

A qualitative multiple case study exploration of the antecedents of the interpersonal behaviours of youth football coaches in Scotland based on a self-determination theory framework.

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Abstract

Background:

A plethora of research has investigated the impact of the coach-created motivational environment on athlete outcomes, but much less is known about the factors that influence the behaviours that shape this environment in the first place (Matosic, Ntoumanis, & Quested, 2016; Occhino, Mallett, Rynne, & Carlisle, 2014). Furthermore, behaviours that affect athletes' basic psychological needs for competence and relatedness have not received the same level of attention as those that affect the need for autonomy, nor has there been enough qualitative inquiry into this topic (Carroll & Allen, 2021).

Aim:

The purpose of this project was to better understand why coaches act the way they do, so as to help enhance training and support for coaches for the betterment of the coach-created motivational environment.

Methods:

Eight youth football coaches from two community clubs in Scotland were each observed and interviewed across three months. The fieldnote observations and interview transcripts underwent thematic case study (Stake, 2013) analysis on three separate levels: within-case analysis looking at every coach of a club individually, cross-case analysis looking at every coach of a club together, and comparative analysis looking at the cross-case findings from every club together.

Key findings:

Multiple case study analyses revealed that the coaches' working environment, their personal biographies, and their athletes' characteristics combined to influence their behaviour. Notably, these antecedent factors altered the presentation of the coaches' need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting behaviours in ways that conflict with conventional understanding of such behaviours in the sport coaching literature.

Conclusion:

Overall, the findings make a case for in-situ, bottom-up approaches to improving the coach-created motivational environment. A flexible conception of what adaptive vs maladaptive coach behaviour looks like to researchers in coaching is also encouraged to promote increased understanding around the complexity of coach behaviour.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that young people can reap many benefits from participating in youth sport that extend beyond improving sporting skills. Increased physical activity (PA) enhances the growth and development of various body tissues, including the heart, blood, bones, skeletal muscles, nervous system, and immune system (Fogelholm, 2010). Furthermore, PA routines established in childhood and adolescence have been found to predict PA routines in adulthood (e.g., Kjonniksen, Anderssen, & Wold, 2008; Tammelin, Näyhä, Hills, & Järvelin 2003; Trost, Owen, Bauman, Sallis, & Brown, 2002; Van Mechelen, Twisk, Post, Snel, & Kemper, 2000). Thus, active young people, such as those who participate in youth sport, are less likely to develop various chronic health conditions in later life, including coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, obesity, and musculoskeletal problems (Bailey, 2006; Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2003). Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that young people's engagement in PA through youth sport can have a positive effect on their cognitive performance and academic achievement (e.g., Castelli, Hillman, Buck, & Erwin, 2007; Dwyer, Sallis, Blizzard, Lazarus, & Dean, 2001).

Youth sport can also be an arena for fostering psychological and emotional development wherein young people experience numerous mental health improvements, including heightened self-esteem, self-perception, motivation, and psychological well-being (Bailey, Armour, & Kirk, 2009; Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005). In addition, researchers advocate that youth sport experiences can be conducive to learning valuable life skills such as teamwork, responsibility, perseverance, leadership, and self-initiative (Baron, 2007; Weiss, 2004). Consequently, youth sport involvement can be a springboard for character development (Bredemeier & Shields, 2006), and is positively associated with adult career achievement (Larson & Verma, 1999). Furthermore, youth sport can provide opportunities for young people to experience positive peer social interactions, social status, social mobility, and community integration (Cote, 2002; Wankel & Berger, 1990). Similarly, youth sport can play an active role in youth crime prevention by acting as a diversionary activity for young people whilst promoting good citizenship (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Nichols, 1997).

Although taking part in youth sport can clearly be advantageous for young people, research suggests that experiences are sometimes detrimental. Many youth sport

participants feel under extreme pressure to win, view themselves as having ineffective sporting abilities, and feel disconnected from their teams (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005). These youths are more likely to experience low self-confidence and damaged self-esteem, and may develop affective disorders such as anxiety and depression (Ryan, 1996; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991). Eventually, the constant stress related to youth sport involvement can cause athlete burnout (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2009), along with other serious problems such as eating disorders, which have been found to be more prevalent in athletes compared to the general population (Sundgot-Borgen & Torstveit, 2004). Research has also highlighted that poor sportsmanship, poor morality reasoning, and acts of violence and aggression are common features of youth sport settings (Bredemeier & Shields, 1987; Colburn, 1986; Lemyre, Roberts, & Ommundsen, 2002; Shields & Bredemeier, 1995). Harmful experiences such as these likely contribute to the high rates of attrition in youth sport (Balish, Rainham, Blanchard, & McLaren, 2014). Previous figures have suggested that 30% of youth sport participants withdraw from at least one sport club every year (Boiché & Sarrazin, 2009; Delorme, Chalabaev, & Raspaud, 2011).

Taken as a whole, the potential advantages of youth sport involvement for young people can be overshadowed or diluted by other factors within the youth sport context. Thus, there is a need for research focused on investigating the specific factors within the youth sport context that enable or prevent positive experiences and outcomes for young people. Drawing from self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000), the reasons ‘why’ young people take part in youth sport can have important implications for the effects of their engagement. Specifically, more autonomous and intrinsic reasons for youth sport engagement are associated with positive experiences and outcomes for young people, with the opposite true for more controlled or external reasons for youth sport engagement (e.g., Calvo, Cervelló, Jiménez, Iglesias, & Murcia, 2010; Ryska, Hohensee, Cooley, & Jones, 2002). While many factors may affect young people’s motivational regulations for participation in youth sport, the interpersonal dynamics between coaches and athletes are among the most important influences (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Indeed, many studies have demonstrated that coaches can strengthen or weaken athletes’ motivation depending on the interpersonal style they commonly adopt during practice (e.g., Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007; Conroy & Coatsworth, 2007). Hence, much of the existing SDT research in sport coaching has targeted the

consequences of motivationally adaptive versus maladaptive coaching styles on athlete outcomes. The crucial role youth coaches play in enabling sport participants to experience positive outcomes through their behaviours is at the forefront of the Scottish Football Association's (SFA) national 'Positive play' campaign, which seeks to promote player autonomy, progress over winning, and caring relationship between coaches and players among other goals (SFA, 2020). While the features and impacts of coaches' behaviours are a key line of enquiry, there has been a scarcity of research investigating the causal factors that influence coaches' interpersonal style in the first place. Identifying the antecedents of motivationally adaptive and maladaptive coaching behaviours could help to elucidate why coaches behave as they do (Occhino, Mallett, Rynne, & Carlisle, 2014), and aid in the development of interventions that seek to support coaches in creating more motivationally adaptive environments for athletes (Matosic, Ntoumanis, & Quested, 2016).

The support needs of coaches must be considered because coaches are performers in their own right, and known to act in accordance with the psychosocial support their environment provides them (Allen & Shaw, 2009; Stebbings, Taylor, & Spray, 2015). Indeed, the coaching process is awash with conflict, pressure, and tensions that can make it difficult for coaches to engage in motivationally adaptive coaching behaviours (Occhino et al., 2014). Given this domino effect, research should target and look out for the interests of athletes and coaches equally. The reality has been, however, that players' experience and well-being dominate much of the discussion on support needs. This imbalance appears especially problematic given a recent survey on the United Kingdom (UK) coaching workforce found that 55% of the coaches sampled (mostly from a community sport setting) reported that they had experienced a mental illness (Smith et al., 2020), thus highlighting that there are mental health problems among coaches which need to be addressed.

Where coaching takes place also matters, with community sport acting as the central setting for national sport participation. Indeed, in Scotland alone, recent figures suggest 66% of girls and 67% of boys between the ages of two and 15 participate in community sport (with the rate of boys taking part seeing an 8% drop off between 2009 and 2016) (OSS, 2019). Community youth sport encompasses a broad range of participants, including disadvantaged, vulnerable, and underrepresented groups (Cronin, & Armour, 2015), and is often delivered by clubs and organisations with limited resources

and funding – a task made harder in the midst of austerity driven policy measures by western governments (the UK included) that have been in place for over a decade (Parnell, May, Widdop, Cope, & Bailey, 2019). Furthermore, compared to performance focused sport, community sport receives far less research attention, despite the work community coaches do being both challenging and vital to national objectives relating to education, health, and community cohesion (Coalter et al., 2007; Collins and Kay, 2014; Hunt et al., 2014; Kelly, 2011). Most coaches are volunteers (Griffiths & Armour, 2014). To illustrate, three quarters of the estimated 1.1 million active coaches facilitating community sport every week in the United Kingdom are volunteers (North, 2009). All of these coaches require a varied skillset as they attempt to “apply integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes’ competence, confidence, connection, and character in specific contexts” (Côté & Gilbert, 2009, pg. 316). These competencies are instrumental to fostering the positive outcomes mentioned above that a well-functioning society requires and hopes for its citizens. Hence the importance of evidence based practice, such as that prescribed by SDT, informing what community coaches do (Cronin, & Armour, 2015).

To this end, this thesis explored the antecedents of motivationally adaptive and maladaptive coaching behaviours. The project looked at the experiences of community coaches who coach youth football specifically. Football is one the most popular youth sports in Scotland, with recent records indicating that 41% of all youth 16 or under are playing the game (SFA, 2018), and there are over 68,000 registered players across 4,000 teams (Scottish Youth Football Association, 2021). On a global level, an estimated 22 million players are registered in youth football clubs across the world (Kunz, 2007). Therefore, youth football represents both a nationally and globally relevant context for this investigation. Therefore, the findings of this project may have implications for millions of young people (and coaches) worldwide. The next chapter elaborates on the theoretical framework that supported substantial aspects of this thesis (i.e., SDT), and reviews the existing SDT literature on coach behaviour to emphasis the project’s rationale.

Chapter 2. Literature review

The coach is an ever-present social factor in athletes' sporting environment (Horn, 2008), and coaching behaviours can have a significant impact on athletes' sport experiences (Vallerand & Losier, 1999). These behaviours sit within a larger coaching process, and a wide range of theoretically located work has positioned the coaching process as goal-directed (Lyle, 2002), relational (Felton & Jowett, 2013), and dynamic (Jones & Ronglan, 2018). Thus requiring coaches to target and balance a multitude of competing agendas in support of athletes' sporting endeavours. In one respect, coaching is about managing impressions in others, and navigating a micropolitical arena of power and influence in order to obtain and retain resource and agency for the fulfilment of desired goals and aspirations (Potrac & Jones, 2009). In another, coaching is a cognitive pursuit focused on cultivating ever increasing amounts of procedural and declarative knowledge of one's sport, athletes, and personal practice, so as to inform and optimise a coach's professional judgements and decision making across complex situations (Collins, Carson, & Collins, 2016). These decisions and their potential effects are often ambiguous, paradoxical, and dependent on other involved social actors, leading many to liken the coaching process to a form of orchestration. From this perspective, the coach is at the centre of a complex, ever-evolving social system, and tasked with steering others towards success through a blend of considered planning and structured improvisation (Jones & Ronglan, 2018). Within youth coaching the goals and actions of coaches can be further positioned in accordance with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UN General Assembly, 1989), with coaches seeking to maintain children's universal rights through engaging in caring, nurturing, and morally just child-centred practices (Lang, 2022). A common thread across these conceptualisations of coaching is that coaches use strategies to affect their players, which SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000) discusses from a motivational perspective.

For several years great effort has been devoted to studying the effects of coaches' behaviours on athlete outcomes using a SDT framework (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, far less attention has been paid to investigating the antecedents of coaches' behaviours. This literature review will serve to show what is currently known on the topic and also identify gaps in our understanding of the antecedents of coaches' behaviours using SDT as the study framework. Through this review the rationale for the current project will be established.

Overview of Self-Determination Theory

SDT is a broad, empirically-based framework for understanding how social-environmental conditions can either facilitate or undermine optimal motivation, psychological well-being, and performance within different life domains (e.g., parenting, health, education, nursing, sport) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT argues that the reasons why a person (e.g., a coach or athlete) chooses to take part, apply effort, and persist in an activity can differentially affect the quality of their experience depending on the level of self-determination involved (Deci & Ryan, 2008). That is, the extent to which a person has the power or ability to make up their own mind about what to think or do, without outside influence or pressure (Ratelle, Guay, Vallerand, Larose, & Senécal, 2007). Thus, SDT focuses on types, rather than just the total amount, of motivation (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

SDT proposes that motivational regulations can be catalogued along a continuum of self-determination. Intrinsic motivation represents the prototypical form of self-determined motivation, also known as autonomous motivation. When intrinsically motivated, a person engages in an activity because they find it inherently interesting or enjoyable; they have no desire for some external reward as they view participation as its own reward (Ryan & Deci, 2000). At the opposite end of the continuum is amotivation, which is considered a non-regulation and the least self-determined form of motivation. A person is amotivated towards an activity when they do not take part at all or take part only in a passive manner. Amotivated behaviour lacks intentionality and affected individuals are believed to just ‘go through the motions’ (Vallerand & O’Connor, 1989). Extrinsic motivation is positioned between these two extremes and refers to participating in an activity to attain a separable outcome (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007). More specifically, four types of extrinsic motivation exist that range from lower to higher levels of self-determination. These include external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation, respectively. SDT believes that humans are active, growth-oriented organisms who are naturally inclined to internalise behaviours and values so that they can build an ever more integrated and cohesive sense of self (Ten Cate, Kusurkar, & Williams, 2011). Therefore, the more fully an extrinsic motivation, or the value associated with it, is internalised, the more autonomous one is assumed to be when performing the behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

External regulation is the least autonomous type of extrinsic motivation and typifies non-self-determined extrinsic motivation, also known as controlled motivation. When externally regulated, a person performs a behaviour to attain a reward or avoid a punishment (Pelletier, Fortier, Vallerand, & Briere, 2001). With introjected regulation, a person takes part in an activity to avoid feelings of guilt, shame, or doubt over self-worth (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Although the behaviour is internally motivated, it is still perceived as controlled, meaning it is partially, but not fully, internalised (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Next along the self-determination continuum is identified regulation, described by Whitehead (1993) as the “threshold of autonomy” (cited by Biddle & Mutrie, 2007, p. 87). Here, a person recognises a behaviour as being instrumental to achieving personally relevant and valued outcomes and thus accept its regulation as their own (Biddle & Mutrie, 2007; Ntoumanis & Mallet, 2014). Finally, integrated regulation is the most autonomous type of extrinsic motivation, resulting when a person’s engagement in an activity is in congruence with deeply held values, goals, and needs that are already fully integrated with their sense of self (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Despite sharing many qualities with intrinsic motivation, behaviours governed by integrated regulation are still regarded as extrinsic since they are performed to achieve separable outcomes rather than for their innate appeal. While this internalisation process may occur in stages over a period of time, the self-determination continuum is not developmental in the sense that one must progress through each stage of internalisation with respect to each regulation. Rather, one can adopt a new regulation at any point along this continuum depending on previous experiences and situational factors (Ryan, 1995).

People can have multiple motives for participating in an activity; in fact, some may participate for a combination of intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivated reasons (Anderson-Butcher, Newsome, & Ferrari, 2003; Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2002). What matters most is a person’s primary reasons for taking part in an activity, as these motives represent their motivational orientation for that activity (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007). If someone is motivated mostly by intrinsic, integrated, or identified factors, they are said to possess a self-determined motivational orientation. Oppositely, if the array of reasons is chiefly characterised by introjected or external factors, this is assumed to reflect a non-self-determined motivational orientation (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, & Thogersen-Ntoumani, 2009).

The literature on SDT has repeatedly shown that people who engage in activities for more self-determined reasons, as opposed to non-self-determined ones, tend to elicit more adaptive cognitive, affective, and behavioural outcomes (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Vallerand & Losier, 1999; Vallerand & Ratelle, 2002). For example, within sport, autonomous athletes are found to persist for longer (Pelletier et al., 2001), display better sportsmanship (Vallerand & Losier, 1994), exert greater effort (Fortier & Grenier, 1999; Li, 1999; Pelletier et al., 1995; Williams & Gill, 1995), experience higher levels of concentration (Brière, Vallerand, Blais, & Pelletier, 1995; Pelletier et al., 1995) and less fear of failure (Conroy, 2004), perform more effectively (Beauchamp, Halliwell, Fournier, & Koestner, 1996; Pelletier, Vallerand, Brière, & Blais, 2003), and have a lower dropout propensity (Calvo, Cervelló, Jiménez, Iglesias, & Murcia, 2010; Lemyre, Roberts, & Stray-Gundersen, 2007; Lonsdale, Hodge, & Rose, 2009) than athletes who regulate their behaviour in a more controlled or amotivated way.

There are very few studies that examined the effects of motivational orientation on coach outcomes (other than those that focused on behavioural outcomes, which will be discussed later). However, since most coaches are either employees or unpaid helpers of a sports club or organisation, findings of workplace research are somewhat transferable to coaching. This is interesting because workplace studies have found autonomous employees to be more committed to their organisations (Gagné & Koestner, 2002) and less intent on leaving for another position (Richer, Blanchard, & Vallerand, 2002). They also reportedly experience fewer perceived daily hassles (e.g., interpersonal concerns, family relations) and subsequent physical symptoms (Otis & Pelletier, 2005). Thus, establishing factors associated with the endorsement and cultivation of a more self-determined motivational orientation would evidently be useful to those who work with others (e.g., coaches and sports club administrators) (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007).

SDT argues that the motivational orientation of a person is shaped by the extent to which they experience satisfaction of three basic psychological needs, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Autonomy can be defined as an individual's need to perceive their behaviour as volitional and self-expressive (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000). Competence can be defined as an individual's need to feel capable of engaging effectively with their environment (Deci

& Ryan, 2000; White, 1959). Lastly, relatedness can be defined as an individual's need to feel socially close to and accepted by others (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Social environments that support the three needs are expected to facilitate and promote self-determined motivation and enhanced well-being, along with other associated benefits. Conversely, those that neglect or actively obstruct these innate needs are likely to lead to non-self-determined motivation and diminished well-being, accompanied by further related consequences (Vallerand, 1997). This assumption has received consistent empirical support across multiple domains, including sport. For example, Amorose and Anderson-Butcher (2007) found a positive predictive relationship between 581 high school and college athletes' perceived psychological need satisfaction and their motivational orientation. The authors explained that the more the athletes felt their basic needs were being met, the more self-determined they reported being. Furthermore, in a four-week diary study of 33 female gymnasts, Gagné, Ryan, and Bargmann (2003) found that changes in perceived psychological need satisfaction experienced during practice positively predicted changes in subjective well-being from pre- to post-practice. Moreover, the results of Taylor and Bruner (2012) showed a positive relationship between 133 youth football players' perceived psychological need satisfaction and four developmental outcomes, namely goal setting, leadership, responsibility experiences, and emotional regulation.

The relationship between psychological needs and motivational orientation has been scarcely investigated from the point of view of the coach; however, the work that has been done on this subject also supports the abovementioned assumption. For example, Rocchi and Pelletier (2017) looked at 424 coaches' perceptions of their coaching context and how these perceptions influenced their need satisfaction and frustration, and autonomous and controlled motivation. Analyses using structural equation modelling revealed that the coaches' perceptions of their coaching context supported or thwarted their psychological needs, which positively or negatively predicted their autonomous and controlled motivation. Similarly, in a study involving 443 coaches, Stebbings, Taylor, and Spray (2011) found that increases in the coaches' perceived need satisfaction related positively to increases in their subjective well-being. On the subject of social-environmental factors that either promote or undermine the three basic needs, much of the existing research has focused on the interpersonal dynamics between individuals in positions of authority and those under their charge. Most

relevantly, in a sporting environment, the interactions between a coach and his or her athletes is viewed as one of the most significant influences on athletes' motivation and well-being (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003).

Need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting coaching behaviours

Most athletes spend a considerable amount of time with coaches when engaged in sport. Hence, the beliefs and behaviours of coaches can significantly affect athletes' view of their sport involvement (Occhino et al., 2014). According to the SDT approach, coaches' behaviour can be thought of as "actively fostering of, indifferent to, or antagonistic toward" the satisfaction of their athletes' basic psychological needs (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013, p. 6). These are respectively known as need-supportive, need-depriving, and need-thwarting styles of interaction. Examples of each style are given below.

A need-supportive style is characterised by autonomy-supportive, competence-supportive, and relatedness-supportive behaviours. Autonomy support – the most widely researched dimension of need support – is evidenced when coaches offer choices, give a rationale for tasks, limits, and rules, acknowledge athletes' feelings and perspectives, and create opportunities for initiative taking and independent work (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Competence support (also known as structure) is demonstrated when coaches provide guidance, direction, and organisation, offer appropriately challenging activities, set realistic expectations for learning, and acknowledge athletes' improvements (Mouratidis, Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Sideridis, 2008). Lastly, relatedness support (also known as interpersonal involvement) is shown when coaches adopt a warm communication style, provide emotional support and care, communicate unconditional positive regard, and ensure all athletes are included in activities (Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2004).

A need-depriving style consists of autonomy-depriving, competence-depriving, and relatedness-depriving behaviours. These behaviours are minimally or not at all supportive of athletes' satisfaction of needs (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Of the three styles, a need-depriving one is the least acknowledged in sport coaching research. In fact, outside of Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Ryan, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani (2011) separating psychological need-thwarting from what they called 'need-dissatisfaction' when developing and testing a questionnaire for measuring the former, there seems to

be no representative examples given anywhere in the existing literature. Examples of need deprivation might include giving a vague rationale for tasks, limits, and rules (i.e., low autonomy support), only occasionally acknowledging athletes' improvements (i.e., low competence support), or keeping one's distance emotionally and socially (i.e., low relatedness support).

A need-thwarting style comprises autonomy-thwarting (also known as controlling), competence-thwarting, and related-thwarting behaviours. Controlling behaviours – the most widely researched dimension of need thwarting – include issuing demands, distributing task-contingent rewards, punishments, and guilt-inducing criticisms, using intimidation techniques, and encouraging athletes' ego-involvement (Bartholomew et al., 2009; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Competence-thwarting behaviours involve dissuading athletes from attempting challenging tasks, stressing mistakes, and openly expressing doubt about athletes' ability to get better or perform effectively (Sheldon & Filak, 2008). Finally, relatedness-thwarting behaviours entail belittling (i.e., attempting to embarrass) athletes, not listening to athletes, restricting opportunities for interactions and conversation, and excluding athletes from activities (Sheldon & Filak, 2008; Smith et al., 2015).

A plethora of research has established that need-supportive coaching behaviours have a positive effect on athletes' psychological need satisfaction (Adie, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2012; Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009; Reinboth, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2004; Smith, Ntoumanis, & Duda, 2007). For example, Reinboth et al. (2004) tested a model to see whether perceptions of coach autonomy support would positively predict perceptions of need satisfaction among 265 adolescent football and cricket players. Structural equation modelling revealed that athletes who saw their coach as autonomy-supportive felt a higher sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness than those who did not. Similarly, perceptions of coach autonomy support were shown to positively predict differences in perceptions of need satisfaction for 54 elite youth football players across two competitive seasons (Adie et al., 2012). This is because autonomy support can, to a limited extent, foster satisfaction of all three needs, not just autonomy (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). A number of studies have also provided evidence for the full motivational sequence whereby need-supportive coaching behaviours lead to psychological need satisfaction and subsequent self-determined motivation in athletes (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007; Carpentier & Mageau, 2013; Gillet, Vallerand,

Amoura, & Baldes, 2010; Isoard-Gauthier, Guillet-Descas, & Lemyre, 2012; Pope & Wilson, 2012). For example, in a study involving 82 rugby players, Pope and Wilson (2012) examined the relationship between perceptions of coach need support and behavioural regulations over half a competitive season. They found that perceptions of coach need support predicted greater psychological need satisfaction which, in turn, predicted more self-determined motivation and greater perceived effort.

Conversely, need-thwarting coaching behaviours have been positively associated with psychological need frustration in athletes (Balaguer et al., 2012; Bartholomew, et al., 2011; Felton & Jowett, 2013; Isoard-Gauthier et al., 2012; Matosic, Cox, & Amorose, 2014). For example, Balaguer et al. (2012) carried out a longitudinal test of SDT on 597 adolescent football players over the course of a competitive season. The authors found that increases in the players' perceptions of a controlling coach-created environment positively predicted increases in their psychological need frustration that corresponded to rises in their reported burnout. In addition, need-thwarting coaching behaviours has been shown to be key precursor of non-self-determined motivation in athletes (Blanchard, Amiot, Perreault, Vallerand, & Provencher, 2009; Hollembeak & Amorose, 2005; Isoard-Gauthier et al., 2012; Matosic, et al., 2014; Pelletier et al., 2001). For example, Hollembeak and Amorose (2005) examined the mediating effect of perceived autonomy, competence, and relatedness on the relationship between perceived coaching behaviours and 280 college athletes' intrinsic motivation. Structural equation modelling revealed that perceived controlling coaching behaviours negatively impacted feelings of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and in turn intrinsic motivation.

The effects of need-depriving coaching behaviours differ somewhat from those associated with a need-thwarting style in that they represent a more passive and indirect way of obstructing the psychological needs (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013), as illustrated by the following example. A coach may not provide his or her athletes with much choice (i.e., low autonomy support), yet, this approach to coaching is obviously not the same as one where athletes are offered a tangible reward in return for compliance or intimidated and threatened into submission. In the former scenario, the athletes' needs are neglected, whereas in the latter scenarios, the athletes' needs are actively undermined, which is why the latter – need-thwarting – approach to coaching is expected to be a greater and more immediate risk factor for need frustration. However,

neglected needs are expected to produce similar motivational costs over time (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Without explicitly separating need deprivation from need satisfaction and need thwarting, isolated research by Hodge, Lonsdale, and Ng (2008) and Reinboth et al., (2004) has found significant associations between low levels of need satisfaction (i.e., need deprivation) in athletes and high levels of psychological ill-being and self-reported physical symptoms, respectively. Therefore, need-depriving coaching behaviours warrant more attention in SDT research for their potential consequences.

Together, these findings suggest that coaches who adopt a need-supportive interpersonal style can foster psychological need satisfaction and subsequently produce adaptive types of motivation that result in positive outcomes for athletes. Whereas coaches who adopt a need-thwarting or need-depriving interpersonal style can provoke psychological need frustration and subsequently produce maladaptive types of motivation that lead to more negative outcomes for athletes. However, it is equally important to recognise that social-environmental factors are capable of influencing coaches' experiences and effectiveness as well (Gould, Greenleaf, Guinan, & Chung, 2002; West, Green, Brackenridge, & Woodward, 2001). Indeed, a small number of studies have identified ways in which sport clubs or organisations can promote or undermine coaches' psychological needs. For example, using interviews, Allen and Shaw (2009) explored eight high-performance women coaches' perceptions of their sport organisations' social context, focusing on the extent to which their needs were being met. The coaches reported that opportunities and support for formal training and preparation, feedback and mentoring opportunities, and assistance with constraints to development allowed them to experience a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their coaching. Similarly, Stebbings, Taylor, Spray, and Ntoumanis (2012) found that need satisfaction was greater among coaches who felt that they were afforded opportunities for professional development, compared to those who did not. They also found that high levels of perceived work-life interference had a negative impact on coaches' need satisfaction. Clearly, research of this kind should be expanded to learn more about how the coaching context could affect coaches' psychological health, instead of the focus solely being on athletes' needs as coaches are performers (and people) too (Gould et al., 2002).

Assessments of the coach-created motivational environment in youth sport

Several publications have appeared in recent years evaluating the coach-created motivational environment in youth sport from different perspectives. This field of enquiry has considered athletes' self-reported views, coaches' own perceptions, and independent observers' ratings concerning need-supportive and need-thwarting features of the environment created. To date, no study has deliberately assessed the prevalence of need-depriving coaching behaviours within youth sport, likely due to the lack of awareness for it and its potential impact on athletes' psychological needs and motivation.

Many of the studies profiling the coach-created environment, as perceived by athletes, have reported moderate to high levels of need-supportive dimensions, and moderate to low levels of need-thwarting dimensions (Adie et al., 2012; Álvarez, Balaguer, Castillo, & Duda, 2009; Appleton & Duda, 2016; Felton & Jowett, 2013; Reinboth et al., 2004; Quested et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2016). For example, Smith et al. (2016) assessed 882 youth football players' perceptions of the coaching environment in England, France, Greece, and Spain. The mean scores indicated that the players perceived their environments as moderately high in autonomy- and relatedness-supportive features and moderately low in controlling features. Similarly, in a sample of 300 young athletes from various individual and team sports, Felton and Jowett (2013) detected moderately high perceptions of autonomy-supportive conditions created by the coach and moderately low perceptions of controlling conditions.

Coaches and athletes have provided similar accounts of the coach-created motivational environment; however, coaches tend to report more positively, both in terms of producing a need-supportive environment and engaging in less need thwarting behaviours (Curtis, Smith, & Smoll, 1979; Mallett, 2005; Ntoumanis, 2012; Smith et al., 2016; Stebbings et al., 2011). For example, Stebbings et al. (2011) issued self-report questionnaires to 443 coaches to assess their perceived behaviours toward athletes. On average, the coaches' responses for the autonomy-supportive items were towards the high end of the scale, while their responses for the controlling items were towards the low end. Similarly, in a study involving 74 youth football coaches from England, France, Greece, and Spain, the coaches reported being highly autonomy- and relatedness-supportive and minimally controlling (Smith et al., 2016).

Independent observer reports of the coach-created motivational environment are more variable than those of the coach and athlete but generally indicate a lack of need-supportive coaching behaviours (in other words, need-depriving behaviours appear common) alongside a prevalence of need-thwarting ones, both in training (Cowan, Taylor, McEwan, & Baker, 2012; Smith et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2016; Tessier et al., 2013) and competitive contexts (Chaumeton & Duda, 1988; Langdon, Schlote, Harris, Burdette, & Rothberger, 2015; Smith, Quested, Appleton, & Duda, 2017). For example, Tessier et al. (2013) rated the interpersonal styles of 57 youth football coaches from England, Greece, and France during one complete training session. Results showed a modest use of need-supportive behaviours across the three countries, especially in regard to autonomy and relatedness support. Similar results were reported by Langdon et al. (2015) in their study of seven youth football coaches during match situations over the course of a competitive season; they too found that potency ratings for autonomy and relatedness support were low. Tessier et al. (2013) additionally found that the coaches utilised a higher percentage of controlling behaviours than autonomy-supportive. Coaches with an overriding controlling interpersonal style have been frequently observed within coaching, especially within youth football (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Kelly & Waddington, 2006; Smith et al., 2017). For instance, Cushion and Jones (2006) rated the interpersonal behaviours of five youth coaches at a football club over the course of a competitive season and found that authoritarian actions were a dominant feature of the context under study.

Overall, athletes, coaches, and independent observers have given different descriptions and depictions of the coach-created motivational environment. However, there is a consensus that coaches commonly engage in need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting behaviours when interacting with athletes, and that there is room to improve the environment being created. The results from Appleton and Duda's (2016) study of 406 athletes suggest that even strong perceptions of a need-supportive environment may not be enough to prevent need-depriving and -thwarting features from undermining athletes' health and optimal functioning. Therefore, there is a need to better understand why coaches behave as they do and, in particular, to examine the antecedents of need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting coaching behaviours.

The apparent insistence by coaches to use behaviours considered to be maladaptive for players' psychological needs and motivation also calls into question why everyday coaching practice seems disconnected from conventional guidance for

embedding SDT within coaching (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Examining how coaches perceive such guidance thus feels appropriate to understand ways in which SDT might be better applied to coaching in the real world, in order to improve engagement with guidance from SDT theorists by coaches.

Antecedents of coaches' interpersonal behaviours

There has been a considerable amount of SDT research on the positive effects of need-supportive coaches, as well as the negative effects of need-thwarting coaches. While this is a key line of enquiry, little is known about why coaches adopt these styles of interaction in the first place (Matosic et al., 2016; Occhino et al., 2014). In their reviews on coach behaviour, these authors stress that identifying the antecedents of motivationally adaptive versus maladaptive coaching approaches could reveal why coaches utilise certain tactics to motivate their athletes. Furthermore, findings from this research have the potential to inform coach development and also assist in the design of interventions for adaptive behaviour change. The research to date on this topic identifies specific characteristics of the coach, context, and athletes (as perceived by the coach) that may determine whether coaches support or undermine their athletes' basic psychological needs.

Previous research has linked a wide range of coach characteristics to the behaviours they exhibit, including personal orientation (Ahlberg, Mallett, & Tinning, 2008; Byrne, 2010; Mallett, 2005), passion (Carpentier & Mageau, 2014; Lafrenière, Jowett, Vallerand, & Carbonneau, 2011), psychological needs, motivation, and well-being (Rocchi, Pelletier, & Couture, 2013; Rocchi & Pelletier, 2017; Stebbings et al., 2012; Stebbings et al., 2011; Stebbings et al., 2015), coaching efficacy (Feltz, Chase, Moritz, & Sullivan, 1999; Sullivan & Kent, 2003), and narcissism (Matosic et al., 2017; Matosic, Ntoumanis, Boardley, Stenling, & Sedikides, 2016). For example, in a study with 443 coaches, Stebbings et al. (2011) found that coaches' autonomy and competence need satisfaction related positively to their well-being which, in turn, related positively to their autonomy-supportive behaviours and negatively to their controlling behaviours.

Coaching behaviours are also associated with contextual characteristics such as social-environmental factors and external pressures (Byrne, 2010; Iachini, 2013; Rocchi & Pelletier, 2017; Rocchi et al., 2013; Stebbings et al., 2012). For example, Iachini (2013) found that high school coaches who felt pressure from being evaluated on the

basis of their athletes' performance were less likely to engage in autonomy-supportive behaviours. Furthermore, in a study of 418 coaches, Stebbings et al. (2012) found that greater job security, more opportunities for professional development, and lower work-life conflict were positive predictors of coaches' need satisfaction which, in turn, was a positive predictor of their well-being and reported use of autonomy-supportive behaviours.

Coach perceptions of athlete characteristics such as motivation and competence are other factors related to coaches' interpersonal behaviours (d'Arripe-Longueville, Saury, Fournier, & Durand, 2001; Iachini, 2013; Ng, Thøgersen-Ntoumani, & Ntoumanis, 2012; Rocchi et al., 2013). For example, Rocchi et al. (2013) found that, when youth basketball coaches perceived athletes as autonomously motivated, they reported using more autonomy-supportive behaviours. Furthermore, d'Arripe-Longueville et al. (2001) found that an expert archery coach's behaviour was influenced by his perceptions of athletes' competence in a given situation. Specifically, the more confident the coach felt about his athletes' ability to perform effectively in a competition situation, the more likely he was to be autonomy-supportive when coaching them during the situation.

Despite some interest in the antecedents of coach behaviour, the field is still in its infancy due to several notable limitations of the current work. First, there has been an almost exclusive focus on the antecedents of coaches' autonomy-supportive and controlling behaviours (e.g., Iachini, 2013; Stebbings et al., 2015). Consequently, very little is known about the social or personality processes that prompt coaches to engage in competence- and relatedness-supportive/thwarting behaviours, or need depriving ones for that matter.

Although autonomy-supportive coaching behaviours go some way towards satisfying athletes' need for competence and relatedness by conveying messages of trust and respect, they are not equal to coaching behaviours that specifically benefit these needs (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Indeed, competence and relatedness play important roles in the development and maintenance of intrinsic motivation, as it is unlikely that an activity will become or remain inherently interesting to a person if they do not feel efficacious about their ability to master the activity. And while many intrinsically motivated behaviours are gladly performed in isolation, in sport settings where other

people are inevitably involved, feeling valued and cared for will likely lead to higher levels of enjoyment and subsequent intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Experiencing competence and relatedness is also vital for the internalisation of extrinsically motivated behaviours, as the reason most people initially take part in an uninteresting activity is that their engagement is encouraged, modelled, or appreciated by a person or group to whom they feel, or hope to feel, connected. And feeling competent at performing behaviours that significant others value is likely to accelerate the internalisation process (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

When the unique benefits of competence and relatedness support are taken into account, it becomes clear that autonomy support is not enough in itself to foster optimal motivation and psychological well-being – all three specific supports are necessary (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). The motivational implications of depriving or thwarting a person's need for competence and relatedness also become clear. Therefore, given the proposed interrelationships between the different dimensions of coach behaviour recognised by SDT, one can argue that, to better understand their complexity, there is a need for antecedent research that targets the different dimensions at the same time (i.e., need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting) rather than always one by one (e.g., autonomy supportive) or in pairs (e.g., autonomy supportive and controlling). The findings would shed light on why coaches behave as they do in a more integrated way than previously reported. This move towards a more integrated model of coach behaviour echoes the increasing calls of other researchers in the field (e.g., Allen & Hodge, 2006; Duda, 2013; Keegan, Harwood, Spray, & Lavalley, 2014; Mallett & Hanrahan, 2004).

A second limitation of current research is that the interaction effects of different antecedents have yet to be examined in any depth (Occhino et al., 2014). Potentially facilitating this trend is the fact that Mageau and Vallerand's (2003) motivational model of the coach-athlete relationship (MMCAR) – which has steered, and continues to steer much of the research on autonomy-supportive and controlling coaching – infers (intentionally or not) that different antecedents independently affect a coach's behaviour. However, as evidenced by recent work on the mediational role of coaches' psychological needs, motivation, and well-being in the relationship between contextual characteristics and coaching behaviours (e.g., Rocchi & Pelletier, 2017), antecedents also act together. Hence, efforts to understand the connection between different

antecedents can bring us closer to grasping the complexity of why coaches act in the manner which they do. While not grounded in SDT, older (Coté, Saimela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995) and more recent (Cooper & Allen, 2018) coaching models acknowledge the interrelationships between characteristics of the coach, athletes, and context in framing the way coaches behave towards their athletes. Therefore, there is a significant need for more research on the combined effects of different antecedents. Such work could also reveal which antecedents are more influential than others, if there are any.

Third, in the research to date on factors that influence need-supportive - thwarting and -depriving interpersonal behaviours, researchers have focused on contextual factors, with much less known about personal factors related to the leader as explanations for behaviour. Personal factors have mainly been examined within parenting and educational domains (see Matosic et al., 2016 for a review). Furthermore, the limited research on personal factors, including those within coaching, has focused on beliefs and personal dispositions (e.g., Stebbings et al., 2015; Stebbings et al., 2011). Concentrating on leaders' (coaches, teachers, parents) beliefs without considering their source is reminiscent of the wider issue of concentrating on behaviours rather than their influences (Occhino et al., 2014). The sources of a coach's beliefs have a basis in the values they hold, which are a by-product of an individual's psychosocial environment and personal history (Deci & Ryan, 2002). SDT posits that values influence behaviour through the goals an individual sets, with previous research showing more intrinsic values (e.g., self-acceptance and expression, having good relationships with significant others, and activism towards the greater good) often acting as precursors to behaviours that allow those values to be realised, with the same being true for behaviours emanating from more extrinsic values (e.g., external reward, image, and social recognition) (Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Kasser & Ryan, 2001; Richins & Dawson, 1992; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995). These value-laden, goal directed behaviours consequently have implications for the need satisfaction and motivational outcomes of not only the person acting (e.g., a coach), but also those affected by their behaviour (e.g., an athlete). Researchers need to appreciate coaches' value systems if they wish to target behaviour change with enough persistence and specificity to create meaningful adaptations (Stodter & Cushion, 2017). However, so far SDT has been underutilised as a means of understanding the effect of value systems on behaviour, as part of a wider issue around

the neglect of value issues in mainstream psychology. Deci and Ryan (2002) have attributed this problem in part to unfounded scepticism over the objectivity and applied uses of values as a subject matter, as well as the lack of empiricism underpinning the dominant theories in psychology that do consider values, such as Rogers's (1964) organismic valuing process theory and Maslow's (1971) hierarchy of needs theory. This is despite the fact that SDT offers an empirically supported motivational lens through which to observe and explain various aspects of human behaviour and experience across contexts and situations (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Fourthly, at present, research examining the antecedents of coaches' need-supportive and -thwarting behaviours has relied almost solely on quantitative self-report instruments such as questionnaires (e.g., Iachini, 2013; Rocchi & Pelletier, 2017). While such work has demonstrated empirical support for the theoretical propositions of need-supportive and -thwarting coaching, the findings are limited in their utility as quantitative research techniques deliver statistical descriptions rather than specified narrative and less intricate accounts of human perceptions compared to more qualitative methods (Allen, Eby, O'Brien, & Lentz, 2008). Qualitative research methods can investigate unknown matters in great depth and detail (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Many qualitative studies have focused on positive and negative coaching characteristics (e.g., Gearity & Murray, 2011), but they have not examined coaching from an SDT perspective, or considered influences on coach behaviour. Therefore, more qualitative enquiry that is specific to sport coaching, SDT, and antecedent factors for behaviour (e.g., Mallett, 2005; Carroll & Allen, 2021) is needed to enrich our understanding of the motivational basis of coaches' behaviours. There has also been a call for more *in situ* studies carried out with coaches in different sport surroundings (e.g., Ahlberg et al., 2008) to gain a better understanding of the environmental features of coaching practice (Occhino et al., 2014). Ultimately, this would allow for a more holistic exploration into the antecedents of coaches' behaviours. Generally speaking, the experiences of sport participants (including coaches) in performance focused sport environments has been given far more research attention than those involved in community sport at a participation level (Cronin & Armour, 2015; Hill, Kerr, & Kobayashi, 2021). The range of sport settings covered within SDT based research is more balanced; nevertheless, qualitative, *in situ* research that has the potential to improve our understanding of what is required to improve outcomes for sport participants in community sport – where the

vast majority of sport participation in occurs – arguably deserves priority. Particularly when the dearth of support services and resources afforded to community sport by comparison are considered (Collins et al., 2012).

Lastly, judging by the vast range of determinants of interpersonal behaviours discovered in other life domains (e.g., education, parenting, health, work; Matosic et al., 2016), within sport, there are likely to be many antecedents of coach behaviour still left to discover, and understand. Therefore, research should continue to elaborate on factors believed to influence coaching behaviours, while searching for additional unidentified ones.

Criticisms of SDT

Notwithstanding the supportive evidence surrounding SDT, questions have been raised around the universal applicability of SDT across different domains (e.g., Van den Broeck, Ferris, Chang, & Rosen, 2016; Mallet & Hanrahan, 2004), and resistance has been shown towards some of SDT's underpinning philosophies (e.g., Hassmén, Keegan, & Piggott, 2016; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 2000). To illustrate, SDT focuses on the shared and continuous importance of all three basic needs for optimal functioning and growth. This focus on the innateness of each need contrasts with differentiated weighting of needs in other need theories, most notably Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943), which takes a more developmental view of needs, where the relative importance of a higher level need is only activated when a lower level need is already met. Hence, SDT can be seen as focusing on need satisfaction rather than strength (Van den Broeck et al., 2016), which limits its utility for explaining what psychological need coaches and players may need most and when.

Furthermore, not enough is known about how cognitive, affective, and behavioural outcomes might change depending on each need's alignment with the pervading values of the culture an individual finds themselves within. Indeed, Van den Broeck et al. (2016) asserted that, from a relativistic perspective, how much the needs of autonomy, competence, or relatedness are valued within one's surrounding culture will determine the extent to which they might benefit from the satisfaction of each of those needs. To illustrate, in a society valuing individualism, players or coaches receiving support for the need for autonomy would be expected to elicit more benefits

than if they were situated within a collectivist society where conformity is more aligned with the cultural norm and relatedness with others is of greater concern, and thus value.

Moreover, it could be argued that the rigid empirical criteria SDT sets for what constitutes a need – that being, its fulfilment should consistently, and distinctly (i.e., not simply be a by-product of autonomy, competence, or relatedness satisfaction/frustration), predict long lasting psychological growth, internalisation, and well-being (Vansteenkiste, Ryan, & Soenens, 2020) – has made it exceedingly difficult for other need candidates to added to the theory. In recent years the candidate needs of novelty (González-Cutre, Romero-Elias, Jiménez-Loaisa, Beltrán-Carrillo, & Hagger, 2020), novelty-variety (Bagheri & Milyavskaya, 2020) and morality (Prentice, Jayawickreme, & Fleeson, 2020) have all received convincing arguments and supporting evidence for their viability as the fourth basic psychological need. The promise shown by early evidence suggests that autonomy, competence, and relatedness may not be comprehensive indicators of optimal psychological functioning, opening up the possibility that SDT as a theory may need to catch up with other need-supportive behaviours already happening in coaching. Leading to the second possibility that need-supportive coaching behaviours may be misunderstood.

Criticism has also been levelled at SDT's strength as a reliable explanation of the interplay between needs and maladaptive forms of motivation and well-being, with the theory seen as more useful in explaining the brighter rather than darker sides of human experience (Pyszczynski et al., 2000). That basic psychological needs have occasionally been found to be inadequate in explaining variances in external or introjected motivation among studied populations (e.g., Van den Broeck et al., 2016) brings into question the exact conditions under which need satisfaction reduces external regulation in the internalisation process.

SDT's place as a comprehensive theory of human motivation can face further scrutiny through the way needs are expressed, satisfied, and from a coaching standpoint targeted across populations. For example, in a study involving 10 elite track and field athletes, Mallet & Hanrahan (2004) found the athletes were partly motivated by external factors including financial reward and beating their opposition, but this did not reduce their self-determination as they interpreted financial reward and success in competition as a sign of competence, which was their overriding concern and ambition.

The implication being that coaches working with elite level athletes in a performance-focused context can promote both ego- and task-involved goals that facilitate perceptions of competence through their achievement, and this subtle appreciation around *who* they are coaching may direct these coaches' behaviour. This finding is demonstrative of 'blind spots' within the theory when applied to unique populations. Overall, the criticism that can be levelled at SDT as a theory require consideration and closer inspection within work applying SDT to coaching, in order to better understand not just its uses but also its limitations within effective coaching practice. Hassmén, Keegan, & Piggott (2016) called for researchers to not just use but also legitimately 'test' and if needed challenge SDT within their work. The authors carried out a systematic review of 24 SDT based publications in sport and exercise psychology – noting that SDT was the most common theory used in past five years – and observed a tendency for researcher to 'explain away' findings that do not fit with SDT's particular view of the world. Anomalous findings were typically blamed on methodological errors, or attributed to cultural differences in the way needs are satisfied and supportive behaviours are expressed. A second tendency has been for researchers to simply conclude that their findings offered support for the tenets SDT, even while also reporting unexpected findings. Hassmen and colleagues argue that the evident unwillingness from researchers to challenge or look to refine SDT only serves to reinforce its current assertions, which does little to advance our understanding of motivation and risks creating (or perhaps continuing) a dangerous form of dogma in the field of motivational psychology.

Aims of the present project

The primary aim of this project was to explore both individual and combined factors that influence the need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting interpersonal behaviours of coaches working with community youth football teams in Scotland through qualitative multiple case studies. The secondary aim was to gain an understanding of what could be done to assist these coaches in creating more motivationally adaptive environments for their athletes. More specific research questions targeted within the project were:

1. How do coaches' experiences and perceptions of coaching contribute to our understanding of differences in coaches' behaviours?

2. How do coaches' personal backgrounds contribute to their need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting coaching behaviours?
3. How do coaches' perceptions of characteristics of athletes influence coaches' need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting coaching behaviours?
4. How does the community sport context influence coaches' need-supportive -, depriving, and -thwarting coaching behaviours?
5. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the guidance given to coaches for embedding SDT within their practice?
6. What are the experiences of community youth coaches and how does SDT assist in explaining these experiences?

Chapter 3. Methodology

Research design and philosophical underpinnings

One of the key aims of this study was to explore differences in coaches' behaviours based on their experiences and perceptions, and to consider this information alongside my own experiences and prior knowledge of coaching and SDT, in order to produce nuanced, practice bred explanations for their and possibly others' coaching behaviours. Thereby bringing us closer to understanding coach-athlete interactions as they are positioned both within a community sport space, and also within SDT as a theoretical framework for understanding coaching. To this end, this project was located within an interpretivist paradigm that adopts a relativist ontology, subjectivist epistemology, and an empathetic axiology. Relativism is founded on the premise that reality is socially and experientially constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). From a relativist perspective, therefore, many different yet equally valid versions of reality (and thus, coaching) exist, put together by researchers and their research participants (Potrac, Jones, & Nelson, 2014). Subjectivism relates to the doctrine that knowledge and perception are one and the same; that is, people assign meaning to the world and interpret it in a way that is understandable to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). According to subjectivism, how researchers collect, handle, interpret, and report on data is shaped by their own opinions, values, social experiences, and perspectives, thereby embedding themselves within the research process (Lather, 1993). Axiology pertains to the values and ethics one carries into a research process, including the goals they have for the research in terms of what it sets out to achieve (Potrac et al., 2014). An empathetic axiology was positioned within the present study to guide an open-minded and holistically considered examination of the coaches' behaviours. The aim being to not just identify opportunities for adaptive coach behaviours within the coaches' accounts, but also reveal challenges in the translation of theory into practice.

Case study

An instrumental, multiple case study methodology was chosen for this project. Case study is a type of research inquiry that involves an in-depth investigation of a phenomenon within its real-life context over a prolonged period using multiple data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Instrumental case studies are appropriate when the research aims to understand something other than the particular case (Stake, 1995). In keeping with this idea, learning about youth football coaches and their environments

was deemed instrumental to understanding why they engage in certain behaviours when working with athletes. Furthermore, the multiple case study approach was seen as well suited to exploratory research since it places emphasis on examining several pieces of evidence (Gräbner & Eisenhardt, 2007), and comparing and analysing cases in different environments (Stake, 2013). This strategy offered an opportunity to better understand why coaches behave as they do in different community youth football environments. Such insight was used to generate both context-specific and more general understanding of the antecedents of the coach-created motivational environment. Another reason for choosing to do multiple case studies was the potential transferability of results. While it is not the intended purpose of case studies to generalise findings widely, the multiple case study approach offered an opportunity to identify commonalities (or as Stake [2013] suggested ‘tentative generalisations’]) that may also apply in other football coaching settings as well as other youth sports settings. Moreover, given the in-depth examination, prolonged engagement, and use of multiple sources and cases in multiple case study research, the resulting evidence was anticipated to be strong and reliable (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For this reason, case studies are more than a method, methodology, or research design, they are a “comprehensive research strategy” (Yin, 2009, p. 13). Given this project’s commitment to qualitative inquiry, Stake’s (1995, 2013) guidance on qualitative case study research heavily influenced how the data was collected, namely in terms of fieldnote observation and informal interviewing, while also helping in identifying, classifying, and parameterising the case under study. Nevertheless, lessons were also pulled from Yin’s (2009) more positivistic case study guidance to aid the management, analysis, and organisation of the data once collected.

Participants

The sample for this project were eight active youth football coaches operating in Scotland (see Table 1 for an overview of their demographic characteristics). The coaches coached for two different categories of club, Standard and Legacy. Standard and Legacy clubs are part of the quality mark award scheme, which is the SFA’s community club accreditation programme (see Figure 1 for the landscape of youth football programmes in Scotland, in order to position the quality mark scheme at a national level). It aims to attract and retain players in the non-professional game by driving high standards of practice and encouraging the development of footballers, coaches, and volunteers operating at the grassroots level. There are five levels of quality

mark accreditation that a team or club can aspire towards (ranked from highest to lowest): Legacy, Community, Development, Standard, and Entry (Entry is not an accredited stage). To gain one of these awards, a team or club must achieve criteria related to management, development structures, administration, planning, and welfare. The accreditation standards increase at every level. Five youth coaches from a Standard club and three youth coaches from a Legacy club participated in the present study. Recruiting coaches from different community football settings was anticipated to offer an opportunity to better understand why many, rather than just some, kinds of community youth football coaches engage in particular behaviours, thereby increasing the overall transferability of the results (Eisenhardt, 1989). Furthermore, Standard and Legacy clubs were chosen purposefully to understand how coaches with apparently different levels of infrastructure surrounding them navigate decisions in their practice, and also how the absence or presence of one component of infrastructure at a club might help explain coach behaviours at another club by contrast. Lastly, the decision to recruit coaches of clubs from two rather than all five levels of accreditation was to avoid compromising on the depth of insight targeted and prioritised in case study work (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Gender	Eight males
Age	27-47 years old (M= 40.3, SD= 6.4)
Ethnicity	White, Scottish
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual
Coaching experience	1.5-7.5 years (M= 3.6, SD= 2.5)
Level of coaching qualification	Four of the coaches held a level one formal coaching qualification, with the other four coaches holding no formal coaching qualifications.

Table 1. Demographic information relating to Standard and Legacy club coaches combined.

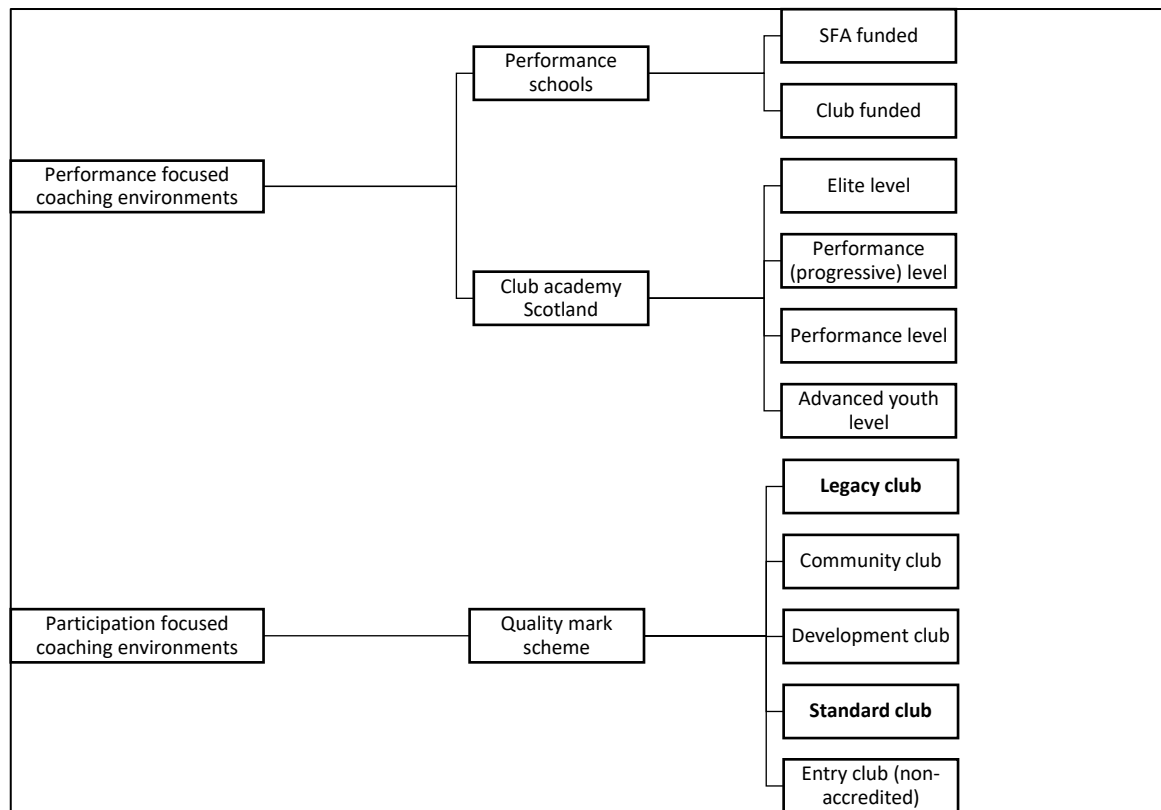


Figure 1. The landscape of youth football programmes in Scotland.

The make-up and history of each of the recruited clubs will now be described in detail to illustrate more about ‘where’ the coaches in the present study coached. Note, these profiles were generated from the data collected, and to encourage honest reporting and protect individuals’ identities, pseudonyms have been used in relation to the clubs and coaches, including the names of colleagues, athletes, friends, and relatives mentioned by the coaches.

Club profiles

The Standard and Legacy club were both non-profit making organisations formed over 30 and 50 years ago, respectively, and each club comprised several football teams. The age groups at the Standard club ran from under nine to under 18, but I was based within the under nine age group, following all five coaches who coached this team. Meanwhile, the Legacy club hosted teams from the ages of six to 18, in addition to a ‘babes’ academy for even younger players and four ‘colts’ teams for players aged 12 and up who had additional support needs. I followed one coach from each of the

under eight and 13 age groups, and a coach of one of the colts teams whose players were mostly 16-17 years old.

All standard and legacy club coaches and administrative staff were volunteers, and many of them were relatives of players. Indeed, every coach who participated in this study was either a parent or step-parent to one or two of their players, as were the coaches they worked with. Throughout the clubs there were also parents-turned-coaches who had remained involved after their child/children left. Therefore, parents of present and former players played a substantive role in the running of both clubs.

The standard and legacy clubs' teams trained one to two times per week using rented facilities: for the under nine team, a five-aside centre; for the under eight and 13 teams, a high school; and for the colts teams, a sports complex. They also played matches against other teams on hired out pitches. To cover these costs and pay for other necessities such as kit, equipment, league registration, coach education, and referees for games, each player's parent or guardian was charged a monthly membership fee. Players were also expected to turn up for games wearing their playing kit and have someone wash it afterwards. At the time of data collection, the under eight, nine, and 13 teams did not yet have a training kit so players trained in whatever sports clothes they owned, meanwhile the colts team trained in their playing kit from the previous season.

The standard and legacy clubs' teams played matches on a festival, tournament, and league basis, and in various formats: the under eight team played five-aside, the under nine and colts teams played seven-aside, and the under 13 team played 11-aside. All of the under eight and nine teams' matches were non-competitive in that end scores were not formally counted, whereas wins, draws, and losses did get recorded in the under 13 and colts teams' matches. The under 13 team played in the Lanarkshire football development association league and the colts team played in the championship tier of the SFA's pan-disability football league system against teams of equal ability banding (i.e., ranges of disability); both teams also took part in competitive tournaments and football festivals.

Coach profiles

Each of the Standard and Legacy club coaches are now described individually to introduce and illustrate more about them as people who fit coaching into their busy and already pressured lives.

Standard club

James. James was a 43-year-old supermarket assistant who worked nights. James started coaching “because my boy Euan, he was wanting to join a team and my next-door neighbour, he’s in charge of the older team and he asked if I was interested in starting up an age group and I said aye, and that’s how big Kyle and that got involved.” He had been coaching for approximately two years and did not hold any formal coaching qualifications. James’ weekly coaching routine is summarised below:

Interview response from James

I work every Monday night so on a Tuesday I’ll get up about quarter to four then I’ll have my dinner then go straight to training, that’s my Tuesday session...on a Thursday I just cut about the house, take the dog a walk, do housework, and then get the wains from school, [have] dinner, and then [go to training] again...I work one weekend every two so I can’t make [every game], [it] depends on the time, if it’s a nine o’clock kick off I can still make it, if it’s a 11 o’clock kick off there’s no way I could make it because obviously the shifts I do, but there’s other coaches there to cover me.

Kyle. Kyle was a 39-year-old training and development manager for a public transport company. He also volunteered for a charity that runs enterprise learning programmes for young people in primary and secondary schools. Kyle got involved in coaching “because I’ve got a boy in the group.” He had been coaching for approximately two years and did not hold any formal coaching qualifications apart from a ‘Children’s wellbeing in Scottish football’ E-learning certificate. The following excerpt encapsulates Kyle’s weekly coaching routine:

Interview response from Kyle

Most days I’m in work before seven, cause I like to get the first hour or two in peace and quiet before anyone else is there so I can get some work done. On a Tuesday and Thursday I block my calendar, I’m away by 4.30pm, and if I don’t get away by 4.30pm I’m not making training, so I need to have that discipline where I’ve got that kind of stop to my working day on a Tuesday and a Thursday...James stays local to me so he’s always able to take [my step-son] Liam if I’m ever struggling and sometimes I’m maybe ten or fifteen minutes late or I’ll just turn up in my work gear and try and help, I’ve done that a couple of times.

Interviewer: How do you commute?

I get a train...I get back to X and I'm a ten- or fifteen-minute walk from there to get back to the house, then [I] grab a car and head away... I've not been there at all this week just because of work, so it's difficult juggling that, most weeks it's fine, most weeks I make a train at about twenty past four and I'm up the road in good style and I get a chance to get something to eat then I'm out the door, and I like to get down a wee bit earlier so I can get set up.

Peter. Peter was a 42-year-old operations manager for a manufacturing company. He had only been coaching football to children for around 2 months but previously spent seven years working with adult players in a semi-professional junior team. Peter started coaching adults because "I was playing for a team and...I enjoyed being in the dressing room and all the things that everyone talks about with football...and I didn't want to give it up, and I fell into it that way" but his more modest involvement in coaching children "was born from spending more time with [my son] Alex." He did not hold any formal coaching qualifications, despite studying course material for UEFA level coaching licences on the SFA's youth/adult pathway. Peter's routine on a typical coaching day was as follows:

Interview response from Peter

Tuesdays are my hell day to be honest with you. Alex and Bridget my other two kids live with their mum, and I'm in the house with [my partner] Caroline and the baby, so. The normal Tuesday routine is work, I always make sure I'm back in the house at 5pm at the very latest. I pick Alex up at 5.30pm then we get down to training. In terms of what I do during the day, it can vary in terms of, meeting after meeting, but in terms of the location I might be in [location A], I might be in [location B], it could be in [location C], [Location D], I could be anywhere. I look after all of Scotland and as far down as kinda [location E], and back up to [location F].

Daniel. Daniel was a 27-year-old courier for a delivery company. His motivations for coaching were "Pretty much my step-son, just to make sure he survives...cause he's one of the younger ones so it's harder. [Also], at the start we didn't have enough people and the rest of it, so I had to join in." Kyle had been coaching for just over one and a half years and held no formal coaching qualifications. On a typical coaching day Daniel would "Start work about 11am, finish about 5-ish, and then just head straight over to get Lewis and then go to [training]." Midway through

data collection Daniel stopped coaching at the club (for reasons that are examined and discussed later) but kept participating in the study to share his experiences.

Derek. Derek agreed to participate in the study but left the club near the beginning of data collection because he and his family were moving to a different area, so very little became known about him other than he had a son who played for the under nine team. It can, however, be inferred from James' comment about recruiting other parents that Derek's involvement was similarly motivated through his son, and also that, in line with how long other parents had been coaching at the club, Derek accrued up to two years' worth of experience before stepping down.

Legacy club

Kieran. Kieran was a 40-year-old high school teacher. His involvement in coaching evolved "when my oldest boy was about five or six...we took him to the academy on a Saturday morning, it's like a babes so basically [the club] done a thing where you can get them in from like four years old, mini kickers kinda thing, go in kick a ball about, do fun drills and basically at that point the club looked for parents to take it on, it's always something that I kinda wanted to do anyway, so I just said to the guy [that I would do it]...I enjoyed playing football and just wanted to stay in the game kinda thing so I just felt that the next natural thing to do was to do a little bit of coaching." Since then, Kieran had coached for roughly seven and a half years and now led the club's under 13 team with the assistance of two other coaches. He held a level 1 national coaching qualification on both the SFA's children's and youth/adult pathways. A typical coaching day Kieran is described below:

Interview response from Kieran

Get up, go to work, do the day job, come in...I like to plan the sessions at the weekends for the Tuesday and the Friday because I do have a busy working week, sometimes the work takes over so if I'm not as organised as I want to be on the Tuesday, if it's a Tuesday session, I'll come in from work and I'll sit down for an hour and just think about what I want to do in terms of that particular session...some Tuesdays I'll have a meeting after work so it's usually in, eat dinner then out but if it's going to be like that obviously myself and the other coaches have got a WhatsApp group, I would maybe just say to them, "I'm struggling to think of anything, can you guys come up [with something], this is the kinda theme that we want to look at.

Nathan. Nathan was a 47-year-old police officer close to retirement. He “[got] into coaching because my son really loves the game and he’s got a wee bit of talent and I thought you know coming towards the end of my professional career this is something that I’d quite like to do going forward so that’s how I got into it...a big motivation for me is to spend time with my son.” Nathan had been coaching for roughly two years and led the club’s under eight team with the assistance of two other coaches. He held a level one national coaching qualification on the SFA’s children’s pathway. Nathan’s typical coaching routine is summarised below:

Interview response from Nathan

So my general day of work, which is what happens before I’m coaching, quite often I’ll find myself at lunch time thinking about the drills, things we want to try and cover...basically my lunch break that’s the general plan, it’ll happen on the day...I would say you’re more often planning for coaching for that evening during the day. I’ll have agreed with my other coaches that I’ll do a passing drill, a shooting drill, or whatever other drill then I’ll go and research it...then continue my afternoon’s work, rush home from work, [have a] quick change usually just because of the times we get, the younger boys are out quite early...[so] travelling home from work during the rush hour, getting something to eat and actually getting to the coaching [venue on time] is a wee bit of a challenge...I’m struggling sometimes...[I] try and get prepped and be there before anybody else...to receive the boys from their mums and dads.

Anthony. Anthony was a 44-year-old procurement officer for a repairs company. He coached the club’s four colts teams at training alongside three other coaches, and took one of these teams on his own on matchdays. Anthony had been in this role for a little under five years and took it on, and kept it up, because “[my son] Luke had always wanted to play [mainstream] football but it never really worked out, he’s just kinda that far behind in a sense, so when he went to [high school] they were giving out leaflets and a couple of his friends had joined and they were like, ‘there’s a football team,’ so I spoke to [the head coach] Vivian and she’s like that, ‘right ok, bring him up,’ so it was a few weeks, I used to just drop him off and go to the gym then she says, ‘why don’t you give us a hand?’ so I said, ‘aye, ok, no problem,’ and I just seemed to immerse myself in it and the players took to me as well, so what started really [as something] for him is for everybody now.” He held a level one national coaching qualification and once won

‘disability coach of the year’ at a regional awards ceremony. Anthony’s typical coaching day begins at work:

Interview response from Anthony

I’m at work but it does go through my mind at times, you know, ‘what we gonna do tonight,’...sometimes it crosses my head if I’m out at lunch...I’m thinking, ‘right we’ll maybe do that tonight’...I finish at 5pm so got a couple of hours’ time [to plan]. I go home and get the dinners [made]...then you go out [to training].

Data collection

Coach observations

Non-participant observations were employed to examine first-hand how the coaches behaved in their natural setting without interfering (Denzin, 2009). Naturalistic observations are recommended for their contribution towards understanding coaches’ in-situ behaviours and the environments they operate within (Cowan, Taylor, McEwan, & Baker, 2012). Field notes were taken to capture intricate information about what was heard and seen during these observations. This included details of the coaches’ behaviours, their players’ reactions, and the environments that they took place in (Dennis, 2010; Jackson, 1990). Events were documented in this way to produce a narrative display of findings that brought the coaches’ actions to life in a way that is difficult to achieve when using quantitative coding systems, and each incident was able to be referred back to in detail during interviews to aid coaches’ recall, which in turn strengthened the depth of their assessments about what happened and why (Zainil & Arsyad, 2021). Field notes tended to be taken in the midst of an event occurring, but at times were delayed until afterwards whenever the conditions were considered unsuitable for open, immediate note taking (e.g., when in close proximity to an altercation between players and/or coaches). In these instances, memory was relied upon to reconstruct events (Nurani, 2008).

Short, casual interviewing was also carried out at times judged appropriate by myself and each coach (e.g., during water breaks, after or before practice or matches) to gain clarification on events that occurred during their observations. Coaches can sometimes do things for reasons which are not detectable through observation alone so a conversation is also required before an informed judgement can be made on their thinking. Asking questions soon after events took place also enabled insight into the

coaches' raw emotions and initial thinking during each event and the potential impact these factors had on their decision making. Moreover, it offered an opportunity to assess if there were any discrepancies between what the coaches said they did and what they actually did and why, and examination of behaviours the coaches themselves were unaware of (Mays & Pope, 1995). Unplanned, informal chats were occasionally held with others present at the observations (e.g., parents, club administrators) to collect extra information on the coaches and club participating in the study.

Formal interviews

Formal interviews were carried out to gain a detailed insight into the coaches' beliefs around coaching, their thought processes during training sessions and matches, and ultimately their views on why they do what they do. These sit-down meetings offered an opportunity to revisit and expand on anything interesting that was mentioned during the short pitch-side interviews, or discuss anything that was initially missed or not touched upon due to time restrictions. A semi-structured interview guide was used to focus the interviews on relevant topics while allowing for changes in the wording and order of questions to keep the conversational momentum going. The guide also offered the freedom to ask follow-up questions based on the coaches' responses and pursue fruitful lines of enquiry that emerged unexpectedly during each interview (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

The interview guide was developed based on SDT concepts and recommendations for antecedent research in sport coaching (Occhino et al., 2014; Matosic et al., 2016). In keeping with the project's exploratory aim, it targeted influences on multiple dimensions of coach behaviour through three general antecedent dimensions (personal factors, contextual factors, and athlete related factors) (Matosic et al., 2016) and with consideration for their potential overlapping effects (Occhino et al., 2014). The interview guide was piloted with a youth coach to test the questions and identify and correct flaws or limitation within its design. At the time of interview, the coach was 25 years old and had 10 years coaching experience working with recreational youth football players, however he was not currently coaching. He held a level two national football coaching qualification as well as an academic sport qualification. Based on feedback from the pilot interviewee, the interview guide was modified in three main ways: the purpose behind each set of questions was explained as they were reached rather than all at once to make it easier for coaches to understand the aim of

each part of the interviews; behaviours and incidents were discussed one at a time rather than simultaneously so coaches could focus their attention and give more detailed comments; and examples of behaviours were written down so they could be quickly given to assist coaches if they struggled to recall relevant events.

Each of the study's formal interviews began with introductory questions about the coach's motivations for, and beliefs around coaching, to gauge their general approach and build rapport, before moving onto more specialised questions around each category of need support, deprivation, and thwarting. Coaches were asked to recall examples of times when they acted in particular ways towards athletes (e.g., "Can you think of any examples of times when you try to make your athletes feel as though they are competent and effective players, and can meet their athletic potential?" – competence support), then probing questions were given to encourage the coaches to dissect each episode in order to explain the reasoning behind their actions (e.g., "Does the amount, and possibly way, you do this depend on anything? What factor, or factors, do you believe may play a role here?"). Practical examples of behaviours were occasionally given as prompts to stimulate coaches' thinking towards relevant incidents (e.g., "For example, do you ever offer them information or advice during drills and games? Talk me through how you do this").

Focus groups

Focus groups were employed to facilitate discussion between participating coaches, as sharing views and experiences in a group setting can help generate additional knowledge about a topic, in this case coaches' perceptions of their behaviours and their causes (Acocella, 2012). However, rather than repeat the same line of questioning from the one-to-one interviews, the focus group was designed to be a transparent, open discussion about what SDT theorists in coaching have said on coach behaviour and the extent to which coaches agree (or disagree) with these views and why. This approach also enabled the development of a better understanding of coaches' willingness (or lack thereof) to engage in more motivationally adaptive behaviours with athletes, and assessed the connect (or disconnect) between conventional interpretations of SDT as an academic theory for coaching (e.g., Mageau & Vallerand, 2003) and the real world application of these guidelines within coaching. Only autonomy-supportive and controlling coaching behaviours were targeted because, based on the interview findings, the decision to encourage, as opposed to discourage athletes' autonomy is

arguably more disputable – and therefore a suitable topic for generating critical debate – than the decision to support versus restrict feelings of competence or relatedness. Based on individual interview data, it was believed that coaches would mostly agree with the idea of building relatedness with athletes and offering them structure, particularly in front of one another for social desirability reasons. Time restrictions were also considered, as adequately covering nine dimensions of coach behaviour in the space of 45-60 available minutes would not have been possible.

The focus groups began with me introducing the general concept of autonomy-supportive coaching before describing and explaining each of Mageau and Vallerand's (2003) seven key autonomy-supportive behaviours. This included the controlling ones the authors mentioned to avoid (Bartholomew et al., 2009). Practical examples were given for each behaviour alongside the proposed effect each behaviour has on athletes' basic psychological needs. Coaches were then given two activities to complete. The first activity asked coaches to think about and discuss what they liked and disliked about the behaviours presented to them from a coaching perspective. The second activity asked them to consider the barriers and enablers to implementing these behaviours within their practice. Coaches were provided with pens and paper to assist them in organising their thoughts by writing them down as they engaged with the tasks, and any notes they produced provided additional data for the project. Pairs were used when the number of participating coaches at a club allowed it. This enabled coaches to share their initial thoughts with one another and also build confidence to voice their views before the full group conversations. After being given roughly five minutes of thinking time for each task, each pair was asked to share both their joint and individual views with the rest of the group. These were discussed amongst the group. The focus group concluded with a full group assessment of autonomy-supportive coaching in terms of its perceived usefulness and appeal as a guide for working with athletes. Throughout the focus group probes were given as required to help the conversations develop (e.g., "What is this view based on? Does anyone feel the same or differently?"). The interactive and collaborative mechanisms of the focus groups were inspired in part by the Scanlan collaborative interview method used in the past to explore athletes' sport experiences (Scanlan, Russell, Wilson, & Scanlan, 2003).

Quality Assurance

Qualitative research is inherently subjective and contextual; therefore, a series of strategies were used to try to improve the rigor (also known as the trustworthiness) of the project's findings. However, there is much debate around how qualitative researchers can be rigorous in their work. From a relativist position, criteria is "a socially constructed list of characteristics" (Smith & McGannon, 2018, pg. 16), and as such cannot have universal merit. Consequently, it is the job of the relativist researcher to select and work off open-ended criteria they consider to be well suited to achieving the individual study's unique aspirations (Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow, & Ponterotto, 2017). For this project, Guba's (1981) criteria was deemed to be a useful starting point: credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. Credibility refers to whether the findings are an accurate reflection of the coaches' realities (i.e., the 'truth' of the findings). Transferability has to do with whether findings have applicability in similar coaching environments. Confirmability relates to how much the findings are shaped by the coaches and not me as the researcher. Lastly, dependability is based on the degree to which the findings could be supported by other researchers.

Starting with measures to increase credibility, member reflection was used to reduce (as best as is possible, personal bias and power relations within research considered [Smith & McGannon, 2018]) the chances of inaccurate interpretation of data, while stimulating deeper and richer analysis of the coaches' behaviours (Bloor, 2001; Tracey, 2010). The data underwent preliminary analysis and coaches were presented with the results at a follow-up interview (their third interview). This procedure meant they could see how their views and experiences were being interpreted and would likely be presented in the report. The coaches were asked to provide feedback on how accurately I was interpreting their reality, correcting and/or adding information as needed. Vague, doubtful, or highly contradicting findings were checked first to ensure they received attention when time was limited. Emphasis was given to using member reflection to generate additional data, by exploring gaps in the interpretations, or using my interpretations to prompt further commentary, and thus refine my understanding of the coaches (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Tracy, 2010). This included gauging how meaningful and comprehensible the coaches found the findings, as a predictor of the research's potential contributions to the population it is designed to serve (Tracey, 2010).

The potential for the findings to resonate with the coaches' perceived reality was also strengthened by using multiple methods of data collection and crosschecking the resulting information. This method of triangulation increases the likelihood that findings reflect what is actually happening as opposed to the strategy used to obtain the data. For example, some coaches were more open about their experiences and gave stronger opinions in the interviews than the focus groups, therefore only carrying out focus groups might have limited the comprehension of certain coaches' perspectives. Merging the data sourced from both these methods helped build a more complete and accurate picture of the coaches and their environments (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014).

The transferable potential of the project was targeted by describing the coaches in rich, thick detail so readers can confidently judge the extent to which the findings resonate with their own coaching experiences (Pitney, 2004). For confirmability reasons, a reflective journal was used during time away from the site of data collection to encourage reflexive thinking and also help with identifying and clarifying themes and patterns emerging from the data (Ben-Ari & Enosh, 2011; Hayman, Wilkes, & Jackson, 2012; Snyder, 2012). Reflexivity was considered important because, due to the intimate, hands on requirements of qualitative research, researchers cannot detach themselves from their inquiries (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), and so their personal history and interests influences the way they collect, select, and interpret data (Finlay, 2002). To illustrate, I am also a youth football coach. Furthermore, I was once a youth footballer myself, and have experienced a mix of positive and negative outcomes as both an athlete and coach and these experiences drive me to pursue particular research topics such as the one under investigation in this project. Also, as an academic with real world experience, the beliefs and values I have developed as a 'front line' sport participant encourage me to critique coaching theories in various ways (e.g., realism, language, flexibility). All of these factors had potential implications for how the data in this project was managed, but writing down personal impressions and feelings about what I saw and heard in the field, as well as what I was expecting and/or privately hoping to encounter, assisted me in identifying and addressing my personal bias throughout the research process (Sangasubana, 2011). In the interviews and focus groups, care was taken not to ask coaches leading questions or make statements which might indicate my own feelings on topics, so as to prevent confirmation bias from corrupting the data

collected. I did occasionally play the role of ‘devil’s advocate’ by offering up different perspectives to the ones taken by the coaches, repeating questions they answered but in different ways, and using their answers to introduce new questions, however this strategy was employed with the intention of encouraging them to discuss their opinions in more detail rather than change their minds on topics, and the neutral stance I adopted was always communicated when making these soft ‘challenges’. The selective use of devil’s advocate was recommended for its potential usefulness in generating richer insight into when, for example, coaches will and will not engage in particular behaviours (i.e., the conditions of their actions), than might otherwise be found, and also its capacity to reduce the urge for focus group participants to only agree with each other, by stimulating debate (MacDougall & Baum, 1997). At the same time, I allowed my personal history to benefit the research by constructing questions built around real-world coaching scenarios wherein the functionality of coaching guidelines and coach behaviours could be tested, and I carried forward my appreciation for the challenges coaches face when judging the coaches’ behaviours and beliefs. Having a coaching background was also useful for building rapport with the coaches in order to make them feel comfortable in my presence, and by doing so elicit more open, truthful responses.

Finally, to increase the project’s dependability, an audit trail was established whereby all research decisions and activities have been described and explained in this report, and participant quotes and raw data themes are accessible to reviewers. This means that reviewers can validate the data by seeing how it was gathered, recorded, and scrutinised (Bowen, 2009). Furthermore, a code-recode strategy was adopted, therefore the data was coded on multiple occasions – which were spaced apart in time – to determine whether the findings were consistent (and investigate any inconsistencies that were revealed), and also develop a deeper understanding of the patterns of behaviour emerging from the data (Chilisa & Preece, 2005). Moreover, talks were held and results were shared with the project’s supervisory team to help detect and correct any irrelevant or weak/inaccurate assertions being made about the data (Anney, 2014). The honesty of these discussions also contributed towards the project’s reflexive analysis (Bitsch, 2005), which was considered to have heightened importance based on the empathetic axiological position taken within the project’s wider design and rationale.

Procedures

After ethical approval for this project was obtained from the University of Stirling General Ethics Panel, coaches were recruited through personal networks. Based on the recommendations of Stake (2013), no more than five coaches per club/organisation were recruited. This sample size helped ensure that enough time could be allocated to study and properly understand the behaviours of each coach, as well as the similarities and differences between them. A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to ensure the participants could discuss experiences within coaching that gave insight into why they created adaptive versus maladaptive coaching environments for players (Denieffe, 2020). During the recruitment stage, coaches were made aware of the voluntary nature of their involvement in the project and those who decided to participate gave informed consent before any data were collected.

Data collection for the Standard and Legacy clubs followed the same general process given below (see Table 2 for an overview of the data collection process across both clubs). The author spent between two and three months in each of the clubs and with the coaches. During such time, coaches were observed leading their teams through multiple training sessions and matches, and gave short interviews before, during, and/or after each observation. Each observed training session and match lasted between 45 minutes and two hours. At the end of each coach observation, fieldnotes were collated and used to produce questions specific to the relevant behaviours of each coach, and these questions were referred back to across three in-depth one-to-one interviews. The length of time for each of these interviews ranged from 60-120 minutes. After the three initial interviews with coaches had taken place, a 45-60 minute follow-up interview took place to carry out member reflection with each coach. Finally, to conclude data collection for each club, a focus group interview was carried out with coaches. The focus groups lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Note that differences in the exact number of observations and interviews, or total time spent at each club are the result of varying levels of coach availability, which affected the time taken to reach data saturation at each club.

Category of club	Approximate time spent in club/organisation	Methods of data collection used	Data generated
Standard club	3 months	Observations, interviews, focus group	N = 7 observations (approx. 7 hours' worth of fieldnotes) N = 11 in-depth interviews N = 1 focus group
Legacy club	2 months	Observations, interviews, focus group	N = 13 observations (approx. 13 hours' worth of fieldnotes) N = 9 in-depth interviews N = 1 focus group

Table 2. Data collection process.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process began at the same time as data began being collected, with fieldnote being scrutinised for what they revealed regarding features and trends of the coaches' behaviours, as well as the nature and possible influence of the environment these behaviours took place in. Next, each coach's initial interview recordings were listened back to, and initial impressions were noted down, then taken back to the coaches and subsequently modified where required. Following the completion of data collection, the interview and focus group recordings were transcribed verbatim. Due to the substantive amount of data to be transcribed, a selective transcription method was adopted that sits between naturalism (where the aim is to provide as much detail as possible) and de-naturalism (where the aim is to capture the substance of the interviewee's responses) on the range of transcription practices (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason 2005). Therefore, only statements with relevance to the project were written down, with punctuation included to avoid distorting messages. Elements of speech such as stutters, laughter, overlapping talk, and non-verbal messages were omitted unless they were also considered integral to accurately representing the meaning behind a

statement (e.g., a laugh signifying sarcasm, the memory of a facial expression which suggested a ‘no’ or ‘yes’ answer). This personalised approach helped ensure that, within the time available for the study, relevant features of talk and interaction could be represented in their full form and more easily understood in the absence of any ambiguous or unimportant surrounding information (Davidson, 2009). Once the transcription process was complete, the transcriptions were read several times so I could develop further familiarity with the data.

At this stage, all data belonging to the coaches underwent thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a way of “identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The aim of the project was to discover more information about factors already presumed to influence coach behaviour while also identifying new potential antecedents. Therefore, a particular thematic analysis approach offering both direction and flexibility was required. Thus, an inductive and deductive form of thematic analysis was selected, also known as an abductive approach (Kovács & Spens, 2005), whereby prior research findings were considered and searched for but in an unguarded manner, so that new interpretations could still ‘emerge’ from my thinking about the data (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997). Such an approach was used to great effect in Sparks, Dimmock, Whipp, and Lonsdale’s (2015) study of Physical Education (PE) students’ perceptions of their teachers’ relatedness-supportive behaviours. By examining their data in accordance with the principles and assumptions of SDT while remaining open to the development of less conforming and at times conflicting trains of thought, the authors were able to generate deep and novel understandings of PE teachers’ interactions with their students. The computer software, NVivo, was used to facilitate this analysis as there was a large amount of information to manage and NVivo allowed data from various sources to be conveniently pulled together, stored, and studied.

Theme production began with searching the interview and focus group transcripts (including the activity sheets) for anything of relevance to the research questions, and tagging and naming potentially interesting sections of text wherever they appeared (otherwise known as generating initial codes). Fieldnotes were then coded and, where possible, extracts from the fieldnotes were matched up with similar codes generated from the coaches’ self-reports. Matching coach reports with similar coach observations added ‘realness’ to the experiences being discussed by the coaches. To ensure that the

context (and therefore meaning) behind each code was not lost during this stage of analysis, which is a common worry (Bryman, 2001), paragraphs rather than individual lines of relevant text were often extracted so that each code could later be reviewed, and if necessary refined, with the aid of pertinent surrounding information. Any contradictions within and across data items were also coded for their potential to reveal hidden insights about the antecedents of the coaches' behaviours, as achieved in Carroll and Allen's (2021) recent multimethod study of community youth football and swimming coaches. In their study, the coaches showed inconsistencies in their observed and self-reported behaviours, and as a result of looking for reasons behind these conflicting findings the researchers discovered antecedent factors that would have been missed had they chosen to ignore such contradictions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Since the thematic analysis sought to identify and examine ideas and concepts that underpinned the coaches' responses and actions as opposed to simply describe what had been said and done, the data was primarily coded with a latent rather than semantic focus (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016).

Due to the present study utilising multiple data sources and based on recommendations from Stake (2013), thematic analysis was carried out at three levels: within-case analysis looking at every coach of a club individually, cross-case analysis looking at every coach of a club together, and comparative analysis looking at the cross-case findings from every club together. Within-case analysis was employed first and cross-case analysis was applied separately for each club. Subsequently, comparative analysis was carried out on both clubs collectively. Stake suggested that taking a multi-layered approach to analysing cases would be necessary for uncovering what was common across the coaches and their environments as well as unique to each. The explanations the idiosyncrasies of individual coaches might offer for differences between them were also considered at this stage (Yin, 2014).

Next the codes, and their related data extracts, were organised into representative themes at lower- and higher-order levels. Sorting the different codes into themes was achieved by writing the name of each code on a list and placing similar looking ones together, then considering how they might combine to form a theme that captures their collective meaning. Codes judged to be similar but not quite the same were split into two or more lower-order themes (e.g., coaching beliefs, motivations to coach) which together formed one overarching major theme (e.g., coach's personal orientation).

Outlier codes were placed in a miscellaneous category either temporarily or permanently. Subsequently, all preliminary themes and their codes were merged, refined, split, or rejected as necessary (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Thematic analysis is an iterative and recursive process; therefore, these steps were repeated in a non-linear fashion until a strong level of confidence was built in the rigor and trustworthiness of the analysis. At that point the remaining themes and their associated codes and data extracts were presented to my supervisor who acted as a critical friend by challenging the findings with alternative explanations and consequently spurring reflexive thought. Further refinements within the analysis were then made before the themes were regarded as final (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Smith & McGannon, 2017).

Introduction to results and discussion

At the broadest level, five major themes were found to influence the coaches' need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting behaviours: coaching in a community sport context is challenging, athlete characteristics, being a parent-coach, a coach's personal orientation, and mini-case studies (see Table 3 for a wide view of the major, lower-order-, and sub-themes). The results and discussion are organised into chapters that focus on one major theme at a time before a general discussion of the key findings from the thesis. Chapter 4 focuses on the (lack of) structure in community sport coaching and practical dilemmas from coaches' experience that influence their behaviours, respectively. Chapter 5 presents an exploration of athlete characteristics that coaches consider and the ramifications for their behaviours. Chapter 6 examines the unique challenges of being a parent-coach and the sometimes differential effect on coaches' behaviours with their sons versus other players. Chapter 7 focuses on the coaches' personal orientation towards need-supportive coaching. Finally, Chapter 8 expresses three mini-cases nested within the major themes but detailing features of community sport coaching through unique, singular experiences. The meaning of, and insight generated through each of these major themes is elaborated through various lower-order-, sub-, and mini-themes, which are presented below. The raw-data themes are also presented within a table at the beginning of each section.

Sub-theme	Lower-order theme	Major theme
Lack of structure to support players and coaches' competence	Lack of structure to support psychological needs	Coaching in a community sport context is challenging
Lack of structure limiting relatedness support amongst coaches		
Conflicting views on the place, role, and management of competition	Practical dilemmas	
A time and place for need support, and control		
Managing groups effectively is complex and affects need support		
Perceptions of players' sport specific skill affects structure and autonomy support	Perceptions of players' multiple abilities	Athlete characteristics
Readiness for autonomy		
Perceptions of athletes' motivation as a non-linear predictor of support	Perceptions of players' motivation	
Simplistic views on motivation		
Competence and confidence seen as two sides of the same coin	Perceptions of players' confidence	
Balancing life experiences within and across a team		

Life lessons	Hopes and fears for their child	Being a parent-coach
Parental freedom		
Other players’ experiences are “just a by-product”		
The legacy of being a parent-coached player for coaching		
Insider information (and whether to use it)	The child as a coaching tool	
Parent-child collaboration		
Emotional investment	Hypersensitivity to their child’s actions and others’ perceptions	
Favouritism		
Disrespect (back) from the child		
What works at home can work in coaching	Parenthood as coach education	
Learning to understand the child leads to better need support for others		
“You don’t lick it off the ground, you become your parent don’t you”	Influence of significant others on coaching values	Coach’s personal orientation
Past coaches		
Sport participants		
Local ‘experts’ on working with young people		
Working to understand (other) young people	Influence of outside values transferred into coaching	
Growing up in a fractured community brings relatedness-supportive coaching targets to the forefront		

Need-supportive lessons from the workplace		
Feeling isolated and incompetent	Case – Daniel’s mental health	Mini-case studies
Pressured by others’ expectations		
Need for structure and involvement to support competence and relatedness		
The person behind the coach		
Increased structure for lower bandings	Case – Anthony’s para-football coaching	
Increased choice for players who need it (more)		
Less ‘space’ for need-thwarting coaching		
Players’ emotional control was a consideration		
Parents as affordances, not constraints		
Experimental exercises to learn about players and their personalities	Case – Peter’s familiarity with players	
Group versus individual familiarity		
Spiralling behaviours		

Table 3. Overview of major, lower-order-, and sub-themes determining coach behaviour

Chapter 4. Coaching in a community sport context is challenging

The first antecedent dimension, ‘coaching in a community sport context is challenging’, refers to the contextual issues and nuances of coaching in a community sport setting that affect how the coaches work with players as well as the impact on the coaches themselves. This major theme was made up of two lower-order themes: lack of structure to support psychological needs, and practical dilemmas. Each of the lower-order themes and case example are described and discussed below.

Lack of structure to support psychological needs

The first lower-order theme encompasses the varied and often adverse need support experiences relayed by the coaches as they attempted to cope with the challenges of coaching in their environment. Two sub-themes were generated: lack of structure to support players and coaches’ competence, and lack of structure limiting relatedness support amongst coaches. The supports the coaches did and did not receive were traceable to their club, national governing body, and coaching team. Each support was shown to impact or at least hold relevance for the coaches’ behaviours towards players.

Lack of structure to support players and coaches’ competence

This sub-theme comprised two mini-themes (see Table 4). The first mini-theme captured the coaches’ challenges planning coaching sessions with little support from their club and the SFA. The second mini-theme captured the coaches’ limited understanding of the complexity of coaching and particularly motivational processes. These resulted in coaches experiencing challenges to support players’ competence development and struggling to balance competence development with players’ other psychological needs.

Raw data theme	Mini-theme	Sub-theme
Emphasis on session content Inexperienced coaches generating/adapting session content	Challenges planning coaching	Lack of structure to support players and coaches’ competence

Lack of club structure/guidance for session content		
Developing club/team content to share is a big ask for volunteers, inexperienced		
Neglect player autonomy	Limited understanding of the complexity of coaching and particularly motivational processes	
Tight control in drills		
Compromise interpersonal aspect of coaching		
Games used as a motivator only		
Drills for learning/games for fun		
Development of wider/complex view of coaching left to chance		

Table 4. Lack of structure to support players and coaches' competence.

Challenges planning coaching sessions

A weekly challenge some of the coaches faced was generating content for their sessions. This was particularly the case when they first started coaching, and they often searched online for drills and activities. The planning process they described was disorganised and stressful for them, and appeared to be done through necessity rather than choice:

Interview responses from Nathan and James

...A lot of the time is spent just googling drills for eight-year-olds... my biggest concern [is]..., 'aw, five minutes to go before training, I need to think of a couple of drill for tonight,' and I'm struggling with that (Nathan).

When I first started, I didn't really know anything, so I was watching YouTube and I was trying to just doctor wee bits for myself, it was chaos, (James).

Kyle and Anthony also recognised challenges with planning. It should be noted that in the quote below by Anthony, different colour teams were used to distinguish between different disability bandings. Furthermore, emphasis has been added to parts of his excerpt which are judged to have particular relevance to a point or theme, and this protocol continues throughout other findings:

Interview response from Kyle and Anthony

There are times where we [are] completely doing it by the seat of your pants and you've seen something on YouTube that looks good, but [it's] with kids who are 14,15, 16, and actually when you start talking you see the 8s and 9 year olds glaze over... We were doing it because we didn't want to run out of ideas, we didn't want to keep doing the same crap week in week out that would just bore the kids (Kyle).

We've done coaching stuff and we've went, 'that's a good drill but we need to lose that part because the reds and the blues wouldn't cope with that, that's a good one for the whites if we move this wee bit here, ...you need to customise a lot more than normal... I don't think there's much support for the likes of our guys because everybody's support needs are different... the SFA do a [para-coaching] course but *it's just to learn how to deal with different disabilities rather than coaching disabilities* [emphasis added], you know what I mean so...we kinda support ourselves really (Anthony).

Kyle's statement also highlights the risk of forcing relatively inexperienced coaches to source drills themselves, as they may use activities that are inappropriate for the athletes they are working with, which jeopardizes athletes' sense of competence if the activity is too difficult, or limits their competence development if the activity is too easy and does not challenge them to improve their performance. The reliance on coaches to source and tailor content appears to be exacerbated when considering coaches working with athletes with disabilities. There is a lack of coach education programmes that are disability specific (Townsend, Huntley, Cushion & Culver, 2021) which can result in inadequate coaching for disabled athletes (Hammond, Jeanes, Penney, & Leahy, 2019) and coaches questioning their competence (Cronin, Ryrrie, Huntley, & Hayton, 2018). Anthony's comments recognise these challenges and risks. Combined, these findings demonstrate limitations in the structure currently being

offered by national governing bodies to support coaches' sense of competence as they attempt to navigate this environment.

Coaches also desired initial assistance with planning session content from their club, as Nathan mentioned, "if you had a wee bit more provided to you, you know, 'here's the striking drill that we would suggest if you're looking to achieve this outcome,' [then that might be easier to do]." Kyle said, "...it is the absence of having something more formal that says, here's the 20 things and resources that we can pull out." On a similar note, the lack of need support the coaches reported experiencing not only had to do with practice preparation, but also coaching targets:

Interview responses from Peter

We have that autonomy to do as we please...I think the one thing that might improve things would be if there was a framework in place that was, 'right ok, we would like A, B, C, D, and E to be covered. How you cover A, B, C, D, [and] E is completely up to you...Because it's something to work towards...there's more than one way to get from A to B. Having the [structure] to know where B is but the autonomy to pick you route from A to B...something [like] that would maybe give us something to work to.

Encouragingly, Peter later went on to report that his standard club had begun increasing the level of direction they were providing the coaches around what they should be targeting in their practice:

Interview response from Peter

...it's [got to] a nice balance because it went from a 'we do whatever we want' to Stewart [the chairman] and Graham were at training for about four weeks every training session, and it was fine for the first couple of weeks and then I was starting to get frustrated with it because I'm thinking to myself, 'you've left us alone for this long, now you're here and you want to do this, this, this, this, and this,' and I was questioning, 'if this is what it's going to be like then it isn't what I signed up for,' and then it's now died now again and there's a nice equilibrium of where it is.

Limited understanding of the complexity of coaching and particularly motivational processes

Wanting to deliver interesting and effective sessions for skill development but struggling to think of ways to do so made the coaches focus on organisation within their sessions at the expense of offering athletes input (i.e., autonomy-support) and showing an interest in them (i.e., relatedness-support), which is need-depriving. More generally

speaking, they felt compelled to prioritise ‘what’ they coached to players over ‘how’ they coached it and ‘who’ they were coaching. Two of the coaches discussed how the preoccupation with ‘what’ to coach and the flow of their practices led to a neglect of the interpersonal side of coaching and players’ psychosocial development:

Interview responses from Kieran and Nathan

I think *initially it was kinda content driven for me* [emphasis added] because it was something that was brand new to me...I’ve almost thought about just the drill, what we’re going to do in the session and then *the boys didn’t really matter* [emphasis added] it’s like I want them to do the drill like a kinda robot (Kieran).

I’m going to [be] dealing with up to 20 youngsters all wanting to tell me stories, all wanting to talk to me, [and] I want to engage with [them] positively but equally I’ve got to try and get these drills set up so it’s massively challenging (Nathan).

The possible consequences of approaching planning for coaching in this way was further illustrated by Nathan, who, at length, discussed how it led him to engage in controlling behaviours by dismissing players’ opinions and using rewards to get their compliance, or compromise their sense of relatedness by excluding some of them of them from activities:

Interview response from Nathan

The challenge is *being quite disciplined* [emphasis added] to research it, to set it up, to get the other coaches understanding it, and then getting the players doing it without them [suggesting other things], *you don’t want to say, ‘well we’re not interested in your ideas,’ but* [emphasis added] you’ve actually got to say, ‘right see for this exercise *we need you to listen and concentrate* [emphasis added] because this is the first time we’ve done this and this isn’t a time for ‘can we do this, can we do that’ ...You’re ultimately wanting to *properly test the exercise* [emphasis added] to: a) to find out if it works, and b) see if they enjoyed it, to see if you’re going to do it again... the challenge is, see when you’re just starting out with the youngsters, and coaches are just starting out as well, you’re literally looking at videos trying to remember the photos on your phone and go out and set it up and then *it can be quite a challenge doing it right* [emphasis added]... it’s the carrot, I’ve said to them several times, ‘*we’re going to [do] games soon but we want to do this drill so we can become better*’ [emphasis added] ...you’re *constantly trying to motivate* [emphasis added] with the limited tools you’ve got, which is game time....There have [also] been occasions in training when you’ve certainly, I

wouldn't use the word excluded but you've *told somebody to step aside* [emphasis added], You wouldn't be doing it to humiliate them...it's not to punish but it's to actually *allow the exercise to continue* [emphasis added] so it doesn't come crumbling to a halt, and then you've got 19 other bodies all standing there thinking, 'this is rubbish,' ...sometimes they are more comfortable if you say, 'no, let's just follow me,' and if they do just follow you inevitably the drills works a wee bit better and they enjoy it a bit better.

The coaches' limited understanding of the importance of interpersonal skills and motivational strategies is emphasised through two of the coaches' confusion with and reluctance to adopt more need-supportive behaviours when first presented with them:

Focus group responses from Nathan and Anthony

The biggest problem, see the first one 'providing choice', see when you've got a group of 20 people, provide choice to 20 [people], you've got 20 opinions, where does that take you? It's that old saying I need to please some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time, and [I] can't please everybody all the time so where you going with it? (Nathan)

We're always trying to instil confidence. You see 'ego' there but I see that as getting confidence up with our guys... 'c'mon you're one of the best players in the team, the younger players look up to you guys, c'mon.' ...I'd be quite happy if somebody was going about thinking they were brilliant, that's good because they're [going to] take that onto the park (Anthony).

Nathan overlooked the key 'within limits' condition of offering players choice, as autonomy support does not suggest total self-regulation by players but rather offers them freedom to make decisions within clear parameters set by the coach. Equally, Anthony confused ego reduction with confidence reduction. In contrast, minimising normative comparison between players is actually to the benefit of their confidence by extending evidence of their performance and improvement beyond competitive success, thereby supporting feeling of competence, especially in comparatively weaker players.

Discussion

The coaches' preoccupation with 'what' to coach is consistent with Nash and Sproule's (2012) finding that learning new drills is the main 'takeaway' from formal coach education for coaches with limited coaching experience. Previous research has shown that for accessibility and time-saving reasons, platforms like Google, YouTube,

and social media channels are utilised by youth coaches who value and rely on the internet as a source of coaching knowledge (Sport Coach UK, 2017; Harvey, Atkinson, & Hyndman, 2020). The challenge faced by these coaches, and documented in a study of 10 academy soccer coaches in Singapore (Koh, Lee, & Lim, 2018), is that the scope of their self-directed searches and appraisals of online resources and generic content is limited to the reach of their current knowledge of coaching and the sport. The implication being that less experienced coaches, like Nathan, may be drawn towards more classical coaching practices like drills and adopt them uncritically. Nash and Sproule (2012) also found that other aspects of coaching such as decision-making, pedagogy, and sports science, by contrast, received limited attention. Exposing new coaches to messages that coaching is simply about running practices risks neglecting the importance of developing high quality relationships with players. From an SDT perspective the opposite may be true.

Although drills and other session-based activities offer key opportunities to improve players' skills and techniques and consequently boost their perceptions of competence, SDT asserts that to optimise a coach's motivational impact they should also offer environmental supports for players' sense of autonomy and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Neither autonomy nor relatedness development appeared to be priorities in the coaches' planning and delivery. For example, Nathan's preoccupation with "doing it right" through replicating drills he has seen delivered in online videos suggests Nathan has learned to view features of these videos as representing a successful and effective coaching session. The often polished and fluid nature of online drill demonstrations may explain Nathan's insistence on making sure his players' "allow the exercise to continue" as he attempts to mirror flawless practice models. These models are arguably detached from the imperfect reality of skill learning, wherein players make mistakes, and indeed should be encouraged to do so in the pursuit of learning, and thus competence development (Dweck, 2009).

In addition to the apparent gap in Nathan's perception of effective coaching practices, the stress he reported experiencing when running drills – which are already relatively controlled activities given the set limitations on players' movements – hints at a potential reluctance from less experienced coaches to include game-based activities within their sessions. This may be due to their less tidy, less coach-controlled nature, making them perceptively more stressful for the coach to 'control learning' (Harvey,

Cushion, & Massa-Gonzalez, 2010). It may also be related to a somewhat naïve perceived dichotomy between drills and games, where the former is viewed as a learning tool while the latter is seen as purely a motivational incentive. For example, Nathan spoke about negotiating with players by promising that “we’re going to [do] games soon but we want to do this drill so we can become better.” This is despite the fact that game-based coaching activities are credible and productive coaching tools in their own right due to their representativeness and ability to train multiple components of performance at once and do so variably (Kinnerk, Harvey, MacDonncha, & Lyons, 2018).

The further irony is that the play-like quality of game-based learning can be intrinsically appealing for players and may in fact reduce the need for coaches to manufacture their engagement through need-thwarting measures (Jarrett & Harvey, 2014). From a psychosocial development perspective, games can also offer opportunities for players to experience feelings of autonomy and relatedness by letting them think and act more independently as well as work together in teams. On the flip side, however, game based coaching activities can also isolate players (e.g., teammates refusing to pass the ball to them) and may not push them out of their comfort zone (e.g., the opposition being too easy to compete against) or provide them with adequate structure to know what to do depending on the level of challenge and instruction they are provided. In these instances, game-based activities can actually jeopardise players’ development of relatedness and competence, respectively.

Furthermore, unlike the more experienced coaches in Koh et al.’s (2018) study who had enough prior knowledge and delivery skills to adapt the content to better suit the needs of the athletes they coach, Nathan, as a relative beginner in coaching, reported focusing on “being quite disciplined to research it, to set it up, to get the other coaches understanding it, and then getting the players doing it without them [suggesting other things]” so that he could “properly test the exercise”. His adoption was very strict and controlling to the point where it negatively impacted the interpersonal dynamics with players due to the incompatibilities between his narrow expectations and his players’ experience and motivation. Coupled together, these findings reveal limitations of a preoccupation with ‘what’ to coach, a reliance on digital coach learning resources, and generic content for less experienced coaches. It also highlights that a lack of perceived competence support for less experienced coaches can damage the confidence they have

in their ability and lead them to make restrictive planning decisions for sessions, which in turn pushes them to engage in maladaptive motivational behaviours towards players.

Interestingly, a separation of the organisational side of coaching from the relational and instructional side of coaching was evident in both Anthony (“it’s just to learn how to deal with different disabilities rather than coaching disabilities”) and Kieran’s (“initially it was kinda content driven for me...the boys didn’t really matter”) reports. An explanation for this is that Anthony and Kieran respectively had five and seven years of coaching experience at the time of data collection compared to Nathan’s two years’ of experience, which hints at the strong impact experiential learning is known to have in the development of coaches’ knowledge (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003). These findings suggest, if left to experience alone, an awareness of looking beyond session content to consider and develop one’s interpersonal skills may develop at different speeds depending on other factors (i.e., context, athletes characteristics, personal influences) that influence coaches’ thoughts and behaviours. For examples, the wide range of disabilities among Anthony’s team and his experience of attempting to not just facilitate practice sessions but also coach challenged him to develop greater understanding of who he was coaching. How formal coach education can widen the syllabus of lower-level courses to ‘speed up’ coaches’ understanding of the complexity of coaching such as interpersonal aspects without overloading beginner coaches is a challenge future researchers should investigate. One example is the Empowering Coaching workshops designed by Duda (2013) which revolve around applying SDT principles when working with players and have an explicit focus on the coach-created motivational environment. However, the high importance the coaches in the present study assigned to learning about football content (i.e., drills and activities) reinforces the importance of integrating sport-specific content with theoretical principles (Langan, Blake, & Lonsdale, 2013) which may be needed to entice coaches to engage.

SDT theorists who consider motivational processes from the coach’s perspective (e.g., Allen & Shaw, 2009; Stebbings et al., 2011; Stebbings et al., 2012; Stebbings et al., 2015) would argue that, like athletes, coaches with unrealistic performance expectations risk damaging their perceptions of competence as they could be prone to judging themselves harshly, which is counterproductive to building confidence and self-belief in one’s ability. They could also be weary of making mistakes, so much so that, in relation to a previous point on activity selection, they may avoid experimenting with

different practices and less ‘safe’ or ‘normalised’ coaching methods (e.g., game-based session content) that have the potential to develop their skills and help them generate better outcomes for their athletes. Coaching environments that allow new coaches learning space to push towards simply being “good enough” (Denison, Jones & Mills, 2019, pp. 1) as they develop are therefore critical. The pressure Nathan felt under to achieve unrealistic standards within his sessions evidently drove him to engage in need-thwarting behaviours he felt would help him achieve these standards (i.e., manufacturing compliance and removing disruption). Arguably the stress Nathan felt around achieving the ‘right’ balances in his coaching practices held back his confidence. His low sense of competence appeared to be lowered further by the lack of guidance and support he believed he was being given by his club.

That several coaches were unclear about what their coaching roles were signals another failed support measure within the Standard club, as setting vague expectations for coaches deprives them of the structure they need to identify relevant tasks and engage in them successfully. Autonomy-supportive yet unstructured, chaotic environments have been shown to stifle the production of autonomous motivation and self-regulated learning habits, albeit in an education-based study carried out with high school students (Vansteenkiste et al., 2012). Therefore, empirical support exists regarding the impact of the imbalance in support provisions described by the coaches. Regarding the implications of this failing from a coaching behaviour standpoint, previous research has shown that coaches’ view of their role can influence the types of behaviours they engage in and the athlete outcomes they target within their practice (e.g., Carroll & Allen, 2021; Potrac, Jones, & Armour, 2002; Nash, Sproule, & Horton, 2008).

Until now, Carroll and Allen (2021) represented the only study framed within SDT to explore this phenomenon, with the authors linking holistic rather performance-oriented role frames with coaching behaviours that focused on supporting athletes’ autonomy instead of exerting coach control, and vice versa. The present finding compliments this work by introducing a third scenario wherein coaches lack clarity on their role and consequently struggle to align their behaviours with any clear targets. The possible consequence being that the coaching environments these coaches create will be less goal-driven and thus similarly confusing (i.e., competence-depriving) for their athletes. At present the negative impact role ambiguity can have on coaches’ sense of

competence and the quality of expectations they then set for their athletes requires closer examination in future work.

Interestingly, Peter felt the chairman and coach mentor Graham had initially become too involved in his practice to the point where he thought the guidance was restrictive, an ironic reverse of the imbalance of too much autonomy and too little structure that he had been accustomed to. This finding highlights the need for competence support from above to retain respect for coaches' sense of autonomy, with the two constructs found to have a synergistic rather than conflicting relationship (Vansteenkiste et al., 2012). Evidently some coaches, like Peter, who are already comfortable with acting independently can be sensitive to changes in their autonomy, which reiterates an earlier point made around the importance of coach developers taking the time to learn how the individuals they work with wish to learn, in order to harmonise the learning process and maximise the quality of their motivation throughout it (Dunn, 2009).

Lack of structure limiting relatedness support amongst coaches

The second sub-theme encompasses how the lack of structure given to the coaches also limited involvement with and amongst coaches and affected their relatedness as they attempted to cope with the challenges of coaching in their environment (see Table 5). The supports the coaches did and did not receive were traceable to their club and coaching team. Each support was shown to impact or at least hold relevance for the coaches' behaviours towards players. This theme captured the limited involvement with other coaches and limited support from others to ease the burden of administrative tasks as part of their coaching role and provide structure through resources and ideas. This included coaches' reluctance to 'get involved' beyond their team, and the responsibility with a team residing with one coach, which affected coaches' motivation and their interactions with players and parents. Three mini-themes were observed: 'who is supporting us?', limited involvement with other coaches and teams, and administrative tasks are a burden.

Raw data theme	Mini-theme	Sub-theme
Left to your own devices	Who is supporting us?	

Too much freedom not enough information		Lack of structure limiting relatedness support amongst coaches
Support from knowledgeable others is valued Who would provide resources/support? Reluctance to ‘get involved’ beyond team due to busy lives Lack of collaboration across club coaches Geographical separation/lack of training base limits collaboration	Limited involvement with other coaches and teams	
Lack of collaboration on administration tasks within teams Administration tasks are part of being the coach Administration tasks have to be done but not desired Lack competence and interest in administrative tasks Unaware of the extent of administrative tasks Running a team takes work	Administrative tasks are a burden.	

Table 5. Lack of structure limiting relatedness support amongst coaches.

Who is supporting us?

Limits to the support for coaches, at a club level, were identified by coaches. Kieran commented, “you can be left a little bit to your own devices... when I started out it was pretty much like, ‘what do I do?’ there wasn’t any, within the club really, there wasn’t any structure there.” Similar experiences were reported by Nathan and Kyle:

Interview responses from Nathan and Kyle

[I came in] thinking that there would be somebody behind me here but when you look over [your] shoulder quite the opposite is the case, there’s nobody there and there’s nobody going to give you strips and if you want to get them you’re gonna need to get them yourself by next Wednesday or whatever...[we’re] going from five aside to seven aside next year and I don’t have a clue, where do we play? How many players do we have? Do we have two teams, do we have one team? I don’t know any of these things (Nathan).

There’s a difference between too much freedom and not enough information. So, sometimes lack of contact can be seen as freedom but it’s not freedom, it’s not knowing enough and that can be a bit of a difficult situations, [like] some of the stuff with games and things that we’ve not known that they’ve just assumed we knew. You maybe think that’s freedom but actually it’s blissful ignorance because you don’t really know what you’re supposed to be doing and that’s not a nice place to be because then your scrambling to try and recover it (Kyle).

Nathan suggested that practice ideas and strategies to improve competence-supportive measures within their club (noted in the previous sub-theme) may be scarce due to the level of coordination and commitment necessary to develop resources, and reluctance from coaches to propose ideas in case they were expected to lead on them, with the demands being such that volunteer coaching staff would struggle to meet them:

Interview response from Nathan

There’s probably nothing to stop it other than, you know, the time taken to find those resources, ...so it doesn’t look like it would be a big ask but I can understand how it would be a big ask, ...who decides that those are the right resources for passing, shooting, defending, who decides what age group they’re best for, who’s going to take ownership for collating them, making them available, circulating them...they’re volunteers and it isn’t their full time job... the problem is...if you’re the person that

puts their hand up, it's dead easy for somebody to come back and say, 'well are you going to do that then?' ...It's going to come right back to you.

Limited involvement with other coaches and teams

A lack of partnerships between coaching teams within the legacy club was also suggested as an explanation for individual coaches perceiving there to be a lack of structure to support their competence and lessen their performance anxiety and stress. However, this dysfunctional network was seen as a by-product of poor coach need-support at a club level, with coaches too preoccupied with their own team's problems to take time to engage and assist with others':

Interview response from Nathan

If you had somebody there that just took you aside and said, 'look we took the sevens last year, this is what happens, this is what the rules are...and here's your starter [kit],' but we get nothing, and that's definitely something we could do better, and I've tried to do it for the team that follows us, I did invite them along to our training session, they didn't come along but I invited them along... I'm sure if I went and asked for it that you'd be welcomed along to whatever age group but you tend to be just kinda fighting fires and before you know it, it's training day and I've got to come up with an hour's worth of drills to keep these 20 bodies happy...[so] to try and get that network up and running [is hard].

Interestingly, Nathan went on to identify the potential role geographical location has in the development of a supportive network at a club without a central training base:

Interview response from Nathan

We train all over the place, our club have got different training nights and different facilities, see if you had a facility block booked for a night ...and the coaches were all there the same night and all you had to do was stay behind for half an hour to watch the later age group, I've kinda discussed this with the chair of the club and there's issues round about getting those block bookings, ...it's great ...in theory but actually being able to provide that [is difficult].

For financial reasons, recreational clubs do not typically own their own training ground, and due to the high demand for public facilities, many of their respective teams practice and play at separate locations, thereby limiting coaching teams' networking opportunities. From Nathan's report we see how two contextual factors (poor structure,

training facilities) might combine to produce need-depriving and -thwarting behavioural outcomes in coaches. This finding is the first of many in this study to corroborate and extend the assertion that antecedent factors do not only influence coaches' behaviours on an individual level, but also act together in an integrated fashion (Côté et al., 1995; Carroll & Allen, 2021; Occhinio et al., 2014).

Although a lack of structure was endemic across the Standard and Legacy clubs, the Standard club coaches were slightly more fortunate in that they had access to an experienced coach, Graham, who worked across the various age groups without being responsible for any one team. Kyle felt that Graham's capacity and willingness to offer mentorship to him and the other coaches went some way towards compensating for the absence of more formalised coach resources:

Interview response from Kyle

You need some advice, it's just like anything really, if you don't get advice and a bit of guidance on how to do it you'll do it to a certain level and then you'll probably just leave it there, you won't get any further... we've been muddling through YouTube and other kinds of stuff, that does help, but Graham, he's dealt with this age group repeatedly before and he just knows how to get them to work... it's just about experience and ideas and how he talks to the kids and how he deals with them.

The competence-supportive role Graham fulfilled at the standard club is demonstrated below:

Fieldnotes of James and Kyle

It's a training night and Graham has come along to practice. Graham has agreed to take the lead for the entirety of the session, but before he begins, he asks James if there is anything he wants to do with the players. James responds by saying, 'No no, you take the lead, I'm happy to go with your lead and learn a bit.' Throughout the session, James assists Graham by helping set up activities and providing encouragement and support to the players as they engage with Graham's drills. He listens to Graham intently, clearly eager to learn from him. Graham leads another session the following week. Before the session starts, Kyle tells Graham about a technical mistake some of the players were making in the last game they played, to which Graham responds with advice as to what the kids could be coached on to improve their performance in this regard.

Not only did Graham assist the coaches in generating content for their sessions, but his competence support also extended to offering them technical and tactical advice to develop their sport knowledge competence and directing them on how to develop relationships – in other words relatedness – with their players. The perceived advantage of having individuals like Graham in community clubs was supported by Kieran who felt his coaching benefited from the relationship he had with a SFA coach who once visited the legacy club. He valued observing an experienced coach coaching, gaining new ideas he could try and being able to discuss his coaching experiences:

Interview response from Kieran

A lad came out from the SFA, [it was] one of the community guys... I think having somebody like that available all the time [would be beneficial], I know it could never happen I know that, cause they come out and work with your club for six weeks then disappear to work with somebody else... but having somebody like that to watch and learn from [is good] ... you can feel kinda reinvigorated like, 'aw I could try this, I could try that,' kinda thing, and [you benefit from] watching these guys work with the kids, and getting ideas off them and speaking to them about things like, 'sometimes I feel like...'

Administrative tasks are a burden

Administrative tasks associated with coaching were a burden for the coaches. Kyle discussed feeling as though more responsibility had been placed on him to complete administrative tasks than the other coaches, and spoke about how their lack of help was negatively affecting his work-life balance and reducing his perceptions of relatedness by making him feel like they cared little about his higher workload:

Interview response from Kyle

There's a lot of [administrative tasks, and]... we met on Tuesday night and I said, 'you guys need to do this because I'm not gonna keep doing the level of stuff I'm doing, from kit ordering, from booking a soccer camp over the summer, to all the liaising about the games, to the money side of it' ... you know I turn up at training on a Tuesday night and often the first fifteen minutes is mums asking questions about games and money and kit and all that kind of stuff...I'm [also] the point of contact for all of the games... an example from a couple of weeks ago, between the other team and our team I had something like 60 WhatsApp messages on a Saturday morning asking questions.

Kyle's story offers a vignette of work-life conflict occurring in a recreational coaching setting. A similar experience was relayed by Peter, but he suggested that he doesn't take that responsibility on anymore. Their experiences also have motivational implications. Kyle's decision to temporarily, but not indefinitely, continue completing multiple administrative tasks to keep the team functioning, and his comments that "it does affect your energy level and your motivation" suggests the situation caused him to become more externally regulated in his motivations towards coaching (i.e., fearing the consequences for the team if he does not continue), bordering on feeling amotivated as he stated that he "can't be bothered doing that" and no longer has "the energy levels to do that and I physically can't juggle everything between work and home and everything else" which aligns with the apathy, passivity, and feeling of helplessness that characterises this motivation type (Deci & Ryan, 2002). In contrast, without administrative duties, Peter's motivations towards coaching seemed to be more about his interest and enjoyment, in other words intrinsic, "I love the fact now I can go in, do what I do", than they were in the past, "it kinda takes over your life a little bit... [it] was the equivalent of having a full-time job. It was too much", and he felt more competent within his role now than before.

Several explanations for how much support a coaching team offers to one another when it comes to the completion of administrative tasks were identified. Peter's comments suggested that memories of being in similar situations can discourage coaches from becoming too involved in running the team, whereas James speaks of lacking the competence and desire to carry out administrative tasks:

Interview response from James

I don't want to do that, see the financial side of stuff, that's not, it's not for me that...if I had to do it, I would do [it] but I would need to be pushed into it, I wouldn't do it voluntarily.

In the legacy club, Anthony made a comment about his experience of filling in for another coach that offers a potential third explanation; obliviousness to other coaches' workloads:

Interview response from Anthony

It's only recently I'm finding out how much she actually does, she's been on holiday for the last week... Vivian usually books all the buses, does all that stuff and I thought, "she needs a hand actually," you know in terms of the paperwork side of things.

Discussion

The feeling of neglect reported by the coaches has clear yet contextually distinct parallels with a finding from Allen and Shaw's (2009) study of eight performance coaches across two organisations. The authors found that some performance coaches felt they were given little structure to support their coaching or help with administrative tasks, much to the detriment of their perceived relatedness and autonomy, since a lack of assistance shows poor recognition of coaches' perspectives and feelings and a lack of care for them. The present finding extends this issue to community coaching settings.

The present finding highlights the importance of more removed counterparts such as external SFA coaches at a governing body level, or head coaches like Graham at an internal club level, being available for less experienced community coaches to potentially use as an alternative source of gaining need support. These individuals were shown to offer guidance on what effective coaching could look like at their level, therefore providing structure and supporting the coaches' competence. Importantly, they also offered them a connection with another coach, to suppress feelings of isolation, and showed care, concern, and interest in them and what they were doing, which could foster a sense of relatedness. Having little or no social support network across a club has been shown to make coaches feel alone and disconnected (Allen & Shaw, 2009). The difficulty Kieran as well as Nathan expressed in accessing coach mentors as one such social support repeats the reality reported by coaches in previous research (Nash & Sproule, 2012), thereby suggesting the issue remains unresolved in some coaching settings and deserves further attention by coach developers and researchers.

While there was no evidence to suggest the lack of support Kyle received with administrative tasks impacted his behaviour with players, previous research has linked work-life conflict with reduced need satisfaction in coaches and controlling interpersonal behaviours towards their players (Stebbins et al., 2012). Furthermore, in a study involving 424 coaches, 102 of whom were recreational coaches, perceiving colleagues and administrators to be unsupportive was linked to the coaches' need-frustration, controlled motivation, and need-thwarting coaching behaviours (Rocchi & Pelletier, 2017). Nathan's account progresses this work by offering qualitative insight

into how poor colleague and administrator support (mainly for competence, offering little guidance; but also relatedness, showing a lack of care and concern) can manifest within a recreational coaching setting, while revealing possible social and environmental constraints on more collaborative, need-supportive efforts between coaches and administrators.

From an SDT perspective, Kyle's and Peters' accounts of their experiences as community sport coaches illuminate the relationship between coaches' stress and their feelings of external pressure. Iachini's (2013) study of high school coaches was the first to examine this relationship and called for further exploration after finding high stress to be a precursor of high external pressure and low autonomy-supportive behaviour towards athletes. The present findings demonstrate how a particular external pressure, administrative duties, can lead coaches to feel overwhelmed and as though they have a lack of control (or autonomy) over their engagement with coaching. Their comments also illustrate the extent of the administrative tasks community coaches need to complete to keep their teams functioning. Evidently this situation whereby one coach handles all the tasks can come about, at least in part, through intentional actions (e.g., in Peter and James' cases) or unintentional ignorance (i.e., in Anthony's case) by other members of a coaching team. As such, alongside exploring the relationship between external pressures, stress, and controlled motivation in coaches, the present study's results reveal contextual factors that increase the potency of administrative tasks as an external pressure for coaches within a community coaching setting.

Summary

In summary, the findings from this lower-order theme explore the difficulties of coaching in a community context from planning, delivery, collegial, and structural organisation perspectives. The coaches mainly reported having low perceptions of competence, alongside unbalanced – and to many of the coaches, unwanted – amounts of autonomy, which seemed to constrain their ability to perform and find stability in the role and encouraged them to display behaviours towards players that were not always conducive to the fulfilment of their basic psychological needs either.

Practical dilemmas

The second lower-order theme reflects the coaches' thoughts on how practical delivery considerations within their role influenced their behaviours. Three specific

factors were identified as sub-themes: conflicting views on the place, role, and management of competition; a time and place for need support, and control; and managing groups effectively is complex and affects need support.

Conflicting views on the place, role, and management of competition

Changes in the coaches' approach were reported during training sessions and matches. More specifically, these adaptations came in response to 'boring' training practices and matchday events. This sub-theme comprised two mini-themes: "they do need the carrot" with "boring" practices; and matchdays – competition, overcoaching and the importance of winning (see Table 6).

Raw data theme	Mini-theme	Sub-theme
Promise of rewards to encourage players to engage Use of contests to boost intensity Competition prepares players for performance SFA player pathway influences training emphasis	"They do need the carrot" with "boring" practices	Conflicting views on the place, role, and management of competition
Coaches' believe winning is important to players Players need to experience winning to feel they had a positive experience It's not all about winning, but... Strongest team selected Players' discouraged from taking on different positions	Matchdays – competition, overcoaching and the importance of winning	

Value to team for team to be successful		
Change in coach behaviour – more serious/less humour		
Lack of for independent decisions during open play		
Parents pressure to be directive		
Coaches' appetite for competing		
Coaches enjoy winning		
Critical of mistakes		
Strict commands		
Coaches can be impulsive/reactive		

Table 6. *Conflicting views on the place, role, and management of competition.*

“They do need the carrot” with “boring” practices

Kyle claimed that he, as well as the rest of his coaching team, would often use the promise of rewards to encourage players to engage with training activities they found less interesting:

Interview response from Kyle

So stuff that's competitive, [like a] little five on five, it might be nothing more than a sprinting challenge ...they'll never need carrots [rewards] to do that [type of activity], they'll always want to do that...But... things that appear quite slow and quite *boring* [emphasis added] to them [and] are all about how they develop their technique... they do need the carrot that says... ‘if you give us 10 minutes of good hard work at that, if you concentrate at this, [then] we'll give you 20 minutes of a game at the end,’ ...[we] probably do that most weeks.

Placing players in competitive practices also seemed to be a common solution for the standard club coaches. Nathan commented, “that’s how you hook them.” Kieran used contests in training to counter the lesser effort he felt players put into non-competitive and/or unopposed practices:

Interview response from Kieran

We will do non-competitive stuff with the boys, we do kinda passing drills or whatever that are non-competitive but...when you watch them, I just think it doesn’t fire the boys [up], they just kinda go through the motions, but as soon as you give them like a competitive element...it switches them on, so if you want that intensity...you just get a little more out of them [using competition].

Kieran also reported that he and his coaching team used competition to prepare their players for performing in the more result focused matchday environments they were transitioning into:

Interview response from Kieran

I didn’t really do anything competitive [when the players were younger], it was more just getting the ball at their feet...because...I just felt at that age they maybe weren’t ready for it... whereas then when it becomes [eleven aside], all of a sudden it just became competitive for them, all of a sudden they’re in a competition....that’s when we started going, ‘right lets maybe with the training make it more competitive for them, because they’re going to be in that environment anyway.’

Matchdays – competition, overcoaching and the importance of winning

The coaches’ handling of and enthusiasm towards competition in youth sport also influenced their behaviour during matches. In this setting the coaches’ actions appeared to be triggered by their judgement of what their players valued most on match days, specifically winning. James and Nathan believed their players focused on winning matches and that their players needed to experience winning to feel they had a positive experience. This drove them to be competitive in matches and change their behaviours (e.g., use of humour), in the hopes that doing so might increase their chances of winning “for them” (James):

Interview responses from James and Nathan

It's not all about winning but you don't want to put a team out every week where they're losing every game, *the enjoyment drains out of it, they don't turn up [emphasis added]*...it becomes like a downward spiral (Nathan).

I want them to win for them [emphasis added]...in their heads you only have fun if you win... at this age group there's not a points system, no one counts goals but obviously the wains do in their heads, they know who's won and who hasn't won... In the middle of [training] games... they're having fun with it so you just keep the fun going...just keep joking with them, they seem to enjoy that... *in a game [match] the wains take it serious [emphasis added]*, they shouldn't but they do...[I'm] less likely to do it [use humour in a game] because [I] don't know how it would work because in their head it's like the biggest game ever (James).

However, the coaches also admitted to their own competitive drivers. Several coaches mentioned how they wanted to win at competitive activities. Kieran hinted that he carries his appetite for competing with him when coaching. Nathan commented: "as a person I'm probably more competitive than your average person." Somewhat at odds with his messages to players, James classed the desire to win as a natural desire: "We're trying to tell them it's not about winning, just play the game, just enjoy it, if you win or lose it shouldn't matter, and it shouldn't matter, but as humans we all like to win let's face it." Furthermore, James suggested coaches in the community sport environment may be responding to judgements made by onlooking parents who give off the impression that they expect coaches to be directive:

Interview response from James

[At] the game last week my team won 9-1 over two games, but the other team, Graham's team got beat 3-0 and 7-6, and the parents from the other team are telling me, 'there's no structure... they're just all running about after the ball.'

Whether it was to support players' desire to win or be competitive on matchdays, manufacture wins for themselves, or in response to pressure from parents, there were changes in the coaches' behaviours on matchday. It led Nathan to discourage players from taking on different roles in the team, in favour of highlighting and utilising their individual skillsets and the roles suited to them:

Interview response from Nathan

Everybody wants to be a centre-forward... and you've got to tell some of them, 'actually that's not where your strength lies just now... you're more value to the team [in this position], '... it's to include everybody but also be a relatively successful team as well.

It also led coaches to limit opportunities for players to make independent decisions. Instead, coaches appeared to dictate decisions almost on a pass-by-pass level:

Fieldnotes of Nathan and Kieran

Nathan is coaching his team during a match at a football festival. At one point a loose ball speeds towards the side-lines. As it does, Nathan shouts to a player, 'Go X, keep it in!'

Kieran is coaching his team during a match. Kieran shouts, 'in here!' pointing towards where he wants the right midfielder to go and the right back to pass. On another occasion, Kieran's team score a goal, and he immediately starts telling the players where he wants each pass to go as they get the ball.

Interview responses from Nathan and Kieran

Maybe as games are closer [in score] or... more important... yeh you can have to raise your voice, 'I need you to get back, get back now!' I would say that's a weekly occurrence (Nathan).

I could maybe put it down as [trying to offer] a bit of guidance...to help them make the right decision...I know it's not important for me for them to win, it genuinely isn't, but I think for them...it is, so I'm kinda trying to... maybe *help them along that path* [emphasis added] (Kieran).

Observations of the coaches indicated that sometimes their 'competitive impulses' did take over, as they were occasionally seen responding critically and/or aggressively to mistakes by players that jeopardized the score line, even at the risk of damaging players' perceptions of competence and relatedness:

Fieldnotes of Kieran and Nathan

Kieran is coaching his team during a match at a football festival, and at one point the players lose possession of the ball straight away from a goal kick and allow the opposition to penetrate the midfield and take a shot on goal. This mistake angers both Kieran and his coaching staff, and he shouts, 'C'MON, HEY!' in frustration of what had happened.

Nathan is coaching his team during a match at a football festival, and his team is losing. At half-time, Nathan gathers the team round and says, among other things, 'X, your attention span was zero in that game... We're a bit of a disaster at the back... You can't moan at anyone Y, you've been really lazy today.' The criticisms were very bluntly given, and Nathan placed far more emphasis on what the team was doing wrong rather than right. The players appeared rather solemn in reaction to these comments.

James commented that: "It goes that fast, I don't even think about it, it just comes out my mouth... because we lost a lot of goals from just trying to take people on...it just comes [out] as the game unfolds." Nathan also alluded to the risk of engaging in impulsive behaviours on matchdays when speaking about one of the ways he can react when he feels his players are receiving poor treatment by the opposition:

Interview response from Nathan

There's times where maybe you'll get involved sometimes, shouting out, not necessarily swearing or anything like that but just shouting out because *you're over enthusiastic about somebody who has put a tackle in* [emphasis added] on one of your players cause *you do naturally feel quite protective about it* [emphasis added], but you need to reflect, you need to step back and think, 'well, actually that's not a positive thing to do,' and we're all human beings, we do react like that sometimes.

The coaches were not oblivious to the potential consequences of their preoccupation with the score line on match days. Indeed, Nathan showed clear awareness that focusing his efforts towards staying competitive in a match could require neglecting his other desire to provide players with equal game time:

Interview response from Nathan

If you're telling everyone you're going to have equal game time then you need to be making sure you're watching your watch to make sure there's equal game time and that's where you get that conflict, if it's two each [in the match, and] you get two maybe less abled players waiting to come on and you know it's tight and you take two of your good players off that's a real big challenge.

Discussion

The Standard club coaches' tendency to use external incentives to boost players' engagement in activities considered naturally less stimulating downplays the presence of more intrinsic drivers in sport participants (in this case, to improve and get better at

one's sport), and hints at a lack of awareness around the motivational consequences of external ones. Frequently promoting players' engagement in more "boring" activities as a pathway to something better (e.g., a practice involving competition) risks reducing their intrinsic interest in these activities further, thereby creating a situation where these athletes begin or continue to require extrinsic incentives to engage in them (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). The situations and responses described by Kyle are therefore contradictory and representative of a controlling self-fulfilling prophecy that likely creates the very engagement problems they experience when delivering activities that may have less initial intrinsic lure for players. A possible attributing factor for this situation appears to be that the coaches had limited understanding of how to engage and motivate athletes through activities beyond the introduction of external stimuli. Need-supportive alternatives might include providing a rationale for completing the task to promote identified regulation with the requested behaviours (i.e., players understand the benefit and thus engage more volitionally as a result), or acknowledging players' perspectives around the less stimulating aspects of these exercises and giving them meaningful input in adjusting conditions to make them more appealing (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). The present findings therefore highlight a potential limitation in coaches' knowledge of motivational workarounds to engagement problems that coach developers and researchers could target and/or investigate further.

Interestingly, there are different interpretations of the use and consequence of using opposed versus unopposed practices in the coaches' responses, which necessitates discussion around the complicated motivational impact of coaches using competition within their practice. Coaches can use competition in training without focusing on the results, in contrast to Kieran's worry about the drawback of players entering a "competitive football" phase in their development. And the outcome does not need to be entirely damaging to players' psychological needs. To illustrate, the presence of an opposition for players can make a training activity more representative of the parent game that they are preparing for, which allows players to attach more meaning to the activity and their participation, leading to more volitional engagement (Orth, van der Kamp, & Button, 2019). Equally, opposition players offer additional challenges which, when moderated effectively, can support players' need to feel and in time become more competent, and consequently encourage them to take on further challenges (Torres & Hager, 2007). Lastly, in team sports like football, working in a team can foster feelings

of closeness and togetherness between players, thereby supporting their collective need for relatedness and fuelling their autonomous motivation.

It is when the outcome component of competition is treated as the focus of an opposed practice that motivational problems are likely to develop due to the emphasis being placed on normative comparison. Normative comparisons are problematic for the promotion of self-determined motivation because they place players' self-esteem under threat, which can drive ego-involvement whereby players focus their energy on showing superiority over others or at least not appearing inferior in order to feel competent. This imposed performance rather than self-set learning goal has been found to reduce sport participants' intrinsic motivation (Duda & Balaguer, 2007; Ntoumanis & Biddle, 1999). It can also discourage individuals from putting effort into tasks or taking on reasonable challenges, despite the opportunities appropriately challenging tasks provide to increase one's ability and perceptions of competence, since doing so risks highlighting (or in the affected person's mind exposing) their present weaknesses in comparison to others (Dweck, 1986).

Of course, the constant use of opposed practices, regardless of whether it is delivered in a need-supportive fashion can inadvertently cause ego-involvement to manifest in players by frequently putting them into winning and losing situations where some degree of normative comparison is inevitable. But the fact that the use of competition need not be entirely negative for players' need satisfaction and motivation appears to be lost on Kieran based on his response, as he appears to interpret the use and impact of competition without nuance. This mindset aligns with a popularised rhetoric in coaching that vilifies the use of competition in youth sport (Torres & Hager, 2007), and until now there have been little attempts to temper this view in the SDT literature, where competition has been narrowly presented as purely a means of normative comparison and therefore a destructive force for adaptive forms of motivation (e.g., Bartholomew et al., 2009; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). In reality, competition as a training modality is arguably indifferent to the satisfaction of players' psychological needs, with its implementation determining the shape and role it goes on to take. Future research should seek to explore and collect evidence around the differing motivational effects of coaching environments that focus on competition to compare and separate players, versus those that use competition as a potent incentive and development tool, in order to support or add further caveats to the present argument. In

line with the call for more nuance, a middle ground approach also exists that is worth testing. Indeed, within the Positive Coaching Alliance and Positive Coaching Scotland double goal coach strategy, competitive goals are embraced as part of plans that support players' perceptions of autonomy and competence by focusing on individual improvements and making them feel capable of achieving outcomes that are personally meaningful to them, winning sometimes being one of them ("in a game [match] the wains take it serious" [James]). Gathering and comparing evidence on the motivational outcomes of these different approaches work may help in generating more balanced knowledge about what competition means and how it is best utilised in youth coaching.

Notably on matchdays, there was apparent misalignment between coaches' judgement about the importance players place on winning, the coaches' priorities (player development, enjoyment), their own desire to win, and their actions (selecting the strongest team, telling players what to do during matches, use of humour). The contradiction of telling players to ignore the competitive element of matches and yet behaving in ways that suggest winning is important could push players to view coaches' words as disingenuous and internalise ego-promoting actions instead. Not only is this difficult for the coaches but it has potential consequences for the players' need satisfaction and motivation.

The differing behaviours by the coaches during matches compared to training sessions closely mirrors the findings of recent research by Smith et al., (2017) on 17 grassroots youth football coaches, wherein the authors observed a significant emphasis being placed on disempowering (controlling and relatedness-thwarting) rather than empowering (autonomy-supportive, task-involving, structured, and relatedness-supportive) behaviours across these two settings. Although not statistically significant, they also observed a tendency for coaches to emphasise ego-involving goals in matches, and together these results align with the present evidence showing James reducing his use of humour (i.e., relatedness-depriving), Nathan adopting a colder communication stance (i.e., relatedness-thwarting), selecting his strongest team to start matches (i.e., ego involving and therefore controlling), and discouraging players from stretching their abilities (e.g., competence-thwarting), and both Nathan and Kieran directing players (i.e., controlling) and allowing little opportunity for them to experiment and self-correct (i.e., autonomy- and competence-depriving). The present study builds on Smith et al.'s work by suggesting that these behaviours in part manifest because coaches assume

players are overly concerned about the score line in matches, and therefore feel the need to direct their behaviours towards assisting them in winning to support their desires in this moment, or as Kieran put it “help them along that path.” This explanation raises questions over the accuracy of coaches’ judgements on their players’ focus around winning.

Equally, the findings question how responsible coaches and their behaviours may be for players holding such views in the first place. That is because the same self-fulfilling prophecy detected in the coaches’ beliefs around the need to incorporate extrinsic incentives within training activities to increase players’ interest and engagement is arguably repeating itself here (and perhaps even compounding the matchday issue by reinforcing a preoccupation with external drivers), as each of the coaches’ matchday behaviours can be interpreted as contributing factors for why players might “take it serious” (James) (e.g., “Reminding them, ‘it’s really important you stay in that position, I need you to stay at the back,’” [Nathan]), and consequently why the coaches see their role as being about satisfying this desire rather than shifting players’ motivation towards more task-oriented, need-supportive goals. Future research is needed to validate the legitimacy of these claims, possibly by comparing coaches’ and their athletes’ perceptions in this regard, and by asking athletes why they might place high or low importance on winning to see what role their coach has in them carrying either mentality.

The term ‘overcoaching’ has been used repeatedly across coaching literature to describe an overly involved coaching process that restricts rather than nurtures athletes’ learning potential (e.g., Janz, 2009; O’Connor, Larkin, & Höner, 2020), but until now overcoaching has not been conceptualised under an SDT paradigm. The present findings position overcoaching as controlling and directing players to the point of constraining their need for autonomy, which hinders their competence development by reducing the decision making component of their performance (cf. Carpentier & Mageau, 2013). A possible next step for research is to track differences in the impact of high versus low frequency in-game directives from coaches on players’ decision-making skills, in the hope that practice-based evidence might be generated that promotes more purposeful, autonomy-supportive handling of players in game situations.

Several of the accounts demonstrate the inherent emotionality of coaching (Potrac, Smith, & Nelson, 2017). Evidently, powerful emotions such as those experienced by coaches on a match day (e.g., worry, excitement, anger) may push them towards displaying reactive behaviours that not only neglect or actively thwart players' needs – as was the case with James where he worried about them conceding a goal – but also support their needs too. Indeed, Nathan admitted that his “protective” and “over enthusiastic” reactions made him quick to voice displeasure at fouls on his players, and this caring, albeit extreme response can be interpreted as related-supportive because it communicates that he cares enough about his players to look out for them. PE teachers who were noticed by students spotting and publicly addressing negative social events happening in their classroom were considered supportive of students' relatedness (Sparks et al., 2015). The fact that both adaptive and maladaptive coaching behaviours came out of the coaches' competitive desires in these moments aligns with findings that suggest coaches can display need-thwarting, -depriving, and -supportive behaviours simultaneously (Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011).

The misalignment between coaches' comments and actions reflect the innate challenge coaches regularly face in managing contradictory tensions in their practice. The tension Nathan was feeling in the substitution scenario was over whether to promote an ego (i.e., keep his strongest players on and coach to win) or task (i.e., bring weaker players on and coach to develop) orientation on match days, knowing that whichever direction he chooses can have both positive (e.g., staying competitive and perhaps winning the game, or every player getting equal opportunity to play and develop their skills) and negative (e.g., players of weaker ability feeling rejected, or “[when] they're losing every game, the enjoyment drains out of it, they don't turn up” – an earlier quote) consequences for his players, respectively, but never knowing exactly which outcomes will occur or to what degree, in order to make decisions with more certainty and ease. Contradictions such as this are known as coaching paradoxes (Barnson, 2014), and the present findings are useful in qualitatively illustrating, from a combined SDT perspective, the inherent messiness of the coaching process, wherein coaches must constantly choose between muddled and conflicting options on how to motivate their players via autonomous or more controlled incentives. Showing an internal debate that coaches like Nathan may engage in when attempting to support the needs of *each* and *all* of their players at once offers a practical conundrum for future

research in this area to investigate and build potential solutions around. This work could go some way towards answering the call for coaching theorists to present a “fuller picture of coaching” (Barnson, 2014, p. 381) when investigating individual topics, such as the antecedents of coaches’ behaviours.

A time and place for need support, and control

This sub-theme captured both the conditions and justifications on which coaches (for the most part) deliberately engaged in behaviours that provided need support or underlined coach control. It comprised three mini-themes: opportunities for athletes to input is limited, perceived time pressures restrict need support, and the physical environment, mood, feelings, and behaviours (see Table 7).

Raw data theme	Mini-theme	Sub-theme
Autonomy reserved for superficial moments	Opportunities for athletes to input is limited	A time and place for need support, and control
End of year autonomy		
Kids don’t care why they’re doing something	Perceived time pressures restrict need support	
Offering choice wastes time during sessions		
More space for player conversations during longer sessions		
Bad weather reduces mood and intrinsic motives to engage	The physical environment, mood, feelings, and behaviours	
Use of commands with poor weather to keep players warm		

Less patient with misbehaviour during poor weather		
Warm weather offers feel good factor across group		

Table 7. A time and placement for need support, and control.

Opportunities for athletes to input is limited

A common theme across the coaches was that they tended to reserve their athletes' most meaningful input for the warm-up section of practice. James commented, "sometimes I'll go and I'll ask the kids, 'what do you want to do?' instead of me telling them what to do." Peter's view was that warm-ups are a more appropriate time to accommodate players' input because it will not typically encroach on the coaches' control over the main segment of sessions.

Interview response from Peter

Interviewer: Are the kids involved in decisions?

Peter: A little bit in terms of, the kids will ask, 'can we do this tonight?' Sometimes we'll say, 'yeh ok we can do that,' and squeeze it in, and it would be like playing Pac-man in the warm up instead of going for a wee run... there's times when you have to say no because as three adults who run a football team for kids and, 'adults know better,' *laughs* if we have our own objective and that would interfere with the objective then more than likely it would be a no.

In contrast to Peter's and James' irregular input opportunities for players, Nathan, reported a more consistent use of this behaviour. However, he admitted to it being an unplanned measure that "just happened" without much intentional thinking or planning:

Interview response from Nathan

[During] warm-ups...we try and invite the boys to [suggest ideas], 'Is there something you want to do? Has anybody learned a trick? Would anyone like to demonstrate stuff?'...one of the other coaches just introduced that almost *just by osmosis it just happened* [emphasis added], it wasn't as if we sat and had a chat to say, 'what will we

do this week, will we get the boys to come up with things?’ we were just doing our normal routines where you shout commands [and] one, two, three, four are different moves, [like] roll back and turns, outside of foot, inside of foot, and it just became, ‘anybody else got a wee trick they’d like to try out for number four?’ and they had all these Ronaldo chops and keepie-uppies and it actually gets the boys buying into it a wee bit more, so that’s a really positive way of trying to have a strategy of involving them without having to plan for very much.

Anthony, meanwhile, spoke about a willingness to take on board players’ suggestions at the end of a period of practice: “Well sometimes they’ll suggest stuff, [and] if come the end of the training year...they say, ‘we’re fed up with that, can we try something different?’ [we’ll say], ‘right ok we’ll try’.”

Perceived time pressures restrict need support opportunities

Feeling under time pressure during training sessions was a common reason for limiting the use of interpersonal strategies. Daniel commented, “Don’t think there’s any point wasting time explaining why you need to warm up at that age because they’re never gonna understand or care.” James mentioned how time restrictions compelled them to reduce the level of rationale they offered athletes for tasks, with James also feeling constrained in how much guidance he could provide players around tasks:

Interview response from James

I don’t think an hour is enough... [it goes past in the] blink of an eye, by time we do a couple of wee routines and give them a game at an end that’s it finished...If you’ve got two hours you can sit and talk to them ...and explain to them rather than just saying, ‘right you go to that cone and you go to that cone and pass it, pass it there and pass it there.’

Another need-supportive measure, offering meaningful choice, was also withheld from athletes due to perceived time pressures. Kyle commented: “I don’t think we’ve got time to come down here half an hour before it starts to set up six different drills, [then] split them in two groups.” James held a similar view: “Going in there and saying like, ‘right, what do you wanna do?’ that’s a good five, ten minutes wasted and as I say it’s only an hour you get, so it’s the time.” Nathan said, “you would have chaos and it’s really time critical, that time to coach them.”

Coaches recognised there were potential interpersonal benefits if coaches felt under less time pressure. James reported that he would be inclined to act in a less commanding manner (therefore less controlling) and give more “leeway” in terms of allowing non-task related conversations to take place between teammates:

Interview response from James

If you’ve got two hours then maybe you’ve got a wee bit more *leeway* [emphasis added], they can get a wee bit more freedom, I suppose. It wouldn’t be like regimental, “oh you need to do this, you need to [do that]” ... Maybe they’re having a laugh with their pal and they’re not listening, they’d maybe get away with that more in two hours. If you’ve only got an hour you need to say, ‘listen lads, c’mon we’ve only got an hour.’

However, they also recognised it was not a simple solution, as James went onto explain: “Time is precious to people...people have got other responsibilities... I would make time to [coach for longer], it’s more about just if other parents could make it, [if] other coaches could.”

The physical environment, mood, feelings, and behaviours

Another contextual factor found to influence the coaches’ need supportive behaviours was the weather. Coaching outdoors when it was raining, cold, and/or snowing negatively affected the coaches’ and players’ mood, which made the coaches act more controlling towards players whom they felt were becoming distracted by the conditions and subsequently misbehaving or putting less effort into drills and activities:

Fieldnotes of Peter and Kyle, and interview response from Kyle

It’s the beginning of a training session on a warm sunny night, and the coaches are playing a game where they chase their players with a ball as part of a fun warm up. There is a very relaxed mood about the place, and the coaches seem noticeably jolly and laid back. Peter can be seen catching a player by intercepting his ball with a pass, exclaiming “YES!” as he does. The player laughs and stands still pretending to be a tunnel as the rules of the game stipulate, waiting for a teammate to free him by passing their ball through his legs. Kyle is a chaser too, joking and laughing with players as he attempts to catch them. The pair later explain the effect the weather has on their mood.

Kyle: When we’re doing that kind of warm up and *the sun’s shining and everything’s mellow* [emphasis added] and you’re laughing and you’re messing about, compared to when the *weather’s grim and you’re zipped up and traffic is slow* [emphasis added]... I

think everyone would be in a bit of a bad mood to be honest... you tend to see the boys not concentrating... and it does show, I mean *I've seen us getting a wee bit more shouty* [emphasis added], cause we think they're messing about a wee bit and not paying attention... you know, you want them to work hard as *we're all here in the bad weather, you want them to keep warm* [emphasis added] and move about... so I think it does have an effect on you... I'm a wee bit more, *less patient* [emphasis added] about messing about... when we're wrapped up and it's snowing... I'd be *less tolerant* of stuff... cause you just want to stick to what you're doing and get on with it and get home...but it's just cause you're trying to get as much out the session as you can, *you're trying to keep them going and not standing about getting cold*, you want to try and keep them on the move for an hour when the weather is that bad, but *when the weather is good it's, everyone's in better humour*...

Discussion

The comments suggested the coaches held a specific view of the role of the coach, one where the coach should decide on what is important and needed for the players under their charge. The impact this view had on their behaviour is similar to the recent findings of Carroll and Allen (2021), wherein coaches were shown to engage in specific autonomy-supportive or controlling behaviours that were congruent with their coaching beliefs. The results of more general coaching research have also identified a translation of role related coaching beliefs into coaching behaviours (Potrac et al., 2002; Nash et al., 2008; Gilbert & Trudel, 2004), which further corroborates the pattern seen in the present finding. Furthermore, the worry that too much athlete input might “interfere” with the coaches fulfilling their session objectives suggests a coach-centred personal orientation, whereby the desires and wishes of the coach are prioritised over those of the athletes (Kidman, 2005). However, opportunities for athlete ownership were not erased entirely from coaches’ practice but only when convenient. The attitude that control should lie with the coach was epitomised by Peter’s comical assertion that “adults know better”. This alludes to the challenge coaches face in meeting the learning ‘needs’ of players (through offering clear structure that is led/controlled by the coach) without ignoring their learning ‘wants’ (through offering opportunities for player autonomy) (Allen & Cooper, 2018; Chelladurai, 2007). A conditional approach to offering player input within training session also demonstrates the interacting effects of multiple antecedent factors – in this case personal orientation and activity type – on coaches’ behaviours (Occhino et al., 2014). This finding builds upon recent evidence

gathered by Carroll and Allen (2021) that showed a youth football coach's personal orientation to be indirectly influencing behavioural changes coaches reported making when coaching female versus male athletes. Therefore, there is reason to believe that having a coach-centred personal orientation may result in coaches holding cautious attitudes towards autonomy-supportive provisions and limit opportunities for athlete input and ownership to perceptibly superficial moments (e.g., the warm-up).

Giving athletes input in decisions as well as leadership opportunities can be instrumental in making them feel in control of an activity and their participation within it (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003), and the fact that both James and Peter were very casual in their already restricted provision of autonomy support suggests an underappreciation of the importance of meeting the need for athlete autonomy within the coaching process. Instead, player input was viewed as more of a relatedness-supportive technique ("make them feel...involved in the club" [James], "a strategy of involving them" [Nathan]). While valid in the sense that being offered input in decisions indirectly signifies one's acceptance within a social group, this approach understates the central message of players having ownership over their actions.

The limited intent Nathan appeared to have towards planning more autonomy-supportive activities after discovering the benefits of letting athletes decide on rules (suggested by his judgement that it's "a really positive way of...involving them without having to plan for very much") is of particular interest because it illustrates part of what coaches who are oblivious to the need to empower players may miss out on. That being a conscious assimilation of serendipitous opportunities presented within their environment for empowering players, so that the discovered benefits can be fully recognised and importantly built upon in a deliberate manner. Having more knowledge around SDT and coaching may reduce the chance of motivationally adaptive coaching behaviours only developing accidentally (or by "osmosis"), if at all. This finding shines a light on the important role reflective practice can play in the quality of the coach-created motivation environment through its potential impact on coaches' learning and future planning. It also demonstrates the applied importance of coaches learning about SDT so that they are equipped with a lens through which to analyse and reflect on their coaching practice, thus aiding the consistency and transference of adaptive forms of behaviours when they manifest for the first time, planned or unplanned.

When players were given opportunities for input it was always on the periphery of organised training routines (e.g., warm-up, end of season). In longitudinal assessments of the motivational environment perceived by athletes across competitive seasons, coach autonomy support has typically been found to be stable across periods of training (Adie et al., 2012; Stenling & Lindwall, 2015). However, in a study conducted by Reinboth and Duda (2006) involving 128 university athletes, increases in perceived need satisfaction were recorded 6-8 weeks before the conclusion of most teams' seasons. Furthermore, in a study investigating a competitive synchronised swimming team coach's perception of fun in youth sports, the coach discussed reserving what she took to be 'fun' activities (those without any obvious achievement or performance related goals, and containing a social [or relatedness-supportive] element) for non-competitive periods (namely pre- and post-season), as she, like others in the study, deemed the pursuit of fun and success in competition to be conflicting agendas (Bengoechea, Streat, & Williams, 2004). Future research examining reasons behind other periodic changes in the coach-created motivational environment could provide insight into maladaptive fluctuations.

Research by both Carroll and Allen (2021) and Cooper and Allen (2020) found perceived time pressure to reduce coaches' use of autonomy-supportive strategies with their athletes. The present findings were similar but also extended to the provision of structure. Perceived time pressures limited the coaches' use of other behaviours that support autonomy and competence such as explaining the importance of tasks (autonomy supportive) and offering players clear and detailed instructions for completing tasks (structure) which foster volitional and confident engagement (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Coaches were also found to use more controlling statements. Avoiding controlling statements limits the level of pressure athletes feel under to behave in a particular way (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Furthermore, findings transferred from a PE teaching setting suggest that facilitating playful interactions between teammates can help them bond and develop a sense of relatedness with one another (Sparks et al., 2015).

A necessary ingredient for overcoming time constraints is believing in the value of making a coaching environment more autonomous, and James and Nathan's explanation of how they handle time pressures within their practices indicates that that they see the action of offering choice as something that is separate from coaching (e.g.,

“ten minutes wasted” [James], “it’s really time critical, that time to coach them” [Nathan]). These accounts suggest that the act of coaching in their eyes involves completing and feeding back on practice drills, which is a rather restricted view of what coaching can entail, one where the need to develop players’ competence is prioritised over the need to help them feel autonomous. Carroll and Allen (2021) observed the same mindset in recreational football and swimming coaches, where autonomy-supportive practices were judged to be wasteful in the coaches’ main pursuit of competence development. However, autonomy-supportive practices can actually enhance players’ development of competence by offering them non-restrictive guidance during activity engagement, thereby promoting volitional functioning which strengthens their intrinsic pursuit of skill mastery for higher quality long term motivation (Vansteenkiste et al., 2012). Indeed, a recent study on 527 youth soccer players found that coach autonomy support increased the frequency of additional practice by players across a season (Gjesdal, Wold, & Ommundsen, 2019). Together, these observations emphasise the need to shift responsibility for controlling coaching behaviours away from time constraints – which are an inevitability in coaching – and focus instead on developing an understanding of the internal and external issues that influence how coaches respond to time constraints (Carroll & Allen, 2021). This strategy should aid future research in producing recommendations that achieve meaningful impact in coaches’ practice.

With regards to the influence of weather on coaches’ need supportive behaviours, previous research by Cooper and Allen (2020) also found that in adventure sport coaching, poor weather and potentially dangerous water conditions forced otherwise largely autonomy-supportive coaches to be more controlling in their behaviours to participants. Interestingly, similar to Cooper and Allen, at the centre of the coaches’ more controlling strategies when coaching in poor weather seemed to be concern for players’ safety (i.e., warmth when training in cold conditions). Therefore, the coaches’ behaviour might be considered controlling yet discreetly relatedness-supportive, in that they were showing care and concern for their players, albeit under the public guise of commanding their compliance, and with the aid of extrinsic incentives. This observation demonstrates the difficulty in accurately assessing coach-athlete interactions due to the subjective and context bound nature of behaviours. Thus, the challenge for researchers is to minimise the potential for wrongly classifying need-

supportive behaviours as -depriving or -thwarting, or vice versa, by considering coaches' intentions or reasoning for behaviours. It is equally important that coaches ensure the good intentions behind these more complicated actions are appreciated by the player(s) they are working with, since it is ultimately how a task/instruction is experienced, rather than intended, which determines its general effects on motivation (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Encouraging coach practice in this regard was documented in Cooper & Allen (2020), wherein adventure sport coaches took more control of situations where their participants communicated feeling nervous or lacking confidence, without it damaging the participants' perceptions of a need-supportive environment. Future research around this topic may benefit from consulting both coach and athlete viewpoints (e.g., Cooper & Allen, 2020; Smith et al., 2016).

Managing groups effectively is complex and affects need support

Working effectively with groups was a prominent issue coaches considered during session delivery which influenced their behaviours and in turn the support given for players' psychological needs. This sub-theme covered three mini-themes: 'man-power', confidence, and ability as determinants of providing need support to large groups; balancing player autonomy with threat of misbehaviour in large group settings; and relatedness support as a neglected need in large group settings (see Table 8).

Raw-data theme	Lower-order theme	Sub-theme
Small groups allow for leadership opportunities	‘Man-power’, confidence, and ability as determinants of providing need support to large groups	Managing groups effectively is complex and affects need support
Small groups allow for one-to-one coaching for better structure and input		
Controlling behaviours avoid misbehaviour in larger groups	Balancing player autonomy with threat of misbehaviour in large group settings	
Large group size, limited time, and low coach		

numbers limits autonomy support		
Curbing misbehaviour requires restricting player- player interaction	Relatedness support as a neglected need in large group settings	
Less ability to notice events and respond in large groups		
Poor coach-to-player ratio prevents team bonding events being organised		

Table 8. Managing groups effectively is complex and affects need support.

‘Man-power’, confidence, and ability as determinants of providing need support to large groups

The next identified contextual factor concerns the coach-to-player ratio, and the impact it has on coaches’ behaviours depending on how comfortable (or not) each coach feels with the number of players they have to manage in practice sessions. Having a lower, and therefore perceptibly more manageable number of athletes per coach made several of the coaches feel inclined to provide autonomy-supportive conditions in training sessions, namely, leadership opportunities and input. Small groups were also reported to encourage and more easily allow for individualised guidance and feedback around skills and activities, meaning the structure and hence competence support for players would increase:

Interview responses from James and Kyle

So I’ll sit down at the start and say, ‘right what do you fancy,’ just say to one person, ‘right what training session do you want to do today’. I’ll go around them week by week and everyone gets a shot of doing it. Just to me that make them feel a wee bit [more involved]... If we’ve got enough coaches to split them up it’s a lot easier to do stuff like that, and I feel as if the wains get a better training session, they learn a lot more... You’ve got a lot more, not one-to-one [exactly], but you’ve got a lot more time

for them...to show them stuff. If it's just me and 30 kids... I can't keep my eyes on them all... so I find that difficult (James).

We've done stuff where we've split them into smaller groups or small teams [and] we'll make one of them a captain and leave the captain to decide on formations and who plays where, letting that play out for a wee bit and if they need some help on the back of that [we give them it]...I think it doesn't work in a large group because... a kid who is not confident is just going to be shouted at by 10 boys all wanting to do the same thing... it's easier in small sided games or little training exercises (Kyle).

Balancing player autonomy with threat of misbehaviour in large group settings

Maintaining a sense of control over athletes when there was a threat of misbehaviour appeared to be important to the coaches, to the point where, if necessary, autonomy support would be restricted and more commanding – and therefore controlling – behaviour was used:

Interview responses from Peter

Last night, we were showing them the different skills and just let them go and work on it... we were observing, we weren't giving them any feedback, then second time round... we were giving them feedback... when 3 or 4 of them start kicking the ball off the side of the wall... it would be reined back in...before the point of losing control because... if you maybe left that session another five minutes then you can bet your bottom dollar that all 20 of them would be standing kicking a ball off the side of the wall.

I raise my voice because I've got 25 kids there sometimes and there's mabye four to five different groups and that wee group's chatting about fortnight, that wee group's talking about school, that wee group's talking about something else and the other group's maybe paying attention to me, so it's certainly not shouting, it's trying to be authoritative...there's times where the kids are just a nightmare it's like a full moon and you're trying to control them.

The influence of group size on the coaches' behaviour is further complicated by other factors such as time pressure. Kyle commented:

Interview responses from Kyle

You've only got a limited amount of time and quite a highly volume of boys to try and coach... that's quite a difficult thing... when you're dealing with 25, 26, 27 in one go, the ownership's got to be in the right place otherwise the thing's just gonna collapse in on itself.

This compounding effect (Occhino et al., 2014) can also be drawn from the fieldnotes. Coaches were observed coaching together with players divided into small groups, and despite the apparently stronger position they were in to offer autonomy-supportive conditions (i.e., coach-to-player ratio), they appeared to offer players minimum input. This could be attributed to time pressure (the circuit format of the session likely placing time restrictions on the coaches) and the type of activity (player input is typically reserved for warmups):

Fieldnote of the standard club coaches

It's a training night and the coaches split the squad of around 20 players into four groups, with each group going to a separate quarter of the pitch to work with each coach on their own. The session runs in a rotation pattern until the last 15 minutes when the five coaches came together and put the squad into a football match. The coaches all appear very friendly in their manner around the kids. There is no shouting or cold remarks to any kids. There was, however, a notable lack of choice or input by the kids. All five coaches were telling them exactly what to do from the start to end of practice.

Relatedness support as a neglected need in large group settings

Players' autonomy was not the only need impacted though lack of 'manpower' when coaching and managing large groups of players. Players' need for relatedness was also affected. Peter's comment around "trying to be authoritative" when managing a large group of players and quelling social conversations between players suggests unfavourable player-to-coach ratios can cause coaches to worry about losing control to an extent that they react to players' behaviours with excessive 'clamping down' on positive social interactions between players. In addition, observation of James when he was coaching the group by himself, and a subsequent interview revealed his concerns with being able to adequately monitor the behaviours of players who might be antagonising each other:

Fieldnote of James

James is coaching on his own tonight, and during the game, a player gets fouled and becomes annoyed with the opposing player who fouled him... the fouled player won't let it go and is 'gunning' for the other player, tackling him aggressively and saying disrespectful remarks... After the session, James spoke about how these kinds of session events are much more difficult to spot and keep on top of when there are a lot of kids

over a larger area and less coaches to help keep watch. He jokingly remarks, 'when you're tying shoelaces all the time it doesn't help.'

In previous research, a physical education teacher identifying and responding to session events involving bullying and teasing was perceived by students as relatedness-supportive because it showed concern for their wellbeing (Sparks, et al., 2015).

Therefore, there is reason to believe that having too large a group to coach over too big an area may, as James indicated, strains a coach's ability to monitor and look out for players and therefore limits the coach's ability to support their need for relatedness.

Discussion

Until now group size and how coaches manage groups has not been explored as an antecedent of coaches' interpersonal behaviours, nor has it been connected to other influences or specific motivational strategies. Effects seem to be the level of leadership and input opportunities players are given alongside the supports they receive to foster a sense of relatedness both with their coach and among their social group. Of all the autonomy-supportive strategies coaches can adopt, extending leadership opportunities for youth athletes is perhaps one of the most modestly adopted, even though leadership is deemed an important life skill that can be developed through sport (Watson, Connole, & Kadushin, 2011). Indeed, young athletes have spoken about being given few, if any leadership training opportunities by their coach (e.g., Jones & Lavallee, 2009; Voelker, Gould, & Crawford, 2011), which is worrying considering research has shown that leadership qualities do not develop in young people through participation in sports alone (Extejt & Smith, 2009; Kuhn & Weinberger, 2005). Rather, the development of leadership qualities requires targeted efforts by coaches to create leadership opportunities for players and coach them on fulfilling these roles. One barrier to coaches facilitating such experiences for youth players is evidently the size of the group they are working with and whether the number of players in attendance is perceived to be too high to allow for such activities.

These findings reaffirm Lyle's (2002) claim that some coaches feel coach control is essential to bring about effective outcomes for athletes. Therefore, as has already been seen with physical education teachers (Reeve, 2009), coaches may assert control to counteract the higher risk of athletes' misbehaviour manifesting in larger groups and maintain the authority they feel is necessary for success. However, controlling teaching behaviours have been shown to evoke anger and frustration in

students (e.g., Assor & Kaplan, 2001), so it is plausible that utilising controlling coaching strategies in large groups may exacerbate the very behaviour problems coaches are trying to curb. This, along with evidence connecting controlling coaching behaviours with negative outcomes for athletes suggests that further research is needed to explore how coaches ‘balance’ control and autonomy support, particularly when working with larger groups of athletes.

Interestingly, in a study looking at the benefits and challenges of Game Sense practices where player autonomy is a salient component, Light (2004) found that coaches believed their players were stimulated by such practices and engaged more enthusiastically than they would in coach-led activities. This finding does not mirror the mixed response Kyle mentioned the standard club coaches and himself get when attempting to facilitate an independent skill practice for players, and thus highlights the idiosyncrasies of players and consequently the flexibility and skill coaches must show to manage these different personalities and motivations within sessions. That coaches in the present study compared with those in Light’s study seemed to fair differently when delivering autonomy-supportive practices raises the possibility that autonomy on its own is not to blame in situations where player disengagement occurs. Instead, such events may actually come about through the design of practices not being fun, challenging, or structured enough to keep players engaged. The need for autonomy to be paired appropriately with different learners, content, and learning goals has been acknowledged in models of effective pedagogy (Kulinna & Cothran, 2003; Mosston & Ashworth, 2008). Furthermore, the ability to design effective practice games that offer players autonomy has repeatedly been identified as a challenge for coaches (Howarth, 2005; Turner, 2014).

The findings also offer insight into possible hierarchical structures of behavioural antecedents within a community sport coaching environment, as perceived time pressure and beliefs around where control should lie at different points across a session seemed to supersede the coaches’ inclination towards offering greater autonomy when working with lower numbers of players. Future research should continue to explore the relative importance of factors influencing coaches’ behaviours to help behaviour change interventions concentrate education and support on determinants that are most meaningful for individuals.

With regards to group size effects on relatedness support, when coaching more players, coaches were more likely to limit players' socialising during sessions and engage in less individual conversation with players. While players' chatting with each other is potentially problematic for achieving session objectives (i.e., competence development), it can equally be considered instrumental to players forming and strengthening their friendships, and through doing so feeling a heightened sense of belonging with their environment and more autonomous in their motivation towards it (Stults-Kolehmainen, Gilson, & Abolt, 2013). Furthermore, in the present study, James indicated working with a larger group strained his ability to monitor and look out for players and therefore limits the coach's ability to support their need for relatedness (Sparks et al., 2015). Therefore, community coaches' limited group management strategies, coupled with larger groups of players to manage strains their ability to foster relatedness and autonomy.

Summary

In summary, this lower-order theme reflected the myriad of practical considerations community coaches might make as they attempt to manage the constraints and demands placed on them by their environment. Tangible constraints reported by the coaches comprised of having not enough time, manpower, or even desire to coach and interact with players to the standard SDT promotes. However, beneath these perceived barriers, issues were detected relating to the coaches' knowledge and training, which appeared to feed into their behaviours. The problems facing the coaches included misunderstanding the positive role competition can play in youth sport, and the need for them to become better equipped at planning and delivering sessions with all three psychological needs in mind. The coaches also displayed discreet need-supportive behaviours that illustrate issues with how the motivational environment is currently assessed across the literature in this area.

Chapter 5. Athlete Characteristics

The second major theme, ‘athlete characteristics’, explores the many shared characteristics of players that altered the way coaches worked with them. Three lower-order themes were developed from the data: perceptions of players’ multiple abilities, perceptions of players’ motivation, and perceptions of players’ confidence.

Perceptions of players’ multiple abilities

The terms ‘less/more abled athletes’ were frequently cited by the coaches when explaining their differing behaviours, but for them ability took on multiple meanings. Indeed, coaches were found to be influenced by their perceptions of players’ ability in two distinct but overlapping areas: perceptions of players’ sport specific skill affects structure and autonomy support, and readiness for autonomy.

Perceptions of players’ sport specific skill affects structure and autonomy support

This sub-theme captured how the coaches’ perceptions of player’s sport-specific ability affected their provision of structure and autonomy support. It comprised three mini-themes: less able players received more feedback and praise, use of ability-based groups as a solution to the ability paradox, and perceptions of ability influence support for autonomy (see Table 9).

Raw-data theme	Mini-theme	Sub-theme
Less able athletes are given more frequent, specific, and public praise than others	Less able players received more feedback and praise	Perceptions of players’ sport specific skill affects structure and autonomy support
More critical feedback for better players		
Team improvement needs emphasised		

Ability splits to challenge each player's skill level	Use of ability-based groups as a solution to the ability paradox	
More able players can voice opinion Better players are offered freedom in decision making during match	Perceptions of ability influence support for autonomy	

Table 9. Perceptions of players' sport specific skill affects structure and autonomy support.

'Less able players receive more feedback and praise

The coaches' judgements of players' technical and tactical football skills influenced the way they coached. Firstly, Kyle, Kieran, and Nathan spoke about how they would praise less skilful players more often, publicly, and intensely than their teammates. They felt that doing so helps to increase weaker players' confidence and sense of contribution to the team. Kyle referred to weaker players getting a "confidence boost from someone recognising that they've done something." All three made comments similar to Kieran's:

Interview response from Kieran

Just to make them feel better, just to make them feel as though they've done something good... particularly they ones that they perceive as the weaker player I'll try and maybe pick them maybe at the end of the game [and] go, 'see when you did that, that was really good...I thought you played well today, well done,' kinda thing, just to make them feel good about themselves.

In contrast, more able players were praised but often to a lesser extent or more generally. Kieran explained, "Rightly or wrongly, I would say at the end of the game, 'well done there, you done well today,' maybe not highlighting anything specific but I would still give them a wee bit of praise." The coaches' differential use of praise was also partly in response to the way other boys reacted to weaker players' performances, as Kieran noted, "there have been instances where maybe boys within the team will moan at somebody, that's not doing that particular kid any favours so I'll focus on

maybe praising that particular boy a wee bit more.” Their approach was evident in the observations:

Fieldnote of Kieran

Kieran is coaching his team during a match and one of his players keeps losing possession of the ball in the middle of the park. The player looks discouraged and stressed, with some of his teammates voicing their disappointment at his performance. Kieran shouts over, ‘Stephen relax, you’ve got more time on the ball than you think, take a touch, get your head up, and assess your options then play it. Bradley, tell Stephen when he has time on the ball and when he has a man on.’ A few minutes later Stephen receives the ball in the same area of the pitch, but this time scans for teammates and manages to successfully pass to a wide player. Kieran reacts by shouting, ‘BRILLIANT BIG MAN, that’s much more like it!’ acknowledging the player’s improvement.

Furthermore, Nathan was adamant this approach was successful:

Interview response from Nathan

The payback is in the development of those individuals, we’ve seen a couple of them that have really come on leaps and bounds... makes a massive difference... The players who aren’t as naturally gifted or aren’t as able... are actually the ones who’ve progressed more.

Use of ability-based groups as a solution the ability paradox

Finding ways to offer players of different technical and tactical ability appropriately challenging activities is another problem coaches have to solve as part of structuring their environment. Nathan experienced this issue: “we’re constantly trying to find drills at levels for those [less skilled] players that they can deal with.” His typical strategy was: “quite often we’ll split them by ability and the better players will go do slightly more difficult drills.”

Perceptions of ability influence support for autonomy

Coaches’ perceptions of players’ ability also influenced their provision of autonomy support. For example, players’ input was limited through Nathan’s use of ability groups. He explained, “It clearly wouldn’t be suitable to have those better players saying, ‘right let’s do this drill,’ when it’s things that only they can do, cause the other players couldn’t do it, so that’s why it’s left to the coaches.” The coaches also

spoke about how their judgements of players' tactical/technical ability and knowledge of the game determined the amount of initiative taking they encouraged during matches and input they allowed into strategic decisions. Nathan commented:

Interview responses from Nathan

In matches we look for opportunities to give players that kinda autonomy... 'look, find the space and cover for each other,' give them that autonomy if you like... Some of them are still wrestling with it and some of them still prefer, 'no this is my bit of the pitch,' but there's definitely that happening, you're giving a wee bit more responsibility like that... the better abled players you'd be more likely to give that autonomy because they have a better understanding of the game.

There's times where people are determined to play in a position, and you're equally determined to say, 'well no, I want you to play in a different position,' ...Possibly they [more skilled players] do have more of a license to have a reasoned discussion with you about why they can probably execute more roles more ably, so aye ability probably does have something to do with it...they're different.

Discussion

Coaches providing some players with more performance related feedback than others have been well documented in the past (e.g., Horn, 1984, 1985), as has the complex nature of praise in terms of its effects on players' perceived ability (Allen & Howe, 1998). Encouraging, supportive and information-based feedback has widely been associated with perceptions of competence and self-determined motivation in athletes (Horn, 2008). However, when given too regularly or in an inflated manner, praise can actually convey low-ability messages to players (Meyer, 1992), which potentially undermines the good intentions of the coaches in the present study, who were hoping their encouragement would increase feelings of competence in weaker players by giving them a "confidence boost" (Kyle). Lower-performing children are known to recognise differences in the way they are treated compared to their more capable peers, making them prone to viewing more praise towards them as disingenuous and given because they lack ability, rather than because they have ability (Amemiya & Wang, 2018). Therefore, well intended but possibly misguided approaches to giving praise may pose risks to players' competence perceptions. How accurate coaches' judgements are, and the quality of the processes they engage in to reach their

judgement, should be considered within future work to determine the efficacy (and perhaps frailty) of coaches' competence-supportive judgements and strategies.

There also exists the possibility that by “not highlighting anything specific” (Kieran) when feeding back to perceptibly more able players, coaches are overlooking the need to continue to develop their skills through the same specific performance feedback less able players are given. Furthermore, when Nathan asserted that it was his lesser able players who had made more personal progress, it becomes clear that assumptions being made by coaches about more able players may neglect, and therefore put at risk these players' perceptions of competence (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). The feelings of self-efficacy and pleasure that manifest after successfully executing a skill in sport helps drive one's motivation to continue to improve (Allen & Howe, 1998). As such, the coaches in the present study seemed to be missing opportunities to maximise players' perceptions of competence and how skilful they could become, by validating their successful performance through praise and specific feedback about what they did well. The SDT framework would posit that the more balanced approach is to offer every player equal support in extending their competence perceptions, while communicating that individual ability levels are valued equally across a team.

Kieren and Kyle also spoke about focusing their praise on players they felt received low ability judgements and were regularly criticised by teammates. Hearing statements like “he's not that good” (Kyle) or “aw you're crap” (Kieren) among teammates appeared to act as a behavioural cue for the coaches to praise these players, possibly in an attempt to counter the affective consequences of peer-to-peer criticism. Previous research has demonstrated links between the peer- and coach-created motivational environment (e.g., García-Calvo et al., 2014; Vazou, Ntoumanis, & Duda, 2006). For example, in a study conducted by García-Calvo et al., (2014), perceptions of tasking involving behaviours by the coach were found to have a positive impact on feelings of social cohesion (in other words, relatedness) among 377 football players. Findings such as these emphasise the reciprocal impact coaches and players can have on one another (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003), and underpin the need for researchers to consider interactions between athletes in tandem with interactions between coaches and athletes, in order to better understand group dynamics in team sport settings. The present finding extends knowledge around the interplay between peer- and coach-

created environmental dimensions to include player-to-player support as a potential determinant of coaches' behaviour.

Ability-based groups appear a simple solution to coaching players of varying skill levels since it makes logical sense that matching up players of similar ability might create a challenging but more achievable and inclusive environment within both individual and group practice activities. However, ability-based groups can prevent players of lesser ability from improving through exposure to better players. Furthermore, regularly employing ability-based groups runs the risk of players becoming aware of the segregation and the reasons behind it. This can negatively affect weaker players' perceptions of competence by removing the sense of achievement they get from completing tasks successfully when the group is comparatively weaker. The heightened sense of skill level in relation to others could lead to ego-involvement developing across a team, with those practicing skills in the weaker group feeling inferior to those in the better group, and those in the better group feeling pressured to retain their status as skilled in the eyes of coaches (Boyce, 2009), leading to a host of intra- (e.g., controlled motivation, performance anxiety) and inter-personal (e.g., team rivalry) problems that may negatively affect the fulfilment of players' psychological needs (Bartholomew et al., 2009; Sarrazin, Guillet, & Cury, 2001).

It should be noted, however, that using ability-based groups helped Nathan navigate a different problem of how to offer meaningful input to athletes of different skill levels within a team sport. This illustrates how coaches might seek to resolve need-supportive tensions in their practice, through consideration for the way one set of tensions (e.g., challenging players' competence while protecting their confidence) influences another (e.g., offering players autonomy while directing practices) (Smith & Lewis, 2011). The decision being to then select an imperfect course of action that goes some way towards managing these competing tensions. Paradox resolution strategies within the coach-created motivational environment are an underexplored topic.

d'Arripe-Longueville, Saury, Fournier, and Durand's (2001) investigation into coach-athlete interactions in elite male archery represents the only other study to examine how coaches navigate paradoxical tensions in supporting players' three psychological needs. The authors observed that an archer's autonomy was respected by their coach only for as long as the coach felt the athlete could effectively manage decision-making situations experienced in competition. At this point controlling the archer's decision making

became the priority as a means of increasing the structure they could possibly perform better within. The present study's findings offer a starting point for understanding, and hopefully addressing the behavioural pairings and goals community level coaches like Nathan might view and accept as "persistent and unsolvable puzzles" (Barnson, 2014, p. 377).

Previous research has connected autonomy-supportive coaching with self-regulated learning and winning performances in athletes, albeit at senior rather youth level (e.g., Gillet et al., 2010; Hodge, Henry, & Smith, 2014; Mallet, 2005). However, it should be noted that the coaches in these studies did stress the challenges of implementing an autonomy-supportive coaching approach. Therefore, Nathan's issue is certainly not unique. However, his response can equally be interpreted as a sign of him not understanding how to support players' autonomy and competence concurrently, rather than these types of behaviour simply being incompatible – a conclusion contradicted by research in education where Vansteenkiste et al., (2012) found a complimentary relationship between autonomy and structure. Therefore, revisiting the theme of paradoxes, Nathan's report reflects that some recreational youth coaches may lack the practical knowledge needed to scaffold autonomy for weaker players so they can feel a sense of freedom during matches, regardless of ability, while still receiving sufficient guidance and advice from their coach.

Furthermore, Nathan's tendency to take on board more readily the thoughts and perspectives of more able players when strategising within games has implications for weaker players' perceptions of autonomy and competence. Autonomy, because although he spoke about allowing weaker players to voice their opinions, rarely if ever compromising on his own opinions may make these players come to feel as though their opinions do not matter by comparison. And competence, as restricting players from experimenting in different roles risks communicating a message that they are only capable of making limited contributions to a team (Smith et al., 2015). It also ignores the fact that appropriately stretching developing players' abilities (e.g., by occasionally playing them in less comfortable positions) is a necessary part of helping them improve through the reflection and adaptation which these experiences bring about.

Readiness for autonomy

Another athlete-related factor that influenced coaches' behaviours was coaches' perceptions of players' readiness to take on autonomy. This sub-theme comprised two mini-themes: are they sensible enough to not waste it?; and perceptions of players' attitudes to autonomy (see Table 10).

Raw-data theme	Mini-theme	Sub-theme
Age and perceived maturity influences input players are given Student development used as frame of reference (interacting effect) Autonomy seen as second step after competence development. Being autonomy-support was sign of inexperience	Are they sensible enough to not waste it?	Readiness for autonomy
Athletes have limited desire for autonomy Belief that players are content with coach control limits input they are given More mentally able players can have input, others content with directives	Perceptions of player attitudes towards autonomy	

Table 10. Readiness for autonomy.

Are they sensible enough to not waste it?

Many of the coaches felt that how much autonomy they gave players depended on how ‘sensible’ the players were, which seemed to go hand in hand with their age. Indeed, there was an expectation that if younger athletes were presented with options, they would make wasteful choices for their technical and tactical development, choosing “the one that keeps them within their comfort zone” (Peter):

Focus group responses from the Standard Club coaches

Peter: Given the age...they don’t have a choice in terms of choosing between two or three different drills or anything like that at all. They do the drills that we ask them to do because the drills that we ask them to do are for their own improvement, for their own benefit.

Kyle: ...Totally agree with Peter... if we set up three things they’d decide very quick which one they thought [was the most appealing or easiest], or... they would take too long over it... you’d waste a lot of time.

By contrast, Kieran’s fieldnotes demonstrated attempts to offer players input in decisions. He reported this to be a new tactic within his practice, and one encouraged by his players’ increasing age and maturity: “I feel as though maybe they’re a little bit older, they can maybe think about it a little bit more themselves.” He also mentioned ‘teething issues’ that support the standard club coaches’ trepidation:

Fieldnote and interview response from Kieran

Kieran is coaching his team on a training night and the players are taking part in a bounce game at the end of the session. The bounce game has a short half-time interval, during which time one team gather around Kieran while the other half gather around their second coach. When Kieran’s team comes in, he gives them an opportunity to discuss and decide on tactics they would use in the second half. He initiates this conversation by saying to one player, ‘X, do you want to say something?’

The last year we’ve kinda spoke to the boys about what they enjoy doing at training as well, so we will give them a bit of an input, but you usually tend to get, ‘well we want to do more shooting,’ cause all they want to do is score goals.

These findings suggest that to some degree the coaches felt they had to make decisions for younger players because the players lacked the ability to handle and use autonomy ‘effectively’. At the same time, however, they also felt better placed to make

decisions around players' development anyway, since they had more tactical and technical knowledge of football. The coaches were so adamant in this regard that Kyle and Peter attributed the group's initial adoption of an athlete led approach to lack of experience, coaches, and planning rather than any thought of the benefits it would bring to players' development:

Interview responses from Kyle and Peter

The ownership was probably always with the coaches but there was more times when we reacted to the sort of humour the kids were in as opposed to just the way we keep going now, but that was just because we were inexperienced and didn't know what we were doing (Kyle).

When it was us at the start while we were finding our feet there was more playing football and the kids probably felt that we were doing more of what they wanted to do (Peter).

And thus, the coaches' views express a point of intersection between what coaches feel they can reasonably do to support players' autonomy, and what they feel they should do to help players progress. The coaches felt greater learning benefits would come from adopting a coach-led approach whereby they direct sessions according to learning targets that they themselves set.

Perceptions of player attitudes towards autonomy

Players' appetite for autonomy was also mentioned by the coaches as a reason for withholding or extending autonomy-supportive measures. Nathan and Anthony felt some players prefer a more directive, less autonomy-supportive coaching approach:

Interview responses from Nathan and Anthony

I think some players...[are] demanding the opposite of you... they come to learn, and they want you to tell them how to play the game, they want you tell them where to stand, and how to tackle and hit a ball (Nathan).

You do get some that will come [over and provide ideas] but some are quite happy just to turn up [and be told], 'this is what we're doing,' [respond with], 'ok,' and they'll do it (Anthony).

Discussion

The coaches' scepticism around both the conceptual importance of autonomy support (i.e., the benefits) and practical application (i.e., how to run sessions and games in an autonomy-supportive manner) corroborates previous findings (Carroll & Allen, 2021). Beneath such assessments, however, lies a misunderstanding of what autonomy support is and, perhaps even more importantly, what it is not. Autonomy support does not deny coaches agency to use their superior knowledge to help players progress. This is an indispensable part of the coach's role that justifies their presence. Rather, supporting autonomy is about encouraging players to take greater ownership over their development with the assistance and active involvement of their coach (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). The structure embedded within an autonomy-supportive approach is what separates it from a laissez faire approach, where athletes fully regulate their behaviour with little direction from the coach (Yang, 2015). Furthermore, research has shown that young athletes can learn how to cope with increased autonomy (Pelletier et al., 2001), which refutes the coaches' conclusion that players were too young for choice or input. Coaches' (mis)understanding of autonomy support clearly merits further, more focused examination. Future investigations might explore and identify the sources of such misconceptions around the coach-created motivational environment, in order to understand not just what coaches believe, but also how and from whom coaches develop these views.

It should also be noted that there was a high degree of commonality in the autonomy-supportive behaviours the coaches struggled to implement and subsequently accept in a youth coaching context. Providing opportunities for younger players to have meaningful input into decisions was a challenge to the coaches, yet they showed in previous comments that they were capable of and, possibly as a by-product, more enthusiastic about providing autonomy support in other ways (e.g., providing a rationale, acknowledging feelings and perspectives). Contrasts can be drawn with adult sport, which has, for all its own challenges, so far shown itself to be more harmonious towards involving players in decision making (Mallet, 2005; Hodge et al., 2014). Therefore, perhaps there is a need for research within youth contexts that directs attention towards understanding and improving specific lower-order behaviours that are known to present particular challenges to the coaches operating in these types of environments.

Evidence suggests that players have different coaching preferences (Martin, Dale, & Jackson, 2001; Sharma, 2015), however, the fundamental need for autonomy has been shown to be consistent across athletes (e.g., Adie et al., 2008). Therefore, although some players may wish for more coach control, existing evidence supports the notion that in order for players to develop high quality motivation, they still need to feel as though they have been given a say in the delegation of power – motivationally speaking, a negotiation of sorts should take place between them and their coach (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Thus, perhaps a more sensible attitude for coaches to adopt, and message for coach developers to convey, is that some players may want less of certain autonomy-supportive provisions (e.g., leadership opportunities as discussed by Anthony), but not less autonomy in general, so youth coaches should assist players to exercise autonomy in some way, unconditionally. Understanding the sources of information coaches rely upon to make judgements on players' wishes for their personal autonomy becomes more important in light of the present finding, given the potential for such research to help coaches better manage their athletes' needs.

Summary

Overall, the coaches' reports indicated that differences in coaches' perceptions of players' sport specific skills led coaches to generate behavioural solutions for protecting and promoting players' perceptions of competence and autonomy, across both training and competition contexts. These solutions often conflicted and were imperfect. They highlight the importance of building understanding around how to operationalise autonomy and competence support concurrently, the interrelationship between the peer- and coach-created motivational environment, and how coaching agendas, decision making processes, and perceived situational demands can shape the level of need support coaches offer players of different abilities. The findings from this lower-order theme also offer insight into misconceptions surrounding autonomy support provision, which may serve to reinforce the critical views coaches can hold towards including young players in decisions. Research uncovering and, where justified, challenging the influences on coaches' autonomy support provision is needed in order to further our understanding of the influences on coaches and prompt coaches' reflection about why they think as they do and where their beliefs and understanding come from.

Perceptions of players' motivation

Each player carries with them different amounts and types of motivation, and this second lower-order theme demonstrates the powerful influence coaches' perceptions of others' motivation can have on coaches' practice. Two sub-themes communicated this message: perceptions of athletes' motivation as a non-linear predictor of support, and simplistic views on motivation (see Table 11).

Raw-data theme	Sub-theme
Acknowledging unenthusiastic players' thoughts and feelings as a means of reengaging them Judgement on players' poor motivation affects coach's mood and motivation, and leads to controlling behaviours Players' enthusiasm determines use or not of rewards to bribe compliance Uses introjected regulation to motivate intrinsically motivated players	Perceptions of athletes' motivation as a non-linear predictor of support
Balancing competition with player development seen as key Judges coach success based on athlete attendance. Players with introjected regulation try harder, which is the aim	Simplistic views on motivation

Table 11. Perceptions of players' motivation.

Perceptions of athletes' motivation as a non-linear predictor of support

The coaches' perceptions of their players' motivation influenced both what they did, and how they felt, in response. Kyle reported acting in a more directive manner "a little bit more of an instructor [role] as opposed to coach" with players who appear "flat", which can be taken to mean unenthusiastic towards the session. Nathan

meanwhile spoke about using the promise of rewards to coax the participation of players who did not seem as stimulated by the prospect of improving their skills as their teammates were:

Interview responses from Kyle and Nathan

You are very much guided by the mood they're in...I think you react to the situation...most of the times I turn up, I've not had a good day at work, there's been a lot going on, *I'm knackered, I could do without it* [emphasis added]...but you get on with it and then if they're up for it and *there's a smile, there's a bit of crack, a bit of life about it, it becomes a lot easier* [emphasis added]. If they're messing about and they're *flat* [emphasis added] and they're down, it becomes more of a discipline type thing... you end up having to do a lot more of the shouting and the instruction which is not the piece that anyone wants to be doing (Kyle).

I'd say probably ninety percent of the players in our wee team want to be better, probably about ten percent that they're not bothered about being better... so for them it would be, 'look, hurry up and do this and we'll move onto that, then you'll get to play with your wee pal' (Nathan).

While players appearing disinterested may influence coaches' decision to engage in controlling behaviours, it can also encourage them to provide autonomy support in the form of gauging athletes' feelings and perspectives. Nathan and Anthony's accounts position such behaviour as a strategy used by coaches to reengage less enthusiastic players:

Interview responses from Nathan and Anthony

[If] they've stopped running or they've stopped doing whatever the exercise is you'll ask them just to step aside...it's not to punish [them], it's to actually allow the exercise to continue so it doesn't negatively influence all the other athletes but it's also an opportunity to say... 'is there something wrong?... so that might lead to a discussion (Nathan).

The goalie turned up and he was [like] *makes disinterested sigh noise*, every shot that got hit went in and he's like that *makes disinterested face*, and I'm like that, 'what's wrong?', [boy replied,] 'I could have been doing something fun today, I'm here, stuck here'...and I said, 'I know it's a shame... but see while we are here is there any chance you could just try and save some shots just to kill time?' and he's like that, 'alright then.' That was him, [after our conversation] he was pulling out all these kind of

saves... everybody you need to motivate in a different way... knowing your players... what makes them tick, what doesn't make them tick, so you just need to work on them collectively and individually as you're going along to try and [say], 'everything alright? Aye, ok right, no bother, just a hard day at school or something?' (Anthony)

Simplistic views on motivation

Another finding with relevance to motivation was that some of the coaches judged their effectiveness based on the regular attendance of players at their sessions. Nathan commented: "The thing I take greatest pride in with the team is see the level of attendance every week we get it's absolutely astonishing...we're genuinely getting 16 [players] turning up 99 percent of the time...so we're doing something right." Peter had a similar comment: "It's indicative as to how many kids turn up on a weekly basis... and how many have been around since the start, that we're doing something right." Furthermore, Kyle's seeming comfort with encouraging introjected regulation in a player on the basis that it might increase the level of effort they exert illustrates a risk of limited understanding of motivation: "I think there's sometimes where you shout at one of the kids because they've done something wrong, in their head they're going, 'I'm gonna show him,' so actually they will go away and try a bit harder."

Discussion

The players described by the coaches can be viewed as lacking in self-determined motivation and instead appearing extrinsically motivated or even amotivated towards the activity, which aligns with previous research linking this type of judgement on athletes to controlling coaching behaviours (e.g., Carroll & Allen, 2021; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Kyle also suggested that his perception of the quality of his players' motivation impacted his own motivation for coaching, which seemed to already be influenced by the manner of his working day as an external factor ("I'm knackered, I could do without it...but you get on with it and then if they're up for it and there's a smile, there's a bit of crack, a bit of life about it, it becomes a lot easier"). Previous research has found coach motivation to mediate the relationship between perceptions of players' motivation and autonomy-supportive coaching behaviours. Indeed, players judged as self-determined encouraged self-determination in coaches – seemingly by making the coaching process less laborious and more enjoyable and thus intrinsically motivating – which in turn made them more likely to engage in autonomy-supportive behaviours, and vice versa (Rocchi, Pelletier, & Couture, 2013; Rocchi &

Pelletier, 2017). The present finding supports the validity of this relationship, underscoring the impact coaches' motivation can have on their interactions with players. This finding also substantiates claims about the effect work-life conflict can have on coaches' enthusiasm towards coaching and their subsequent behaviours (Stebbing et al., 2012). While speculative in the absence of player accounts, within Kyle's statement lies the possibility that players' seeming lack of enthusiasm towards a session may be a reaction to perception of their coach's lack of enthusiasm when turning up to practice. Future research should explore this possibility further by consulting both coaches and players to better understand the reciprocal impact of coach motivation on athlete motivation.

The coaches' desire to open up a dialogue, and in Anthony's case empathise with players who appear to have poor quality motivation mirrors findings of Carroll and Allen (2021) in their study of recreational youth swimming and football coaches. That is, coaches' reactions to less enthused athletes are not as one-dimensional (in terms of being strictly controlling) as other researchers have previously suggested (e.g., Mageau & Vallerand, 2003; Rocchi et al., 2013). Carroll and Allen's (2021) study and now this study both show that perceptions of non-self-determined motivation in athletes can encourage coaches to seek out their opinions, which suggests that antecedent factors do not affect environmental dimensions of coach behaviour in an all-or-nothing manner. Instead, lower-order behaviours can have their own antecedent factors that explain their use. This matters for coach developers hoping to encourage or discourage specific sets of behaviour linked to motivation quality. For example, efforts by Carpentier and Mageau (2013, 2014) to understand and promote autonomy-supportive change-oriented feedback – which relies heavily on acknowledging players' thoughts and perspectives as part of being empathetic in the process – may benefit from studying factors that encourage versus discourage this key mechanism in their strategy. Therefore, future research should look to investigate antecedents of specific behaviours at the same time as antecedents of broader environmental dimensions of coach behaviour, in order to generate a fuller understanding of the coach-created motivational environment that can be used to improve outcomes for coaches and players. To this end, effort should also be placed in exploring and identifying other reactions from coaches to their perceptions of players' motivational orientation, such as need-depriving and -thwarting reactions to perceptions of autonomous motivation in players. Anthony's statement also offers an

additional example of antecedent factors interacting with one another, as his level of familiarity with players was said to inform the way he approaches these conversations (Occhino et al., 2014).

Because SDT recognises that an athlete can be highly motivated to attend practice but still possess low quality motivation (i.e., non-self-determined motivation), the present finding offers a reminder of the need for coaches to scrutinise their performances more closely and resist the urge to concentrate purely on outcomes. The risk is that an outcome-based coaching mentality might make allowances for need-depriving and -thwarting strategies that bring about a desired result, irrespective of the other effects. The coaches' misunderstanding of motivation has been seen previously in research. Indeed, Carroll and Allen's (2021) study involving community football coaches found that coaches viewed and thought about motivation on a scale (i.e., more versus less motivation, or motivated versus demotivated) rather than on a spectrum as SDT intended from a more nuanced, accurate view of behaviour. The present findings build further appreciation for the lack of knowledge and understanding community coaches can have around the topic of motivation. To this end, understanding how simplistic representations of motivation manifest and propagate among coaches is another possible target for future research.

Summary

This lower-order theme reiterates and corroborates the emerging view that while coaches' perceptions of players' motivation can and do often influence their behaviour in the traditionally endorsed manner whereby autonomous players are further empowered and non-self-determined players are further controlled (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003), other reactions are equally possible. The present study suggests a specific relationship exists between perceptions of players' extrinsic and amotivated forms of motivation and coaches' support of players' autonomy through acknowledging players' thoughts and perspectives. Simplistic and inaccurate views of motivation were also established, demonstrating the conceptual barriers coaches can face in learning how to improve their coaching environment.

Perceptions of players' confidence

The third lower-order theme captured coaches' perceptions of athletes' confidence. Athletes possess varying levels of confidence about their capacity to be

effective and successful at their sport (Vealey, 1986). The coaches expressed views that suggested the effort they made and strategies they employed to protect and promote players' confidence were influenced by how confident they perceived players to be, and also their beliefs around how best to manage confidence levels amongst players. Two sub-themes were developed: competence and confidence seen as two sides of the same coin, and balancing life experiences within and across a team (see Table 12).

Raw-data theme	Sub-theme
Large desire to praise players can lead to insincere comments Potency of praise is heightened for players perceived as low in confidence Offers more advice to players seen as low in confidence Players low in confidence receive light hearted jokes Seek out opinion of low confidence players to lift and reengage them	Competence and confidence seen as two sides of the same coin
Appreciating negative life experiences outside of sport encourages gentler approach and less criticism Fragile player self-esteem requires constant reassurance about ability, and praise Players' heightened reliance on social support shapes perceived role of the coach Superiority over others is encouraged to counter pessimism linked to outside circumstance	Balancing life experiences within and across a team

Table 12. *Perceptions of players' confidence.*

Competence and confidence seen as two sides of the same coin

Coaches from both clubs reported that they offer greater need support to players they feel are lacking in confidence, and this was done through: seeking out their thoughts and feelings (i.e., autonomy support); offering praise and advice (i.e., competence support), in some cases publicly; and making jokes (i.e., relatedness support):

Interview responses from Kieran, Nathan, Anthony, and Kyle

We were training and I noticed a wee dip in their confidence so...we were just basically asking them how they felt in terms of how [they] felt at training... during games, what they wanted from us on a matchday...and then they give us a little bit of feedback on that...They *are very results [driven]* [emphasis added] ... I can sense when they're a little bit down and I need to lighten the mood with them so I will have some laughs and jokes with them, talk about their school, talk about things like if they've got a girlfriend *laughs* and just kinda [act] like a pal...just to make them feel relaxed and try and get them to be less down about it, less uptight about it (Kieran).

There's some individuals who require more one-to-one assistance during a game than others... quite often [it's] the individuals requiring [a lift in] confidence...[I'll ask], 'well, how can we lift you?... have you tried that skill that you did at training?' ...I think there'll always been one that you need to be a wee bit more involved in and others won't need that involvement (Nathan).

There are ones who know they're good...so you know they don't really need as much [advice]...but other ones, you know, especially when they're playing each other, you need to kinda build them up...you try and help them [by] saying, 'this is how you get the better of him,' so it's more that side of things...more tactical advice...you give them...tips and stuff like that (Anthony).

Praise, that's definitely important... I'll [also] sit down with [players] and talk with them and stuff...I tend to do it more when the head's down, so, if it's not working out for them... or they're getting frustrated I'll just say, 'look, what about doing this,... you need to keep working away, try doing this, do that,' ...The less confident kids, when they do something right, I think we try and give that praise in front of the group, it's not

something you do one-to-one, you shout about their achievement...as part of a group so that everybody sees it and everybody hears it (Kyle).

Balancing life experiences within and across a team

Evidence also emerged to suggest that players' personal biographies might impact a coach's belief around how to support them. Anthony had been insistent on praising players to protect and boost their sense of confidence and competence. He described the biographies of para-athletes as being fraught with social problems like rejection and teasing on account of being disabled, and he – accurately (Flynt & Morton, 2004) – believed these experiences cause disabled athletes to suffer with low self-esteem. Therefore, in justifying his behaviour, he reported feeling obliged to offset the mistreatment they endure in other social settings by creating a coaching environment that prioritises them feeling positive about themselves and their capabilities above all else, and this objective appeared to drive other competence-supportive behaviours he engaged in, such as being sensitive in the handling of players' mistake and communicating confidence in their ability to take on challenges:

Interview responses from Anthony

If you're shouting and balling and finger pointing and [saying], 'you should have done better, you were rubbish,' for me that's a no-no... especially if they've went to a mainstream school, they're probably getting bullied and whatever so they've went through school getting told they're useless or they're not doing something [right], you know so for me, we try and repair that... A lot of these guys have a, 'I can't do that,' attitude, you know and that's up to us to try and reverse that a wee bit, again for me it just comes back to the confidence [factor] ...so it's just a matter of keep building them up... We're there for multipurpose, not just for the football. Sometimes football looks as if it plays a small part in the grand scheme of things.

Anthony's keen desire for his players to view themselves as equal to others even compelled him to promote their ego-involvement:

Fieldnote of Anthony

Anthony's team are participating in a tournament and lose the first game. He gathers them round and says, 'Done well there guys, sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. We're playing X next and you beat them twice in the season so you should beat them.' In the early stages of the next match, the team go a goal down, and Anthony shouts, 'keep going boys it's only 1-0!' The team don't manage to turnaround the result, and lose for

the second time. The team now appear dejected. Anthony addresses them once more, stating, 'In the second half we know we could have done better, we switched off...we should have won that game...losing the rag at the back doesn't help us, it's a negative, we need to act as a team. You've communicated all season, that's how we've won the league, we need to work as a team, need to focus.' He ends by reminding the team that they've won against the team they're playing in the next match various times before.

Interestingly, Kieran spoke about giving preferential treatment to one player because of the player's personal situation, despite recognising that other players might perceive this as favouritism. It was borne out of a desire to improve the player's attendance at practice, and subsequently offset his difficult family life, providing him with some structure and stability. Kieran's statement encapsulates the difficult balancing act coaches face in supporting the competing psychological needs of their players separately, as well as together.

Interview response by Kieran

Just trying to give him a bit of stability in terms of coming to training...just basically to make him feel...it's somewhere where he can relax and maybe forget about all that, so I just feel as though maybe I favouritise him over the rest of them...just kinda give him that [extra] wee bit of praise... It's a tricky one, the boys don't really see [beyond my behaviours], they don't think about the background, they might be thinking, 'why's Kieran always giving him praise and ignoring me.'

Discussion

There are strong parallels between the way the coaches reported treating perceptibly low versus high levels of confidence in players and perceptibly low versus high levels of ability in players (see the 'perceptions of players' sport-specific skill affects structure and autonomy support' sub-theme section for a reminder), which indicates that these developmental constructs may be coupled together by coaches when assessing players, possibly because they have difficulty distinguishing between the two, and/or do not feel that they should. Competence and confidence perceptions among athletes are known to be closely interrelated, since protecting players' sense of competence is naturally important for protecting their sense of efficacy within sport, and vice versa. Hence, researchers have suggested that the two constructs should be considered together rather than apart (Jones, Holt, Sullivan, & Bloom, 2011; Lerner et al., 2005). From an SDT standpoint, coupling coaches' perceptions of players'

confidence levels with their perceptions of players' competence appears to have operational value. Indeed, the process the coaches outlined for improving players' sense of confidence, and competence, seemed to lend itself to the adoption of a range of need-supportive behaviours. There is also the possibility that framing developmental constructs and goals in accordance with coaches' perceptions will lead to the creation of a collaborative, 'bottom-up' models of coaching that stems from, and thus resonates more easily with those they are intended to serve and could contribute to greater engagement with suggested practices as a result (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2006). Emerging questions for future research to explore include whether coaches couple the way they think about other constructs embedded within players' sport experience, and what effects such couplings have on coaches' interpersonal behaviours.

A second observation of the coaches' comments is that Kieran claimed to engage in higher levels of need-supportive behaviour to help offset the tendency for his players to be "very results [driven]". Yet earlier (see the 'matchdays – competition, overcoaching and the importance of winning' sub-theme section for a reminder), Kieran admitted to notably increasing his use of competitive activities with the players in training, in accordance with their transitioning from a 9-aside to 11-aside football format in a competitive league. Therefore, it appears that, despite being well intentioned in his attempts to increase players' confidence, Kieran may be trying to solve problems he has arguably been complicit in creating, and the lack of professed awareness for this dynamic illustrates the connections coaches need to make between their behaviours and athlete outcomes in order to operate sensitively and with self-awareness. This finding resonates with self-awareness issues detected in Carroll and Allen's (2022) study wherein a coach who had learned to value acknowledging players' opinions and understood the importance of doing so did not exhibit this behaviour when observed. Raising coaches' awareness of their own practice consequently remains a critical starting point for coaches and coach developers. To this end, future work should resume efforts to understand how best to build self-awareness in coaches. Inspiration might be taken from the success of a small number of SDT based interventions in sport to date that have made this consideration (e.g., Ahlberg et al., 2008; Byrne, 2010), and also learning from the wider success achieved in a closely related teacher training context too (Su & Reeve, 2011). The present study offers a potential means of achieving this aim by illustrating how collaboration between researcher (or other coach developers)

and coach can expose inconsistencies in the coach's thinking that they are not conscious of but could benefit from reflecting on and targeting in future practice.

The hope Anthony had for his players involvement in sport guided his practice, and this mindset has received support from previous research looking at the experiences of this specific population of players. For example, in a sample of 1149 young people, Scarpa (2011) found a positive connection between sport participation and self-concept and self-esteem in those living with a disability. And while disabled players have the capacity to bully themselves (Staples, Lieberman, Ratcliff, & Rounds, 2013), the lower social status they are often afforded, and the reduced physical and mental defences they can have in comparison to their more abled bodied peers makes them especially vulnerable to being bullied. For example, those with intellectual disabilities can be less aware of potentially dangerous situations developing, rely heavily on others for guidance and cues, and may be overly trusting of others (Flynt & Morton, 2004). They also rely heavily on a small number of people for social support (as Anthony said "we're like a family or a community rather than like a team, because they rely on you, you know, they do, more than people know or think. You are kinda up there you know in their [lives]"), and coaches are in a position to fulfil support needs that are difficult to pass onto other individuals, given that technical appreciation (e.g., making them feel good about their execution of a skill) and technical challenge (e.g., making them feel capable of achieving things in their sport) are domain specific messages that are best provided by individuals with expertise in that area (i.e., coaches in sport) (Martin & Mushett, 1996).

Effective social support is seen to be tailored to individuals' needs (Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990), and for disabled athletes, the behaviours reported by Anthony appear attuned to the competence and relatedness needs of his individual players. Consequently, personalised coaching strategies may at times be unfairly scrutinized for their potential pitfalls when judged from a more generic athlete position, as such a standpoint arguably overlooks the in situ reality of coaching (Occhino et al., 2014), which by its nature is heavily contextualised and relational. This point particularly applies to the alternative, simpler judgment that could be made around the degree of ego-involvement Anthony encouraged in his players, which in a classic sense is deemed controlling rather than competence-supportive (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). The fairer critique may be whether coaches possess enough understanding of their players to

accurately perceive and accommodate their individual needs, and what sources of information they rely upon to make such decisions. Closer examination of coaches' understanding of their players may allow researchers to learn more about effective practice, and also identify misconceptions coaches can hold about players that run the risk of translating into unsupportive behaviours.

Summary

The findings from this lower-order them show that youth coaches may judge players' confidence and competence at the same time, and choose to handle each developmental construct similarly as a result, reigniting debate around this mode of working and offering support for such a merger to better connect with the thought processes of coaches 'on the ground' so to speak (Jones et al., 2011; Lerner et al., 2005). One coach's response, however, was found to be tailored to players' outside circumstances and personal biographies, and through its empirical justification raises a second question, this time over the potential uses of behaviours classically coined as need-thwarting. The key role self-awareness plays in the monitoring of coaches' personal practice was also underscored as a critical component of adaptive behaviour change. Lastly, the nature of the treatment the players received was shown to be further influenced by the coaches' beliefs, the wider culture within which their coaching took place, and outside experiences and lessons they had gained and integrated within their coaching practice. The intriguing but presently incomplete insights derived around the topic of athlete characteristics compels future research to continue to look at differences in coach behaviour when working with specific athlete populations, in order to further our understanding of how athlete characteristics affect coaches' behaviour, and by extension the quality of their motivational environment.

Chapter 6. Being a parent-coach

The third major theme captured the unique role of being a parent-coach within community sport. Recreational youth football is mostly run by volunteers. The people volunteering tend to be parents of participating children. To illustrate, in a study on the motivation of volunteer youth sport coaches, Busser and Carruthers (2010) found that 90% of the 141 football coaches they surveyed were coaching their child. The parents choosing to coach must combine the roles of parent and coach. In the current study, this was shown to be a delicate and challenging task that had implications for how the coaches acted. Four lower-order themes were developed capturing this topic: hopes and fears for their child, the child as a coaching tool, hypersensitivity to their child's action and others' perception, and parenthood as coach education.

Hopes and fears for their child

Understanding how and why a parent-coach behaves as they do requires firstly understanding “why we’re actually doing it” (Peter), as this is what they are known to ruminate on from the very beginning and carry into their practice (Weiss & Fretwell, 2005). The coaches’ profiles showed that at least part of why each of them started coaching was to spend time with their son(s) or facilitate their son’s desire or ability to play organised football, or both. However, nested within these aims were other thoughts that reflected the coaches’ hopes (life lessons, parental freedoms, other players experiences are “just a by-product”) and fears (the legacy of being a parent-coached player for coaching). Each of these four sub-themes are discussed below (see Table 13).

Raw-data theme	Sub-theme
Having a comfortable home life necessitates giving child pressures in sport	Life lessons
Promoting a strong work ethic sets child up for future	
One rule for my child, another for others’	Parental freedom
Quicker to reprimand poor behaviour	

Parent's responsibility for disciplining child	
Motivations for coaching rooted in child	Other players' experiences are "just a by-product"
Behaviours can be hereditary without reflection	The legacy of being a parent-coached player for coaching
Avoidant behaviours to protect father-son relationship	
Strained relationship with father causes more relatedness support towards son	

Table 13. Hopes and fears for their child.

Life lessons

It is well known that, because of the successes, failures, and challenges young people experience when engaged in sport, the environment offers endless potent developmental opportunities. Many parent-coaches attempt to capitalise on these opportunities to share their subjective wisdom and impart what they deem to be important life lessons to their children, as well as others. This objective is seen through the messages the coaches are conveying to their sons: Peter, having a winning mentality, and Derek, a strong work ethic:

Interview response from Peter

I understand the [non-competitive] ethos now for inclusion and all of that sort of stuff, and with all the kids who are at the football team you see the different variations of skills level and so on and so forth and you understand more about why it's about inclusion ...my ethos was built from when I played as a kid that winning was everything, but when I played... we were playing 11-aside and... points were counted and there was a league table and all of that sort of stuff so that's probably where my ethos comes from...I accept [the inclusion approach as a guide for how to coach them]...unfairly I don't accept it with Alex because he's my son, but I accept it with all the other kids...that's just a dad thing...[Alex] has a nice life... and because *he doesn't*

want for anything [emphasis added], pressure needs to be applied to him in certain situations to get the results out of it that you want for him.

Fieldnote and interview responses from Derek

It's near the beginning of a training session and Derek gathers a small group of players he's working with in front of him to ask if any of them watched Barcelona play the night before. Some of the players say yes, some say no. Derek goes on to ask if anyone watched the way Messi played specifically, before asserting that, if they work hard to refine their skills, they could be like Messi one day.

You're just trying to show them all these football players came from ground level football training like this before they went on to become professional football players... If they really want to do it, they can become the next Messi, the next captain of Scotland, or the next football hero with a poster on kids' walls, you know, if they put in the training and they get the ball work done and they are committed... it's not out with their reach you know... you have to tell them that it's not above them.

Peter endeavoured to emphasise the importance of winning to his son because he believed that doing so was necessary to compensate for him having a less pressurised life outside of sport. Whereas Derek's hope of teaching his son about the importance of hard work and self-belief motivated him to be competence-supportive rather than ego-promoting like Peter. Derek did this by communicating confidence in his players' capacity to progress within their sport.

Parental freedom

Interestingly, the fact Peter mentioned modern trends of inclusion within sport when explaining how he treats other players differently suggests he uses discretion to decide whether to treat his son in the more 'politically correct' manner he feels socially and culturally obligated to treat everyone else. Discretion he seems to afford himself on the basis of being a father. Both coaches also revealed the added influence of their personal biographies in deciding what lessons they wanted to teach their child through sport ("It's a little bit like my childhood where he doesn't want for anything" [Peter]; "coming from my peers, when I played football you know, my coaches, and having kids as well" [Derek]) which underscores the social influences on coach behaviour.

The present finding further suggests that coaching beliefs and strategies that are commonly debated (e.g., whether winning or participation is more important, as Peter

discussed) rather than accepted (e.g., the need to inspire players, as Derek discussed), are the ones parent-coaches might exercise their parental freedoms with when coaching their own child. This sense of having special father privileges in a coaching space was similarly demonstrated by Nathan who reported feeling less inhibited to reprimand his son, “I think you’re just more confident about challenging negative behaviours from your own child” and more limited with other children, “you probably err on the side of caution, you’re probably less confrontational, you’d be more supportive with any other kid apart from your own.” Fieldnotes appeared to back up this claim:

Fieldnote and interview response from Nathan

It’s a tournament, and Nathan’s team are playing a match. During the match, one of Nathan’s players aims a pass at his son, Declan, but the pass gets intercepted. Declan starts complaining about the quality of the pass, and is immediately challenged by Nathan who says, ‘Declan, it wasn’t his fault, you’re waiting for the ball instead of coming towards it, he played the pass!’ His son looks angered by this remark, but keeps on playing.

James reported acting similarly with his own child in comparison to others, judging it as a parental obligation more than choice: “it’s my job to discipline my own kid but not other people’s wains.”

Other players’ experiences are “just a by-product”

Daniel reported that his decision to engage in fun and friendly behaviours with his step-son, and also to some extent other players, was motivated by wanting to be a positive father figure to his step-son: “I think I’m actually just trying to show him [step-son] the way a dad should be, because he’s had a shit upbringing from the start of his life.” This led Daniel to give “a lot of praise to them when they do well” and “a wee bit of banter and teasing them, like, you know playfully, not anything serious”. However, the positive interactions with the other players were incidental: “It’s probably a by-product to be fair. As selfish as it sounds, it’s always been about him.” Peter similarly reported: “[I want to] be influential on Alex [my son], which is how all of this was born. To be influential on the other kids is just a by-product of it.”

The legacy of being a parent-coached player for coaching

For historical reasons, the coaches also held fears that coaching their child might damage their parent-child relationship, and these fears were reported as influencing

their behaviours. Peter spoke about how being coached by his father as a youth player and having unrealistic performance expectations placed on him on a regular basis strained their relationship. The experiences drove him to act in a less pressuring, more autonomy-supportive manner towards his own son by allowing him to choose when and if he wants to discuss his performances and by praising the contribution he makes to the team through carrying out less glamorous tasks:

Interview response from Peter

I sit in the car with Alex on the way home and if he wants to talk about [training or games] then we will talk about it. I don't bring it up with him... I'll wait and let him talk about it if he wants to talk about it... when I was playing my dad managed my team ... and my mum hated it because my dad and I would have a fight every single weekend. So I spoke to my dad about [coaching Alex] and ... he was like, ... 'that's great because you'll be spending more time with Alex ... but remember all the things that happened with us', and that was the biggest thing for me bar none because it was hell on earth.

Interviewer: So did you deliberately try and have a different relationship with Alex?

Completely different, completely different. ... my dad was always trying to push me, ... wanted me to be better than I was, because my dad was involved in junior football... my grandad was involved in football... my great grandad was the physio at [a performance focused club] ...so it was cyclical.

Peter's comments suggest that his footballing lineage may have had a part to play in why his father put excessive pressure on him to perform as a player, as his father had previously participated in a more performance-focused environment himself, as did his grandfather and great grandfather. Therefore, a pattern emerges of performance priorities being passed down through generations, and across coaching domains (i.e., competitive senior football to non-competitive youth football). This is until a reflective episode, such as that experienced between Peter and his father, breaks the cycle and leads to different (and in this case more adaptive) parent-coach behaviours being adopted.

For similar historical reasons, Kieran stated that he is cautious about how many performance critiques he gives his sons while coaching, although it was his father who endured an overly critical playing relationship with his grandfather:

Interview response from Kieran

Looking at my dad's childhood, my grandad was the coach of the team that he played in and [my dad told me that] he wrapped it [stopped playing] because he got a hard time off of my grandad so the enjoyment went out of it [for him]...[and] I don't want to put [similar] pressure on [my own kids when I coach them]... I mean I will speak to them in the house now and again ... but I try and let the other coaches [have those conversations with them]... I try and keep it separate, it doesn't always work mind you.

...It can be [conflicting] at times ... I try to treat them all the same so if I'm going to give one of the other boys a coaching point, I probably should give them [my boys] it as well but I [don't], maybe I'm taking the easy option because I don't want them to fall out with me in the house or whatever.

Discussion

Parent-coaches' hopes for their children's engagement in football are evidently multi-layered, and arguably self-serving, and this can determine what they think about and do in practice. Derek's and Peter's differing concerns for their children's character development demonstrate the diverse, personally meaningful values parent-coaches hold and look to pass on to their children through sport. This is not dissimilar to the findings of Trottier and Robitaille (2014), who found that 24 community coaches transferred their own values into the life skill development of their players. In a positive sense, these findings suggest that parent-coaches might enter coaching with a specific vision of what they want their child (and more loosely, other players) to take from the experience. This wider purpose of sport is a key foundation of positive youth development through sport (Whitley, Gould, Wright & Hayden, 2018). However, the individual targets parent-coaches have may or may not be consistent with positive youth development. For example, ego-promoting parents such as Peter have been shown to foster extrinsic forms of motivation in their child (O'Rourke, Smith, Smoll, & Cummings, 2014). For these coaches to make positive changes to their coaching practice, they would need to switch their attention to teaching other, more motivationally adaptive life skills that as a result of their biographies they may deem to be less important.

A risk highlighted by differential treatment of the parent-coach's child is that parent-coaches may be quick to explain away the more need-thwarting interactions they have with their child – which can be hazardous to their child's perceived need-

satisfaction – as simply fulfilling a parental duty (e.g., by reprimanding their child for poor behaviour). This also highlights that parent-coaches carry their perceived parenting responsibilities with them into coaching (Weiss & Fretwell, 2005). Therefore, promoting less need-thwarting ways for them to fulfil what they consider to be their parental duties might be meaningful for parent-coaches. Research in parenting has already generated advice for nurturing the parent-child relationship through need-supportive provisions (Joussemet, Landry, & Koestner, 2008). Future research might seek to integrate findings and recommendations from existing parent-child relationship research with work examining parent-child relations in a community coaching setting to further our understanding of effective interactions.

The coaches' priorities were developed from their own experiences of being coached by a parent. These findings reinforce the social influences of significant others that can permeate coaching behaviours (Carroll & Allen, 2021), while also demonstrating the power of experiencing coaching as an athlete in shaping the beliefs coaches hold and promote to others about effective practice (Cushion et al., 2003) (more findings and discussions around the influence of past playing experiences are given in the 'a coach's personal orientation' major theme section still to come). Researchers adopting a social constructivist view of coach learning have contended that these social influences reinforce and help maintain behaviour (e.g., Carroll & Allen, 2021; Elliott and Drummond, 2017). Carroll and Allen (2021) found that a coach's upbringing and past playing experience had shaped their view of effective coaching and translated into controlling behaviours observed in their practice. Beyond the contributions social approaches have already made to understanding sport-parenting (e.g., Burgess, Knight, & Mellalieu, 2016; Elliott & Drummond, 2015; Stefansen, Smette, & Strandbu, 2018), the present study, alongside past research on antecedent factors (Carroll & Allen, 2021), shows that blending a social perspective with a psychological one (i.e., SDT) when investigating reasons behind coaches' behaviour can generate new understanding of sport participation experiences because the analysis not only considers what coaches do, but also why coaches do it and at a wider, social level that goes beyond the individual (Elliott and Drummond, 2017). More work is thus encouraged to interrogate and explain coach behaviour by considering the range of social influences potentially at play rather than simply focusing on the individual.

Kieran explained that he typically instructs other coaches to supply his sons with feedback rather than let them hear it through him directly. While this strategy appeared to be well intended, it showed the potential for parent-coaches to jeopardize how much need support (in this instance structure) they provide their children as a result of engaging in what could be considered conflict-avoidant behaviours. There is thus every chance that his sons may receive essential information after the point where it could be used to change particular outcomes in (and stemming from) a performance due to the delay in relaying it through another coach. Equally, the intended feedback information could become distorted and less useful as a consequence of using a transmitter.

Peter's choice-based approach to initiating feedback conversations with his son could pose a similar competence-depriving risk if his son rarely, if ever, shows a desire to speak about his performance. Peter's group-level feedback may not be tailored enough to cover what his son could improve on. Therefore, it appears parent-coaches may be willing, consciously or not, to compromise on their effectiveness of coaching their child if they feel that doing so will protect the bond they have with them. The coaches' worry that conflict in their coach-athlete relationship could create problems in their parent-child relationship is validated by findings from Schmid, Bernstein, Shannon, Rishell, & Griffith (2015) in their study of the effects of dual relationships among seven female tennis players. The players felt coaching issues they experienced with their parent-coach negatively impacted their bond as family members. They also felt unable to complain to their parents about coaching issues for fear of causing further ripples at home. The findings from this study and the present study together show that parent-coaches and parent-coached players both worry about the familial consequences of their dual relationship, and it can cause avoidant behaviour to manifest on both sides.

Ironically, relying on avoidant communication strategies to sustain and protect relationships often inhibits conflict resolution and creates additional stress and tension (Kuster et al., 2015). Therefore, improving the motivational environment created by parent-coaches for their child may not only require identifying and addressing what they do that is actively thwarting their child's needs, but also what they do not do that is passively obstructing the fulfilment of their needs. The present finding offers an example within sport coaching of the need to distinguish between need-depriving and need-thwarting environmental conditions (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Over time the coaches' behaviour is still likely to reduce their sons' sense of self-determination

because they do not actively promote their need to feel capable of interacting effectively with their environment (i.e., competent), nor are they communicating their interest and interpersonal involvement with them by offering support and advice (i.e., relatedness).

Summary

In summary, the coaches' desires and concerns when coaching their child was shown to influence their behaviour in terms of the values they chose to instil, and their comfort with adopting less need-supportive strategies for their child compared to others. The sense of autonomy the coaches had by virtue of being parents also made them quicker to reprimand their child. Equally, the coaches showed open bias towards the needs of their child compared to others, and this set the tone for how they interacted with other players as a result. However, based on their own childhood experiences of being coached by a parent they feared for their own relationship with their child becoming eroded by coaching. Conflict avoidance strategies were common that both protected and jeopardised their relationship and their child's needs, albeit in a more passive, accumulative fashion. Together these findings reflect the impact parent-coaches' motivations for coaching and the tensions they experience can have on their interpersonal behaviour.

The child as a coaching tool

The second lower-order theme related to being a parent-coach captured how many of the coaches reported consulting with and observing their son to gauge what more they need to do to support them first and foremost, and secondly to support their teammates. Two sub-themes were developed from the data: insider information (and whether to use it), and parent-child collaboration (see Table 14).

Raw-data theme	Sub-theme
Using social activities to support son's relatedness	Insider information (and whether to use it)
Prioritising son's needs over others'	
Son increases awareness of intrateam disputes	

Basing coaching behaviours on how son would react	Parent-child collaboration
Consults son to evaluate coaching quality	

Table 14. *The child as a coaching tool.*

Insider information (and whether to use it)

Kieran spoke about setting relatedness-supportive agendas within his coaching, based on what he felt one of his sons needed at the time. For example, he created opportunities for his son to interact and form friendships with other players:

Interview response from Kieran

There is a large contingent within the team who go to the same high school and ...they were quite close together, so ...[I] deliberately split them up ... I'd have two or three of them with somebody else from another school, just to get that guy involved with the other boys. Now the reason maybe behind that is my own son ...he knows quite a lot of the boys but he's not pally with them because he's not in the same age group [in school] ... I noticed with him initially like he would be a wee bit withdrawn...he's quite shy, quite reserved, so...I was like, 'well how do I get him involved,' and that was my way of going about it.

Kieran went on to speak about how having his sons on the team also offered him access to insider information about issues occurring between players, so that he could respond quickly, if necessary, before relations got worse:

Interview response from Kieran

He's quite a clever wee guy, and he does pick up on things within the group... Aaron has actually came to me and said, 'within the group chat this has been said,' to make me aware of it, and then that's obviously going to impact on maybe the training now and again ...it was a tricky one because...at the time I was like, '*how do I [respond to this], do I ignore it, or do I speak to them about it,*' [emphasis added] and then it was the whole [worry of], '...won't they be wondering how I know about that?' you know what I mean, they're not stupid, they're going to go, 'one of his own boys has obviously told him,' so I was like, 'how is that going to have an impact on Aaron as well'.

Parent-child collaboration

Other coaches in the present study recounted times where they actively seek out feedback from their sons about their coaching:

Interview responses from James and Kyle

I ask [my son] Euan ... ‘how did you like the training session tonight, what do you think we could do to improve it, what do you like to do?’ I get ideas off Euan as well, [so] I suppose we bounce off one another (James).

I’m sure the other guys are the same, they test the water with their own boy about how things have been going and...talk about different kids and different circumstances (Kyle).

Discussion

The privileged insight parent-coaches may be afforded by their child into issues between teammates could be considered a benefit of their involvement. The advantage being that it enhances coaches’ ability to notice and respond to events – which can raise feelings of relatedness in players for the care and concern that doing so communicates (Sparks et al., 2015) – and also improve the peer-created motivational environment. Nevertheless, Kieran’s trepidation about what his response could mean for the fledgling relationship his son has with his teammates highlights a notable caveat of their involvement. If, as the results have already shown, parent-coaches’ love for their child can encourage them to put their best interests first, then it is possible that they might ignore, or at least consider ignoring as Kieren did (“how do I [respond to this], do I ignore it, or do I speak to them about it”) social issues among teammates that potentially pose a threat to their child’s relationships. And so, in this respect one could argue that parents’ involvement in coaching their child might be a risk factor for relatedness-depriving behaviours towards other players, because they might be wary of inadvertently disrupting or putting off course the social experiences they want and try to help their child have.

James’ and Kyle’s accounts showed clear intent to acknowledge their children’s thoughts and feelings and provide them with meaningful input into decisions, suggesting these could be other benefits some players receive as a result of their parent coaching them. Previous research by Weiss and Fretwell (2005) also examined the exchange of ‘insider information’ between parent-coaches and their child. In their study,

athletes and coaches were both found to enjoy the benefit of discussing session plans in advance, and for the coaches this also extended to evaluating the effectiveness of their coaching afterwards. The present study further emphasises this reflective benefit, as James and Kyle demonstrated that parent-coaches consulting their sons can increase their awareness of the effects of their behaviours on the players they coach. The present study also extends Weiss and Fretwell's work by detailing the implications for the coach-created motivational environment.

Summary

In summary, the coaches were prone to using their child's opinions and behaviours to identify and set coaching objectives and evaluate their practice. They also used their sons to gain an insight into intrateam dynamics that could affect their or others' experience, and if necessary, intervene. However, decisions were made with a constant awareness and prioritisation of the implications for their child's experience over others. Together, these findings highlight the way parent-coached players' motivational environments may be both improved and compromised if their parent-coach decides to use them as a coaching tool in their practice.

Hypersensitivity to their child's actions and others' perceptions

The third lower-order theme related to being a parent-coach was hypersensitivity to their child's actions and what others might think. From a motivational standpoint this characteristic was found to produce undesirable reactions from the coaches. Three sub-themes were generated from the coaches' responses that encapsulate this issue: emotional investment, favouritism, and disrespect (back) from the child (see Table 15).

Raw-data theme	Sub-theme
Chance to correct need-depriving and -thwarting behaviours at home	Emotional investment
More time committed to coaching makes me less tolerant of mistakes	
Knowing son's personality and faults increases sensitivity	

Empathy for parent cynicism from outside experience Less praise and more criticism for child to avoid accusations of favouritism Others' children given relatedness support to show equal treatment Internal pressure creates performative actions	Favouritism
Undermining position as coach leads to removal or passing son on Expecting criticism creates pre-emptive punishment – self-fulfilling prophecy	Disrespect (back) from the child

Table 15. Hypersensitivity to their child's actions and others' perceptions.

Emotional investment

Nathan stated that he is quicker to become frustrated when his son makes mistakes in a game than when others do because he has given him extra coaching in the lead up to games. Resulting in impulsivity and lack of emotional control in these moments and later (on reflection) regret:

Interview responses from Nathan

You're probably less tolerant of mistakes, being brutally honest and reflecting on it, I think because you've maybe spoken about what not to do before the game, you know, so you've invested a lot more of your time and emotion in it ... we've spoken about it [bad habit] over and over and over so you've got that frustration of we're trying to make you better [but the same mistakes keep happening].

You do feel regretful about it because that's not really what you're doing it for, and at that moment in time yeh you want them to be better ... but ultimately you want them to have fun, you know, that's really what it's all about so you will regret it.

Nathan also mentioned that during moments where he criticised his son's performance, he felt emboldened by the fact that afterwards, at home he could privately explain to his son any public criticisms he made about him when coaching:

Interview response from Nathan

But the advantage with it being your own child... you can tell them... I've said, 'look, Dad shouldn't have said that today, you did really well,' and what you'll do is you'll then emphasise those positives you know, the good goal they scored or the cracking challenge that was made.

Favouritism

An added factor found to impact on how psychologically supported parent-coaches make their child feel is impression management. Nathan spoke about how worries of being accused of showing favouritism towards his son by other parents reduced how much praise he tended to give him. He also admitted to increasing the public criticisms he made around his son's performances, which the below fieldnotes and Nathan's comments substantiate:

Fieldnote and interview response from Nathan

It's a football festival. Throughout the games Nathan's son, Declan, appeared to receive harsher treatment from his father than the other players did. He doesn't look as though he is enjoying himself and seems under pressure to perform. At one point in a match, he dribbles past two players then misplaces a pass. Nathan shouts, 'Declan, you've got to lift your head!' ignoring the great skill Declan displayed up until the misplaced pass. At another point, Declan takes a great shot at goal which is narrowly prevented from going in by the opposition's goalkeeper. Nathan instantly praises the goalkeeper by saying, 'Great save goalie!' but doesn't comment on Declan's shot whatsoever. Shortly afterwards, Declan takes another great shot at goal and Nathan remains subdued, not praising it. Eventually Declan does score and it's an excellent individual effort, taking the ball past a player then slotting it into the corner of the goal. All the parents watching cheer, meanwhile Nathan continues to stand looking unimpressed.

Because you're the coach, you don't really want to be singing the praises of your own child, you know...whereas if it was another [player] that done [something good] you probably would ... you rein it in because you don't want to be seen to be favouring your own [child], so they probably get the worse of both worlds, they probably don't get the praise they maybe deserve some times and they get more criticism because your

expectation's higher... my worry about what other parents think shouldn't really influence [how I behave], I should treat him the same way I do others but I think it's easy saying that.

Kyle also worried about being judged as favouring his son above other players. His solution was to foster a sense of relatedness across the group by adopting a consistently friendly communication style with players:

Interview response from Kyle

I'm trying to be fair to them all and make sure they're all involved and feel included...[by] having a bit of a laugh and joke with everyone, [so] that I'm not showing favouritism, and I'm not treating my stepson any harder than the rest of them or showing him any more favouritism than the rest of them and all that kind of stuff.

Nathan's account points out that the source of parent-coaches' pressure to manage impressions can be internally driven rather than externally applied through overt comments made by others. The question of where such internal pressure can come from was explored through Nathan's comment that "my older boy played football and so I've seen the other side of it as well." This comment infers that the pressure Nathan put himself under at least partly came about from watching his other child be coached by someone who he judged as showing favouritism. This past judgement seemed to feed Nathan's worry over other parents thinking similarly of him. Peter, meanwhile, spoke more generally about the strained experience of being a parent and carrying expectations for how other people should look after his child:

Interview response from Peter

I would always be conscious of the fact that if I wasn't here...how would I want someone else interacting with my child...I'm probably more conscious of the parents standing at the side than I am of the kids.

Together, the coaches' comments hint at the empathy parent-coaches have towards the experience of watching others manage your child, and evidently this perspective can create an internal pressure that, as Nathan documented, may be a precursor for performative actions that attempt to appease other parents, at the expense of their own child's psychological support needs. It should also be acknowledged that Kyle felt motivated to be neutral to all his players, including his son. Therefore, the implications of the internal pressure parent-coaches can feel for the motivational

environment they go on to create is clearly nuanced and depends on other factors such as the coaching context and the characteristics of each individual coach.

Disrespect (back) from the child

The final form of hypersensitivity found in the coaches' interview responses and observations that had implications for the coach-created motivational environment was evident in Anthony's comment about tensions with his son and another example of an incident another parent-coach experienced with his son where parent-coaches were not being given the same level of respect afforded to other coaches:

Interview responses from Anthony

[When Luke has] kinda kicked off and he's just not listening to me, I've had to say to one of the other coaches, 'take him away and give him a verbal warning,'...that's the only thing that will maybe rile me sometimes you know when you're not getting through to him.

...An instance actually, it wasn't my son it was Jacob's son at the tournament ... Jacob had kinda gave him instructions and he might have been a wee bit too harsh but his son kinda went like that to him *imitates rude gesture* right so, you know, and he took him off you know...so I took the team after the game and I said, 'see before we go any further, see on the park when you are playing there's no father-son, it's coach-player... -it's disrespectful when you are arguing or trying to debate a decision.

Anthony passing Luke onto other coaches and publicly calling him out could be interpreted as relatedness-thwarting behaviour because it is distant and unfriendly. His coaching colleague, Jacob, appeared to have similar problems with his own son, suggesting it may be a shared experience and response for parent-coaches.

Discussion

Parents' emotional investment in their child's sport participation has been found numerous times in the research (e.g., Dorsch et al., 2019; Elliott & Drummond, 2013; Furusa, Knight & Hill, 2021), but usually in the traditional role of spectator and caregiver rather than coach (see Weiss and Fretwell, 2005 for an exception). Across these studies, parents were found to be highly competitive and engaged in emotional behaviours whenever they felt frustrated with their child's performance or believed their child was being unfairly treated. These reactions were often borne out of empathy for their child's experience or in the parent's desire for them to succeed in competition and

one day reach a high level in their sport. Nathan's account supports the possibility that coaching your child magnifies a parent's emotional investment by coupling the empathy parents express when watching their child (e.g., Knight & Holt, 2014) with the time and effort parent-coaches like Nathan put into coach their child before, during, and after training sessions and matches. This added emotional expense appeared to raise Nathan's expectations of his son's performance, and influenced his tendency to deliver critical comments on his performance that might thwart perceptions of competence. It is widely accepted that athlete learning often takes a non-linear trajectory (Correia, Carvalho, Araújo, Pereira, & Davids, 2019), and performance is transitory and susceptible to being impacted by many forces outside of an athlete's control (Raglin, 1992; Schmidt, 1988). Therefore, it is naïve for coaches to expect equal returns on their efforts to help players perform better. Yet the inclination to be impatient and overly demanding seems to be there for Nathan. The impulsivity and lack of emotional control in these moments was even identified by Nathan upon reflection and is similar to findings in previous research (e.g., Weiss & Fretwell, 2005).

Reacting emotionally to their child's mistake jeopardises their perceptions of competence, and perhaps relatedness too if criticisms are levelled enough times that the parent-child relationship appears jaded and contingent on performance. Research has acknowledged the importance of emotional intelligence, and particularly self-awareness, for parents to control their emotional impulses and display positive spectator behaviour (Harwood & Knight, 2015; Vincent & Christensen, 2015). Notably, a workshop aimed at developing parents' self-awareness and underpinned by SDT principles received positive reviews from the participants (Vincent & Christensen, 2015). However, the effectiveness of the workshop was not formally assessed, nor was the unique role of the parent-coach – and the increased emotional challenges it can bring. Thus, future intervention studies could take inspiration from these wider attempts at improving the behaviour of parents in sport and empirically evaluate the differences made to coaching behaviours among parent-coaches.

The finding that coaches redress their criticisms of their child with positive feedback, often later and at home, mirrors a finding by Elliott and Drummond (2017) in their qualitative study of the effects of parent-coaches in junior Australian football. There is, therefore, more evidence to suggest that parent-coaches may feel empowered to behave in a critical, need-thwarting manner towards their child when coaching by

virtue of the opportunity they have to redress their actions outside of coaching. Given the possibility that such reprisals may not do enough to buffer earlier attacks on a player's perceived competence raises a question over why parent-coaches feel justified and content with this dynamic. Future research should interrogate parent-coaches' sense of privilege in these regards, in order to elicit insight that coach developers could use to encourage parent-coach behaviours that take less risk on their child's need satisfaction.

Nathan's observed and self-reported behaviour can be seen as competence-thwarting in that he placed emphasis on his son's mistakes, while giving him less praise than his teammates (Smith et al., 2015). The coach's strategy for averting accusations of favouritism aligns with that taken by parent-coaches examined in previous work. For example, Elliott and Drummond (2017) found that the parent-coaches in their study also recognised the potential harm they could cause to their child by giving them harsher feedback and less recognition of good performances than their teammates, but continued on with this trend of behaviour anyway (Elliott & Drummond, 2017). However, the present study is the first to consider the implications of favouritism in youth sport coaching from an SDT perspective and with parent-coaches in mind. This finding offers an example of impression management from coaches affecting the motivational environment youth players are exposed to when participating in grassroots football.

Interestingly, Nathan was adamant that the parents of other players in his team were not putting pressure on him to act differently towards his child, so most, if not all of the pressure he felt emanated from himself rather than others. In contrast, previous research has found parent-coaches report being openly accused of showing favouritism towards their child (Elliott & Drummond, 2017), and this judgement has been observed among teammates of parent-coaches' sons as well (Weiss & Fretwell, 2005). Therefore, more work is needed that examines the underlying motives and factors that determine parent-coaches' reactions to worries over favouritism, as opposed to simply looking at the consequent effects on their own. Such work might help coach developers to better understand parent-coaches' perspectives and inform development opportunities that could support and develop critical reflection.

Receiving respect from players is a high priority for coaches in general, and coaches are known to regularly monitor and take action to protect the respect they have

either built up or wish to build up with players (e.g., Potrac et al., 2002). The disrespect from their child that some coaches discussed shows how the dual role of parenting and coaching one's child can increase this tension by presenting the added problem of how to earn and maintain the respect of all players (including one's child). At the same time, they are navigating outside presumptions of preferential treatment towards a family member, which explains why altercations between parent-coaches and their child have been documented in the past (Weiss & Fretwell, 2005). The authors detected frustration on both sides of the relationship when parent-coached players spoke out against what they perceived as unfair criticism from their parent, and in turn, parent-coaches would become annoyed about their child protesting in front of other players and not listening to them. Anthony's feelings during moments where he felt disrespected by his son's behaviour ("I wish the ground would open up and swallow me because it's like you know, 'I need to react, I need to do something.'") appear desperate and indicate how important he felt reacting was to maintaining respect amongst his players. The second-hand account he gave of Jacob's reaction to a similar incident with his son reinforces the high tensions, and 'stakes', coaches associate with these situations.

In Anthony's case and from his perspective, his son Luke was protesting against his instructions, but when the tenets of SDT are considered, Luke could equally have been trying to voice his own opinion, which Anthony refused to acknowledge and thus, devalued (Bartholomew et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2015). Furthermore, Anthony viewed Jacob's treatment of his son in the lead up to the offensive gesture as "a bit too harsh". Although speculative, it is possible, therefore, that Jacob provoked his son to react in a way he perceived as disrespectful. By doing so, parent-coaches may ignite rebellious responses in their child that create the very situations they wish to avoid. Therefore, the present finding underscores the reciprocal nature of the coach-athlete relationship (Mageu & Vallerand, 2003). Self-fulfilling prophecies are already known to manifest and interfere with the coach-created motivational environment. For example, players perceived as holding controlled motivations for their sport have been found to receive less autonomy-supportive, more controlling treatment from their coach in return (Carroll & Allen, 2021; Rocchi et al., 2013). The present study offers further detection of this phenomena occurring and reveals the tensions of coaching one's child as a factor that potentially increases the likelihood of controlling coaching behaviours being exhibited. However, need-supportive coaching can also stem from perceiving players to

have controlled motivations, as the earlier ‘perceptions of athletes’ motivation’ lower-order-theme section and Carroll and Allen’s (2021) findings evidence. Therefore, the entangled variable of operating as a parent-coach needs to be further examined to arrive at surer conclusions over what might happen to the coach-created motivational environment as a result of parent-child clashes, and how best to improve parent-coaches’ handling of these situations.

Summary

In summary, combining the roles of parent and coach was shown to compound the emotional investment a parent watching from the side-lines already feels, leading to increased expectations around their child’s performance. Consequently, more critical, less competence-supportive feedback was often delivered, and having sustained access to their child to increase praise privately and afterwards was given as a solution for this behavioural response. The parent-coaches also carried perceived suspicion from other parents that they might coach in favour of their own child with them in their practice, and this ongoing concern made some (but not all) of the coaches colder and more distant toward their child compared to other players, thus jeopardising their child’s feelings of relatedness. Further tension, connected to impression management, made the coaches react strongly to signs of dissent by their child by behaving in a controlling manner. Throughout these findings, the key learning was the importance of parent-coaches developing self-awareness as a form of emotional intelligence to help them navigate the challenges of coaching their child and foster an adaptive coach-created motivational environment for all players.

Parenthood as coach education

Ironically, although the ‘hypersensitivity to their child’s actions and others’ perceptions’ lower-order theme section above documented how many of the parent-coaches insisted on their child decompartmentalising their relationship, there was evidence to suggest that the coaches brought various tactics and considerations from homelife into their coaching. Two sub-themes are associated with the next lower-order theme: what works at home can work in coaching, and learning to understanding the child leads to better need support for others (see Table 16).

Raw-data theme	Sub-theme
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Childrens' reactions to instruction inform strategies used in coaching Sanctions and forfeits from home carried over to coaching Learning to acknowledge players' thoughts from being a parent Methods for bonding with son cross over to coaching	What works at home can work in coaching
Son shows merit of offering rationale to players Parenthood teaches patience for managing less enthusiastic athletes Experiencing others misjudge son offers open mindedness with unfamiliar children Thought of someone being forceful with son discourages controlling behaviour in coaching Valuing praise comes from parenthood	Learning to understanding the child leads to better need support for others

Table 16. Parenthood as coach education.

What works at home can work in coaching

Kyle and Peter described how they felt inclined to use task-contingent rewards – a controlling mechanism – to motivate players because this strategy had proven to be useful in their parenting:

Interview responses from Kyle and Peter

To try and make the session go well and for them to get something out of it...the carrot and stick approach sometimes is needed ...it's a bit of experience I suppose...being a parent...you [know how to] get the best out of kids, and you are doing that day in day out you know, [where if you] need something done [you say], 'if you do that we'll think about doing that' (Kyle).

[If] one of the kids comes up at the start of the session asking if they can play pac-man tonight, my stock answer is, 'we'll see,' rather than a yes or a no. I've got three kids of my own so, 'we'll see,' is my stock answer for a lot of things...[saying, 'we'll see',] gives you the kinda *power card* [emphasis added] ...I kinda would relate it all back to being a dad...you know when to say no, when to say yes, and when to say, 'we'll see,' ...from a coaching perspective the meaningful reaction would be to *get the kids to do what the coach wants* [emphasis added].

Learning to understanding the child leads to better need support for others

Evidence that motivationally adaptive behaviours can be carried over from parenting too was provided by Anthony, who spoke about the lessons he learned on how to work with para footballers from raising his son, Luke, who has additional support needs. He reported feeling patient with players making mistakes (i.e., competence-supportive), empathetic about, attuned to, and proactive in handling players' fluctuating emotions and problems outside of sport (i.e., relatedness-supportive), and aware of the need to help players understand the reasoning behind his restrictions (i.e., autonomy-supportive) as a result of being Luke's parent:

Fieldnote and interview responses from Anthony

It's midway through a training session and Anthony has set up three drills that different groups of players take part in (a dribbling one, shooting one, and passing one).

Anthony slowly explains and demonstrates each drill in an attempt to set clear expectations for the players. He then sets them off, but it quickly becomes apparent that they are experiencing issues in understanding and following his instructions. Because these issues are flagging up simultaneously at all three stations, Anthony looks slightly flustered, but remains patient in the way he reexplains and redemonstrates each drill.

Aye, it [being a parent] certainly helped...he [son] has a lot of, I wouldn't say anger but it's certainly frustrations, so dealing with him kicking off [prepares you for similar incidents with other players]...

...It's the same group of players we've had for a few years now so you can tell if somebody's [distressed about something] ...just by ... the way they're behaving and... you know we're going, 'that's unusual,' so you start thinking there's been a trigger for that. That's something I've picked up through Luke's behaviours over the years, he's come in [behaving strangely] and [you think]... 'right we'll need to trace our steps back here, something's happened somewhere that's got him like that,'...

Discussion

The coaches appeared to draw on their experiences as parents to assist with their coaching. In some cases, this resulted in parent-coaches controlling their children and also their players. Although Peter and Kyle's case showed that need-thwarting parenting behaviours can also be extended to teammates of the parent-coached player, with the coaches' parenting beliefs underpinning their coaching beliefs and subsequently guiding their coaching behaviours. Parent knowledge was also used to support players.

Knowing his son so intimately placed Anthony in a prime position to assess and respond to his individual needs, which has been recorded in the past as key potential benefit for parent-coached players (Witt & Dangi, 2018). It also offered Anthony a base from which he was able to learn how to meet the needs of many of his other players as an added benefit and possible counterbalance to some of the heuristic led strategies new community coaches might otherwise rely upon to carry out their roles. Therefore, the observed tendency of parent-coaches to use parenting tactics within their coaching practice can clearly have contrasting effects from a motivational perspective. Parent-coaches evidently come to coaching with parenting-turned-coaching strategies and beliefs ready to be utilised in an attempt to cope with the problems they encounter.

It is possible that inexperienced parent-coaches might draw on their parenting experiences in an attempt to compensate for a lack of first-hand knowledge about relationship building in a youth coaching role. The implication is that parenting tactics may be carried into youth coaching as heuristics that new parent-coaches use while 'figuring out' how best to engage with their players. This finding thus illustrates the importance and strength of experiential learning as a pathway for improving coaches' practice (Cronin & Lowes, 2016), as the coaches had already applied their parenting strategies at home and seen and experienced their effects "day in, day out" (Kyle), and therefore felt comfortable transferring and adopting these strategies within a coaching space.

Summary

In summary, the coaches' experience as parents far outweighed their experience as coaches. It perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the tactics and beliefs they developed from raising their child were redeployed in their combined role as parent-coaches. Such transference was shown to perpetuate both need-supportive and need-thwarting styles of interaction depending on how the coaches approached parenting and what wider parenting experiences they had that distinguished them from each other.

Chapter 7. Coach's personal orientation

The fourth major theme captured the coaches' personal orientation toward need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting coaching, and focused on the experiences influencing their development. Two lower-order themes are discussed in relation to the values the coaches held that acted as the genesis for their coaching beliefs and behaviours: influence of significant others on coaching values, and influence of outside values transferred into coaching. Each theme shares additional layers of explanations the coaches gave for their interpersonal coaching behaviours, some of which are linked to reactions and ways of working already established, and quoted, in previous sections.

Influence of significant others on coaching values

The coaches reported being influenced in their coaching behaviours by a broad range of personally significant people. According to the coaches, each person taught them an important lesson about working with others on an interpersonal level, either through explicit advice that they gave, or behaviour that they modelled within or outside of sport. These types of significant people were reflected across four sub-themes: “you don't lick it off the ground, you become your parent don't you”; past coaches; sport participants, and local ‘experts’ on working with young people (see Table 17).

Raw-data theme	Sub-theme
Structured upbringing encourages value of structure in coaching and work Friendly, joking personality comes from father	“You don't lick it off the ground, you become your parent don't you”
Generational shift away from controlling behaviours Actively embracing versus rejecting past coach behaviours	Past coaches
Supporting players reveals the importance of relatedness in coaching	Sport participants

Taking coaching advice at face value	Local ‘experts’ on working with young people
Professional who work with children use control	

Table 17. Influence of significant others on coaching values.

“You don’t lick it off the ground, you become your parent don’t you”

Starting with parents, the sentiment across the coaches was “eventually I think everybody just turns into their parent” (James). Indeed, many of the coaches’ values, beliefs, and behaviours were attributed to lessons they learned from experiences with their parents. For example, Peter was frequently observed demonstrating tasks to his players and providing them with instructions and organisation to structure their environment. He explained that he valued structure highly, partly because of his upbringing:

Fieldnote and interview response from Peter

It is midway through a training session, and Peter is organising the boys into positions for a match by telling them, with a pat on the head, ‘you’re playing defence, you’re playing midfield, and you’re playing up front.’

Kids need structure, simple as that...in terms of, ‘we’ll do this, we’ll do that, and then we’ll do this.’...I’m an only child who’s mum never worked until I was maybe 10 or 11 or something like that, so I always had structure...so it is ingrained [in me] as I am very diary driven...I live by a diary.

The predictability of Peter’s structured environment as a child is also reflected in the consistency of the environment he reported developing for his players as a coach:

Interview response from Peter

95% of the time I’ll give positive feedback, that other 5% is split between giving constructive feedback and...negative feedback. I think there has to be consistency because that would then lead back to the whole structure thing...I don’t want the kids turning up every single [week] going, ‘oh I wonder if Peter is gonna be in tonight’. You can’t have that.

Behaving in a consistent and predictable manner as a coach can aid the development of trust within the dynamics of the coach-athlete relationship because players know what to expect during interactions, thereby leading to feelings of relatedness (Jowett & Meek, 2000). It seems the structure given to Peter by his mother encouraged Peter's belief in this motivational process. A similar commitment to treating players in a consistent, relatedness-supportive manner was seen in James. He regularly used humour to signal the pleasure he took from being around players. The fieldnote below demonstrates this tendency, while an interview excerpt revealed the influence his parents had in shaping his view:

Fieldnote and interview response from James

It's early into a training session and James has set up a shooting drill for the players. One boy scores consistently, prompting James to shout humorously, 'he never misses!'

Interviewer: When I see you joking with the kids, what's the reason for the use of humour?

I've always been like that...I suppose [I got it] from my dad. He was the exact same as myself, you don't lick it off the ground you become your parent don't you that's what happens.

Interviewer: ...What kind of relationship did you have with your dad?

A good one...he was always approachable...you just see that's the right way to be...my mum was the same, I've had a good upbringing.

Past coaches

Coaches traditionally serve an 'apprenticeship of observation' as athletes (Cushion et al., 2003; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2003), first learning to coach through watching, interacting with, and being led by their former coaches. Experiences as players were reported as playing a role in laying the foundations for the coaches' core values and beliefs in coaching. There were coaching behaviours the coaches experienced as players that they actively carried into their own practice, while other behaviours were actively rejected in favour of opposite forms of interacting. To illustrate, Kieran shared two contrasting coach-athlete relationships he had, firstly with a coach he believed was highly need-thwarting, and secondly with one he felt was highly need-supportive, explaining that they helped him understand the lasting impact he wanted to have on players. Specifically, because of these two coaches he tried to

avoid responding harshly to player mistakes (competence-thwarting behaviour) or using intimidation tactics (controlling behaviour) to elicit effort. Instead, he aimed to create more relatedness-supportive conditions by communicating in a warm, friendly manner, showing them unconditional regard, and taking an interest in their lives outside of football:

Fieldnotes and interview response from Kieran

It's a training night and Kieran has set up a possession drill. At one point, a player panics on the ball, and loses possession. Kieran shouts over, 'Unlucky X, two minds, you were caught in two minds' laughing as he does.

It's a match night, and as Kieran's team plays he walks up and down the side-line, occasionally joking about events happening within the match with players at the side and his assistant coach, as well as the parents.

They think about the result quite a lot so I can sense when they're a little bit down and a need to lighten the mood with them so I will have some laughs and jokes with them, talk about their school, talk about things like if they've got a girlfriend *laughs* and just kinda [act] like a pal...just to make them feel relaxed about us [the coaches] and try and get them to be less down about [the result if we lose], less uptight about it...I think part of my personality [encourages this behaviour] but when I was their age and I played football it was *serious all the time* [emphasis added], and I didn't really enjoy it... [so] I moved team when I was about 17/18 and that coach was way more relaxed with us and I enjoyed that a lot more [than] when I was younger...I just didn't like [the last coach]...if I seen the guy in the street I would walk right by him, whereas the other guy I would make a point of going and speaking to him cause I had that respect for him...the second coach...I don't think he had to do any motivating in terms of individually I just think he came and [created an] atmosphere around the rest of the guys and him [that] was so much more *relaxed* [emphasis added], I used to just look forward to going and playing football on a Saturday because...*it didn't matter what the result was* [emphasis added], I knew that if I tried my best that that was always good enough for him and the rest of the guys...whereas the...first coach, the motivation there was...I didn't want to make a mistake, it was one of those ones, we *used to [be] thankful actually if the game was called off* [emphasis added], like, 'yes the game's off, don't need to worry about it.'...I don't want [my own players] to chuck the game because they aren't enjoying it at this age, I think they need to enjoy it.

What is noticeable in the account given is the SDT motivational sequence on display. With the more need-supportive coach, Kieran was intrinsically motivated towards participating, meanwhile the apprehension he felt when playing under the more need-thwarting coach characterised a more controlled, externally regulated motivation type (Deci & Ryan, 2002). These varying states emphasise the notable difference in Kieran's two experiences and paint a vivid picture of why Kieran appeared to replicate, and also reject certain coaching behaviours within his personal practice.

The coaches also alluded to a generational shift away from the traditional, maladaptive forms of youth coaching they more frequently experienced as players. For example, Anthony asserted that “everything's different [now]” in reference to the more need-thwarting behaviours his past coaches exhibited in comparison to himself. He spoke about rejecting the competence- and relatedness-thwarting behaviours his past coaches regularly adopted when providing feedback, and instead using invitational language that offers guidance and structure but at the same time respects players' autonomy to choose what to do next (Cheon, Reeve, & Vansteenkiste, 2020):

Interview response from Anthony

I would never say, 'you're doing that wrong,' ...I would never kind of single someone out and say, 'that's wrong,' I'd saddle up beside them and say, 'why don't we try it that way?' ...It's not something I think about a lot, but I just think I wouldn't like...someone shouting [that] to me...that's counterproductive.

Interviewer: How were you coached, was it that way or was it different?

It was kind of similar, it was just kind of shouty, it was a bit different, everything was back then, 30 year ago, everything's different [now], things have changed...the approaches I mean, because [back then] it was always grumpy old guys just kind of shouting...I just wanted to play... [so] you're just kind of like that, 'ok,' [in response] you know, just [wanting them to] get on with it.

The strategy adopted by Anthony ensures that the informational, rather than controlling aspect of his feedback remains salient, which aids autonomous action from players (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003):

Sport participants

The third significant other who was found to be capable of shaping a coach's personal orientation was players. Anthony reported how having to support his players'

fragile self-esteem made him view his role as their coach as being about more than just instruction on how to play football. Indeed, regularly learning about players' personal troubles pushed him to offer them pastoral care too, by engaging them in non-coaching related conversation and showing care and concern for their personal well-being:

Interview response from Anthony

I've always said that we're like a family or a community rather than like a team because they rely on you, you know, they do, more than people know or think. You are kinda up there you know in their [lives], probably they listen to you more than their parents some of them so...you need to be a friend to these guys...and a lot of the older ones will ask [for] advice at work or problems they're having at work if they're maybe getting bullied or something at work and whatever, and we can give them advice and whatever as well, so aye it goes beyond just coaching.

Anthony had come to view these relatedness-supportive behaviours as part of his responsibilities and had thus embedded them within his personal coaching values and beliefs.

Local 'experts' on working with young people

Outside of coaches enrolled in university programmes, many have not partaken in formal coach education that explicitly considers or offers training on embedding SDT principles within personal practice, nor have they been exposed to or engaged with scientific reports documenting the effects and features of adaptive versus maladaptive coaching environments. This is partly due to the tendency for national governing body workshops to focus more on content for sessions and personal beliefs rather than research evidence around how to work with athletes (Cushion et al., 2003). For the coaches in the present study, their coaching knowledge had mainly been acquired informally through interacting with locally accessible individuals whose opinions they deemed to be credible. These individuals were considered reliable sources of information due to their experience of working with children extensively and/or professionally. Coach mentors, tutors, and teachers made up the list of local 'experts' the coaches called upon to help shape their personal orientation towards coaching.

Starting with mentors, the standard club coaches attributed part of their learning as coaches to the mentorship they received from a more experienced coach at the club, Graham. Informal mentoring is commonplace within sport coaching, often developing

organically as novice and more expert coaches begin working together (Bloom, Durand-Bush, Schinke, & Salmela, 1998). This relationship can offer numerous benefits for the mentee's development, from improving ideas they have for session content to increasing their pedagogical knowledge and boosting their confidence (Hall, Cowan, & Vickery, 2019). To illustrate, James spoke about how observing Graham's coaching encouraged him to offer athletes more competence support by providing clearer explanations of drills:

Interview response from James

See the way he tells them what to do, he breaks it down a lot better, he breaks it down into stages...so they all know what they're doing at the exact same time, whereas I would just [say] straight away, 'right go run around the cones and put it in the goal,'...so I'm learning that way off Graham...if I hadn't worked with him a couple of session I'd have just kept going the way I was doing it. I'm not saying the way I was doing it was wrong but the way he does it, it seems simpler for the wains [i.e., kids] to follow.

However, based on Graham's guidance, the Standard club coaches were also encouraged to value and engage in more maladaptive forms of behaviour. For instance, Kyle felt inclined to exclude players for misbehaving (a controlling and relatedness-thwarting tactic, in that it involves punishment for non-compliance, and isolates players away from others in the environment):

Interview response from Kyle

Excluding [players] from an activity is just when they've been warned a couple of times and we've just learnt that that's sometimes the way you need to deal with stuff, so it's an evolving thing...Graham talks about if someone's messing about they're obviously looking for attention, [so] he gives you tips on how to deal with that particular thing or you know implementing the exclusion thing.

The same phenomenon was seen occurring through the Legacy coaches' interactions with coach tutors at the SFA. For example, Kieran's tendency to encourage ego involvement in athletes through persistent use of competition was in part encouraged by SFA tutors:

Interview response from Kieran

I think they respond well to a competitive element within the group, so for example we were doing something last night actually that was just a basic passing drill and it was like, 'I'm...giving you 20 seconds to do this and I want you to count how many passes you do one touch, nice and quick...when I say go I want one of you to count how many passes you do,' and then [I] go down the line and get them to give their amount kinda thing...like, 'aw we done like 35 passes,' or whatever. I just feel as though if you give them a little bit of competition, they're just naturally competitive so they're like, 'we want to win this,' sort of thing and they'll just go at it a little bit quicker...I've been on coaching courses where they've basically said, 'always try and [make drills competitive], kids love to be competitive,' so the guys who have ran those courses have highlighted that to me and I've just kinda responded to that.

Furthermore, Nathan felt encouraged to use tangible rewards to motivate his players through listening to tutors on the coaching courses he attended:

Fieldnote and interview response from Nathan

Nathan begins the training session by gathering the team round and saying, 'listen, there's three trophies up for grabs tonight for best trainer, so listen up!' Later on in the session, Nathan sets up a game of cross bar challenge by having the players stand side by side around the perimeter of the box with a ball each. Before explaining how the game works, Nathan reminds the players about the trophies by saying, 'Listen guys, there's a trophy up for grabs, we're giving out trophies tonight and we've got one for the winner of cross bar challenge!' The kids look excited by this. During the game, after the first seven or eight players fail to hit the cross bar with their ball, Michael jokingly shouts, 'No one want this trophy then?'

Certainly, through the coaching courses that was emphasised that that's a good way of getting players to buy in [to what you are asking them to do].

The sentiment across the coaches' accounts was that they followed the advice of their tutors because "you assume that what you're being shown [at coaching courses] is the way to go," (Nathan), highlighting the credibility course tutors are unconsciously given and the influence their messages are capable of having over coaches' personal orientation.

The final type of local expert found to have the capacity to influence coaches' behaviours was teachers. Peter's current and past partners were both primary teachers, and they were found to have a direct influence on his coaching behaviours through

advice they gave him around working with young people. For example, Peter's tendency to threaten or use punishments in response to misbehaviour from players is a controlling teaching tactic they suggested to him, having seemingly utilised it regularly within their jobs:

Interview response from Peter

My partner is a teacher, so that's what helps me [know what to do], because obviously when you're a teacher you're in an environment where you're looking after a group of kids and it's very similar to doing a little bit of crowd control...in terms of the discipline of, well, if they're not doing what they're told, what's the forfeit, in terms of, 'alright ok stop...you need to do five press ups,' or whatever the case may be...My ex-wife is a teacher [too]...I hear stories from school from both of them in terms of how they deal with "problem children" and how they deal with the attitude that they get and this, that, and the other thing, and obviously football is completely different [but] you're still dealing with the same age group and the same issues that kids have.

Discussion

The coaches' upbringing influenced their personal values and beliefs about interacting with people, and internalising these principles then influenced how they interpreted their responsibilities as coaches and how they felt coaches should behave. This impact shares similarities with findings from Carroll and Allen's (2021) study of community football and swimming coaches, wherein lessons the coaches learned from their parents were shown to contribute to why they valued and displayed controlling coaching behaviours in their practice. From a modelling perspective, the present findings also revealed the potential impact of coaches' upbringing on their provision of structure and interpersonal involvement. Connecting coaches' personal orientation to their provision of structure and interpersonal involvement without supports for autonomy having a mediating impact on the relationship (or at least not a salient one) signals the capacity for environmental dimensions of coach behaviour to share antecedent factors but still have independent consequences for the way coaches behave. This assertion is arguably not reflected in the literature to date. The lack of research examining influences on coaches' provision of structure and interpersonal involvement has likely contributed to this 'ringfencing' of antecedent factors connected to coaches' support for players' autonomy, as described by Mageau and Vallerand's (2003) representation of the coach-athlete motivational sequence. In their model any influence

from the coach, context, or athlete is ‘closed off from’ the satisfaction or frustration of players’ need for competence and relatedness. This study demonstrate the need to advance such representations as new knowledge and understanding emerges on the components encompassing this framework.

Several of the community coaches felt their coaching beliefs and behaviours were fundamentally influenced by the positive and less positive practices of past coaches. The present findings, as well as previous perception-based research (Smith et al., 2016; Stebbings et al., 2011) add credence to the notion that there is growing support for developing and working with youth players in a need-supportive manner. This style of interaction has become popularised in recent years, hence the proliferation of training programmes geared towards improving the coach-created motivational environment (e.g., Duda, 2013). Of course, the generational improvements detected in the coaches’ responses do not guarantee widespread enhancements to their behaviour given the individual agency afforded to them – an argument supported by the sustained prevalence of need-depriving and -thwarting behaviours in today’s youth coaching landscape that have been seen in independent observer reports (Langdon et al., 2015; Tessier et al., 2013). However, unpacking the experiences coaches gain through an apprenticeship of observation could offer a useful starting point for conversations with coaches during behaviour change interventions. This entry point is accessible too given the tendency for coaches to have past playing experience of some form (Gilbert, Cote, & Mallett, 2006; Rynne & Mallett, 2012).

Another finding worth discussing is the notion that coaches adopt new beliefs and behaviours out of the experiences they share with players. This view echoes previous research showing alignment between a coach’s experience coaching young swimmers and their reflection on the impact more controlling behaviours had on the energy they put into tasks, which encouraged these behaviours in future interactions (Carroll & Allen, 2021). Coupled together, they demonstrate interaction between antecedent factors responsible for coaches’ motivational strategies, namely a coach’s personal orientation and athletes’ characteristics (Occhino et al., 2014).

The coaches also conformed to the view that advice received from national governing body tutors or coach mentors is to be believed and uncritically adopted. This perspective evidently can have good or bad implications depending on the types of

motivational environments tutors or other coaches promote, as the coaches were prone to taking on board whatever advice they were given. This passivity seemed borne out of ignorance for the motivational implications of coaching behaviours both from the coaches and also the coach mentor and SFA tutors that were mentioned (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003). Therefore, the present findings hint at the need for SDT based training programmes to be aimed not only at coaches, but also coach tutors, to help ensure that the messages coaches receive from more expert individuals show consideration for the impact coaching behaviours can have on players' psychological needs and motivational orientation.

Where advice reportedly offered by educators is concerned, a plethora of studies have documented the varied quality of the motivational environment created by teachers for their students (Vasconcellos et al., 2020; Reeve, 2009). Putting blind faith in teachers' advice based on them being professionals who work with children on a frequent basis is therefore problematic and has parallels with the credibility and value the coaches assigned to a coach mentor and SFA tutors' advice. This finding therefore reiterates the sway locally accessible experts can have on coaches' behaviours through the practices they prescribe. They also demonstrate how the shared learning spaces teachers and coaches often co-inhabit can influence the interpersonal strategies that they each follow (Armour, 2013).

Summary

Overall, the findings around significant others described in this section offer valuable insight into meaningful relationships influencing how community coaches think about coaching and why. Past coaches, coach mentors, SFA tutors, players, parents, and professional educators working with children were all found to influence how the coaches thought and behaved, with clear connections made between these influences and environmental dimensions of the coach-created motivational environment. The findings serve to illustrate the long list of individuals that can encourage coaches to think like they do about coaching and effective practice (Carroll & Allen, 2021).

Influence of outside values transferred into coaching

It has long been recognised that coaches bring their personal biographies with them when carrying out their roles. Indeed, lived experiences such as those already

documented in the present study (e.g., past playing experience, mentoring) act as knowledge frameworks upon which coaches build their practice and to which coach education attempts to add further learning (Cushion et al, 2003; Stodter & Cushion, 2014; Werthner & Trudel, 2009). However, research attention has mostly been given to illustrating and understanding the values and consequent characteristics coaches develop through experiences they gained within sport. Meanwhile, what coaches go through and experience outside of sport has largely been overlooked. This is despite the potential for outside life events to help explain coaching behaviours and aid coach developers in understanding and working with the different back stories of those they are supporting (Carroll & Allen, 2021). For example, Australian Olympic coach Cliff Mallett attributed his orientation towards an autonomy-supportive coaching approach to his background as a physical education teacher (Mallet, 2005). In the present study the coaches' values, beliefs, and resulting behaviours were found to be shaped by experiences outside of coaching that impacted them in significant and diverse ways. Working to understand (other) young people, growing up in a fractured community brings relatedness-supportive coaching targets to the forefront, and need-supportive lessons from the workplace were all sub-themes that came through in the coaches' reports (see Table 18).

Raw-data theme	Sub-theme
Charity work encouraging need-supportive orientation	Working to understand (other) young people
Experiencing youth gangs inspires promoting relations between players Worry for son's safety in neighbourhood	Growing up in a fractured community brings relatedness-supportive coaching targets to the forefront
Education and work experience led to valuing offering players responsibilities Team building activities encourages putting unfamiliar athletes together	Need-supportive lessons from the workplace

Using people's names helps develop rapport and build relatedness	
Dealing with bullying in teaching increases monitoring of players in coaching	
Balance of structure and autonomy	
Mindfulness training in teaching aids self-awareness of behaviour	
Propensity to ask athletes questions comes from teaching	
Importance of rationale for learning job translates into coaching approach	

Table 18. Influence of outside values transferred into coaching.

Working to understand (other) young people

Kyle's encounters with young people extended beyond coaching and parenting and into charity work. Having this additional role seemingly impacted his beliefs about coaching practice by increasing how much he valued acknowledging the thoughts and perspectives of young people (i.e., being autonomy-supportive) and trying to understand their personal situations outside of coaching (i.e., being relatedness-supportive) as means of building rapport. To this end, he also claimed to have developed a more critical attitude towards belittling players and speaking to them in an unfriendly manner (i.e., two relatedness-thwarting behaviours):

Interview response from Kyle

Interviewer: What do you see as a healthy coach-athlete relationship?

...Good two-way listening I suppose, that the players are listening to the coach...taking on board the feedback and all that kinda stuff, that actually the coaches are listening to the boys as well.

...Interviewer: And when you say you like a two-way listening system, why? Where has that come from?

...I'm on a board of directors on a charity that does education stuff at schools at primary and secondary levels...It [involves] mentoring groups of students...and supporting them through an academic year or programme...I think that [principle's] applicable at all ages. I think you've got to listen and understand as well as give the communication and the advice that you want to get across, you've got to understand their perspective as well, if they're not following something they're not gonna deliver it.

...Interviewer: And what would you see as a sign of an unhealthy relationship?

...It would be ranting and raving and shouting at the kids...one to one, you would see kids dropping off, not listening, displaying behaviours that would maybe show they're being bullied and all that as well and you can't have that.

Interviewer: And where have you learnt those lessons?

Wee bit of experience...I think I'm aware of a lot of things in the space around disclosure Scotland just with the work I've been doing with (charity name)...Doing volunteering stuff with charities with kids, you're often left in an environment where you're maybe working with a dozen students at 15 or 14 or whatever, and I think if you can communicate [well] with teenagers you can pretty much do anything in that space cause they can be a really difficult [group].

Another coaching principal Kyle appeared to cultivate as a charity youth worker was his general approach for handling athlete misbehaviour scenarios. The below excerpt explains why he usually decides to make controlling demands of misbehaving players:

Fieldnote of Kyle

It's mid-way through a training session and two teams are changing five-a-side pitches in-between mini-games being played. During the changeover, Kyle decides that he needs to quickly speak to James, so he instructs the group of players he's responsible for to move into the pitch next door and have a drink of water while they wait on him joining them. He also explicitly warns them not to launch any balls about. A couple of minutes later when Kyle joins his group he discovers them doing the opposite of what he told them to do, as balls were being kicked about the area, narrowly missing players

standing close to the goals. He raises his voice and says, 'I told you to stop kicking the ball!' The players stop immediately and do as he told them originally.

Interview response from Kyle

Interviewer: When do you find you normally need to raise your voice to the kids?

I usually [raise my voice] when they're not listening to me, or there's something going on that shouldn't be going on...we don't want to discipline them, it's not like that, but I don't want accidents to happen, so if there's anything that I think is unsafe, I tend to get a wee bitty louder...I mean kicking a ball about like that, they could hit one of the other kids in the back of the head. It's happened...I've done stuff in schools where it's kid's charities and stuff like that as well and sometimes you...need to raise your voice to shock them into gear a wee bit.

He went on to discuss crossovers in how he works with people in his professional life, which underscored this belief about there being universal skills within relationships:

Interview response from Kyle

20 years of work versus 18 months of football coaching [emphasis added]...It's just dealing with people, ok they're at different ages but you're just dealing with people...you find the same people in whatever walk of life, the same traits in people, the same behaviours, the same approach to teamwork all that sort of stuff, it's just *inherent in the way folk operate* [emphasis added]...you're just taking that into a different environment.

Growing up in a fractured community brings relatedness-supportive coaching targets to the forefront

Unlike Kyle who spoke about different leadership experiences he had with young people that helped shape his personal orientation within coaching, James spoke about how his experiences with young people during his childhood had a meaningful, lasting impact on his coaching goals and practice. These experiences made him care about and emphasise the social aspects of sports participation that can foster feelings of relatedness between players. Specifically, he reflected on the high level of violence and aggression between different youth groups in his neighbourhood when he was a child. This volatile atmosphere led James to view and experience difficult incidents, namely

the tragedy of losing a friend who was the victim of a fatal attack, which influenced how he approached coaching in the community, and more specifically what he targeted:

Interview response from James

Interviewer: What was it like for you growing up in this area?

...When I [was] younger, it was really difficult to go into other areas in X, see if you [were] from Y where I stay, and you wanted to walk to another bit...if you met someone from your own age group, like wains [kids], and they knew you were not from that area, conflict started that's what happened.

Interviewer: At what age did that start?

High school age probably. To me most areas are like that right enough...I wasn't involved...but you seen it... that's just the way it was ...there were always people at shops, hanging about shops... [and] it was mostly boys...when I was 13, the wee guy that we hung about with he got killed, someone stabbed him...he wasn't involved in anything [gang related], just wrong place wrong time...13, 13.

Now, as a coach working with young people in the community, James reported that he placed high importance on looking for opportunities to promote friendships between players and teach players lessons on respect:

Fieldnote and interview response from James

It's a matchday and right before and at half-time of both games, James instructs the whole team to get into a huddle, put their hands in the middle of the huddle so they are overlapping, and at same time throw their hands up in the air shout their team's name. When quizzed on this afterwards James explained it as being "A team building thing" he likes to do.

It's always good for them to mingle with other people from other areas you know, at this age especially...we've had a couple of days out, so it's like *team bonding* [emphasis added] I suppose. We've went to paint balling and go karting and stuff like that...The kids are only here for an hour, so maybe they don't speak to each other for an hour, and then they go to a party and they'll maybe speak and they'll *form a friendship* [emphasis added], you know, that's what happens. And they'll always remember that I think. Mabye they'll be out when they're older, and they'll be like, 'aw I remember when we were younger you and me played together.' It can stop a lot of *aggro* [emphasis added] ... That's important for me...*Because I've got wains, I don't want*

them involved in anything [emphasis added], you know what I mean, so I'd like to show them that people come from different areas and you can still get on with them, basically.

Regardless of whether James' own children formed part of or the whole reason for him carrying a relatedness-supportive agenda within his coaching practice, his past experiences of growing up in an antisocial environment and feeling the negative outcomes seem to be what heightened his appreciation for the importance of this dimension of coach behaviour as it applies in his personal context. An astute awareness of the volatility of the behaviour of young men from disadvantaged communities was reflected in James' handling of and thoughts around an escalating conflict that unfolded between Peter and a local group of teenagers during a training session, as well as similar conflicts concerning his players:

Fieldnote and interview response from James

It's a training night, and next to the pitch where the team is practicing a group of older boys are sat drinking, swearing, and even fighting with one another. They have a football and carelessly kick it over into the middle of the team's pitch. This happens three times, and on the third occasion Peter picks their ball up and shouts to them, 'Do you lot realise there's kids playing here?!' before kicking their ball off into the distance. Peter is visibly very angry. One of the older boys shouts back, 'why did you do that mate!' appearing equally angry that Peter had just kicked his ball away. James approaches the boy at the fence and asks what's happened. The boy tells him his version of events. James then says, 'Is that what he (Peter) done? If I'd seen it I'd have just given it back to you.' The boy acknowledges his attempt to make peace, and the group goes away. James managed to diffuse the situation before it could escalate further.

Interviewer: Remember those older kids that were sitting and drinking, Peter had a way of dealing with that that was a bit confrontational, you managed to settle it...you were able to calm things down quite well with them.

That situation could have went bad...I'm only coming from where I'm [from], I suppose it's the area I stay in, it's not the best [in terms of crime and antisocial behaviour] ...I felt in my head that situation, I seen Peter kick their ball away [and] I was like, 'that's gonna escalate if I don't go and speak to these guys.' They'd been drinking, they were young, there were a lot of them, we've got wains on the park, they could have come in and started swinging punches. I've seen it, it's easily done, so you've got to try diffusing it right away, just speak to them...there's not a problem then.

In looking to diffuse intrateam disputes and model friendly and respectful behaviour, James is adopting relatedness-supportive interpersonal strategies that seek to cultivate a sense of cohesion and harmony among players, while teaching them socially responsible ways of behaving.

Need-supportive lessons from the workplace

The third major factor influencing the coaches' personal orientation towards more or less need-supportive coaching behaviours was the occupation and professional journeys belonging to each of them. The coaches' job roles and the lessons they learned through experiences within their jobs were found to impact how they thought about coaching and what they did in their personal practice. For example, Kieran worked as a teacher, and his level of experience in teaching students far outweighed his experience in coaching players (this work experience to coaching ratio was the same for all of the standard and legacy club coaches involved in the present study). In discussions held within the 'being a parent-coach' major theme section, Kieran spoke about monitoring social media communications between players – through his son – as a means of protecting individuals from bullying incidents. Kieran reported being conscious of the prevalence and risk of bullying among young people in online channels due to managing and hearing about bullying cases within his role as a teacher. Therefore, having this foresight appeared to encourage his vigilance towards players' well-being and intrateam relatedness support:

Interview response from Kieran

You're made aware of things that have happened, and it usually online on Instagram and snapchat and stuff that's the start of it sort of thing so, particularly at that age, I feel once they get older they're more aware of it so I feel you don't need to worry about it as much, but I think at their age, from what I've experienced and what I've heard not just at my school but at other schools, you do need to be careful of it.

Nathan's background as a police-officer also provides interesting reasons for his coaching beliefs and behaviours. Building and maintaining community relations is part of Nathan's job, as he said, "you're encouraged to go out and do certain things to be proactive in the community like stopping and engaging with people... [or] visiting churches or mosques." Nathan was adamant that what he targets in his coaching practice is influenced by a range of life events (evidenced by him stating "I've got my

own idea based on my experience, my upbringing, the teams I've played, the boys brigade, the school teams, my work, what the role of the leader is"). Nevertheless, he identified that some of the relatedness-supportive behaviours he engaged in, such as encouraging sportsmanship and respect for teammates and opposition players, and showing care and concern for athletes, are inspired by his relatedness-minded policing agenda:

Fieldnote and interview response from Nathan

It's a training night and Nathan's players are completing a dribbling and shooting drill. A new player has joined in with the team, and he dribbles the ball through the cones but slips as he takes a shot at goal. He has a painful fall and, appearing embarrassed, begins to cry on the floor. Nathan picks him up and takes him to the side, giving him full attention while he checks that he's ok. After a few minutes the boy's crying subsides, and he joins back in with the drill. When he does, Nathan asks the rest of the boys to let him skip the queue, which they do, and when the new player steps up and this time keeps his balance and even scores, Nathan instructs the whole group to give him a round of applause. The boy smiles and goes to the back of the queue.

I think our goal is...to get them building relationships with other kids who perhaps go to a different school or are from different religious backgrounds and build bridges that way, I think that's massively important, and I've seen, like in my job, the benefit of that...Doing a job for 20 plus years, it's bound to have an influence on you...and [teaching social skills] certainly [matters] at the age we're dealing with the boys just now... [as they will] maybe get to 14, 15 and there's that conflict [potentially developing between other young people that can be problematic] and it might be different [with our early help]...I quite often tell them wee quotes and things like that at training about respecting your opponent's, [that's] one of the big ones for me, it's like shaking hands at the end [of a game], I get more annoyed than anything if they're away celebrating with their mum and dad without having shaken hands with their opponents.

Nathan's occupation was also found to influence the value he placed on calling players by their first names when engaging them in conversation:

Interview response from Nathan

I'm big on communication...just a chat as they're kicking the ball, just a kinda open question chat [like], 'how are you, what you been up to, how's things going at school?' It's just to get that communication going... [and] get them to open up a wee bit...I still

always address them all by name, every single one of them...and that's how you gauge whether they [are] up or down...[whether they] need a wee hand...If you show someone that you've taken the time to remember their name then right away there's a door open between you in terms of communication, that's just how I've always seen it, it probably is through my work, through valuing people's names and making sure when you're dealing with people who are complainers or indeed criminals and the like, you'll get to know them by name and you'll speak to them by name and you'll get on a lot better with them if you do that, so that's probably the same in every walk of life...[like] the team that I'm coaching, if all these young people are coming up to me and expecting me to help them then I'm going to make an effort to say their name.

The types of coach-athlete conversations Nathan described were non-coaching related and aimed at communicating care and concern for players and an interest in their lives. Calling players by their names can be viewed as a rapport building technique for supporting what are relatedness-supportive intentions, as has been identified in research centred around teacher-student communication (Acharya, 2017; Sparks et al., 2015). Knowingly or not, Nathan was also likely fostering feelings of autonomy as addressing people by name communicates respect for their individuality, which is in opposition to a more controlling, relatedness-thwarting style of leadership where players are directed impersonally and without any acknowledgement for their thoughts and feelings (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). When the findings from these coaches are taken together, it can be argued that the interpersonal requirements of the roles coaches take on within their careers influences their personal orientation in coaching, as Nathan's job revolved around relationship building and conflict resolution, meanwhile Kieran's job involved increasing others' performance and engagement, and we can see traces of the strategies that enabled them to perform successfully within these roles in their reported and observed coaching habits.

Evidence also appeared to suggest the way coaches interpret and perceive their own motivational environment at a club could be influenced by experiences from their professional careers. In the 'challenges planning coaching sessions' mini-theme section, Peter spoke of his relief that the standard club's head coaches and administrators had tempered their level of involvement in the coaches' training sessions after a brief period he felt was controlling and restrictive ("it went from a 'we do whatever we want' to Stewart [the chairman] and Graham were at training for about four weeks every training session...it's now died down again and there's a nice equilibrium of where it is").

Although speculative, Peter's background as a salesperson and experience working under different types of managers may have been influential in his sensitivity towards balances in environmental supports for autonomy and structure, as well as his personal preference in this regard:

Interview response from Peter

I've got complete control over doing what I do on a daily basis. I've got a framework, and as long as I work somewhere close to that framework, then it's fine, there's no major issues at all...I've worked in sales most of my life and you get feedback regularly and it varies because I've worked with people who micromanage and just now I work with a guy who doesn't talk to you at all, just lets you go do whatever you want. His key driver is, 'are you doing that number? Yeh you're doing that number? Then you must be doing it right,' as opposed to other guys who [were like], 'you done that number but if you had done this, this, this, this, and this I think you could have done that number.'...Micromanagement is frustrating to me...I started this new job in January and I went from extreme micromanager to complete autonomy to do the job, which is what I always wanted in my last job...I wanted that autonomy, now I've got the autonomy I've had to adapt like dramatically because it's gone from having to almost check in on a daily basis to not doing that at all now...it's the polar opposite.

Discussion

The biographical accounts offered by the coaches illustrate the influence personal life stories can have on one's coaching behaviour. These events encouraged values to manifest within them that underpinned the goals they set for working with their players. For James, growing up in a dangerous neighbourhood appeared to orient him toward the intrinsic value of contributing to one's community (Ryan and Deci, 2002), and he acted in unison with this value by encouraging positive interactions among not only teammates but players of the opposition, with the hopes that it may curb poor relations and antisocial behaviour when they are older. The intersection between James' exposure to youth gangs as a child and his worry over history repeating itself with his own child highlights how various factors can build on top of one another in this regard to shape a coach's personal orientation around need-supportive behaviours that create a positive psychosocial environment for young people. The fact James admitted to his area "not being the best", and the area in question is largely an area of social and economic deprivation (SIMD, 2023), shows the potential impact the

social conditions and culture surrounding where coaching takes place can have on the values and interpersonal priorities of those leading the sessions.

Interestingly, parallels can be seen between Nathan's experience as a police-officer handling youth conflict and James' experiences as a civilian witnessing youth conflict in driving the personal missions they have for creating more tolerant, peaceful members of society through the environments they create when coaching. Coaching as an activity can be viewed as a microcosm of the society it happens within (Frey & Eitzen, 1991). James and Nathan's stories showcase the contextualised effects societal issues are capable of having on the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of coaches, including the personal orientation they hold towards need-supportive coaching practices. Indeed, appreciation for the coach's role in addressing societal issues has grown over the years. For example, problems such as gender inequality (Elliott, 2018) and racism (Lusted, Kilvington, & Qureshi, 2021) are now recognised as being under the radar and therefore potential influence of coaches. Based on the coaches' report, the level of action coaches take towards achieving different pro-social targets through their use of interpersonal strategies may be determined by their closeness to each issue. For example, a deep level of empathy for those suffering from the impacts of youth gang violence was evident from James due to his lived experience of this problem growing up and his sustained presence within the affected community. This lived experience evidently focused his efforts on mitigating youth violence through his facilitation of young players' burgeoning friendships. SDT would categorise such goals within the 'care' side of relatedness, wherein people have a need to not just be cared for but also care for others (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Gaining insights from coaches into the societal and local factors that matter to them most may serve as indicators of the behaviours they could be prone to demonstrating in their practice – without discounting the impact other factors will have on their behaviour. Such enquiries might equally reveal the need-depriving and -thwarting behaviours coaches align with larger societal and local aims. Furthermore, learning about what coaches deem to be universal principles for working with others across coaching and non-coaching contexts offers opportunities to critically reflect on these beliefs for their potential benefits and consequences. It also provides opportunities to prompt coaches to consider alternative viewpoints where necessary that might encourage more contextualised, need-supportive behaviours as a result.

In terms of understanding how to support coaches' own needs as a pathway towards encouraging need-supportive behaviours towards players, there were similarities between Peter's preferred work conditions and the conditions he claimed to create for sport participants. This finding builds on past research documenting need-supportive versus -thwarting environmental conditions for coaches (Allen & Shaw, 2009; Stebbings et al., 2011, 2012) by connecting coaches' praise and grievances in these regards with comparable experiences from their lives outside of sport. This possible relationship therefore warrants further exploration due to its potential to inform coach managers and clubs/organisations on probable gateways for making coaches feel supported in ways that are personally meaningful to them.

An added insight comes from Kyle's use of a commanding behaviour in response to player ignoring his initial instructions. This finding speaks to the place of direct instruction in the coach-created motivational environment, where there is a difference between a command to control and coerce, versus a command to organise and manage (and in this case protect the safety of a participant). Cooper & Allen's (2020) study of adventure sport coaches showed the coaches making commands of participants for safety reasons too. As mentioned already, SDT theorists in coaching have arguably not kept pace with advancements in the wider literature in terms of recognising and promoting subtle differences in coach behaviours depending on how, why, and when they are exhibited (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Rather than exclusively coercing compliance from players, commands in coaching may alternatively be experienced by athletes as providing structure (i.e., expectations of how to behave in an environment) without necessarily offering them competence support, or assist in setting rules within the limits of an athlete's freedom (i.e., autonomy-supportive behaviour). As such, this behaviour could alternatively be classed as need-depriving, or even be seen as a facilitator to need-supportive action. Research that examines the differing uses and effects of direct instruction (and other equivalents) in coaching is needed to better understand their mechanics. Having this knowledge could assist coaches in managing the tension already present in their practice by offering fuller information around motivational implications of typical yet highly nuanced and malleable behaviours. Furthermore, researchers could better separate and categorise the behaviours they witness during coach observations, leading to more accurate recordings of the coach-created motivational environment.

Summary

Overall, the present findings document the personal and professional journeys that led the coaches to believe in various need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting coaching principles. The interview and fieldnotes evidence showed a relatively stable translation of the coaches' values and beliefs developed through their experiences both in football and beyond football into their coaching practice. Reflecting on workplace experiences offered an added dimension to discussions around the coaches' personal orientations by illuminating the support provisions they had either experienced or facilitated as staff members in separate environments. The key learning was that the coach-created motivational environment is influenced by coaches' values and beliefs, stemming from diverse vocational and personal histories. More research is needed, however, to look further into coaches' biographical accounts and build greater understanding around the accumulative effect different life events or actors have on the development of motivational coaching behaviours.

Chapter 8. Mini-case studies

This chapter presents three mini-case studies, with each case focusing on one coach to illustrate a feature of community sport coaching with relevance to SDT and the motivational environment. Daniel's story demonstrates the impact a lack of need support for coaches in community sport has for one coach's mental health. Anthony's experiences with para football coaching illustrate how athletes' emotional, cognitive, and physical capabilities can influence the need support they are given in an environment that is distinct from others. The third case, Peter's case, demonstrates the influence of familiarity with players as well as how coaches may seek to learn more about their players.

Case – Daniel's mental health

This case within the multiple case studies illustrates the motivational sequence evident for one coach working in a community coaching environment. It demonstrates the impact of a community sport coaching environment on a coach's mental health when support doesn't meet a coach's psychological needs or reflect the relative importance of different psychological needs. Several themes were developed which captured how factors contributed to the lack of appropriate psychological needs support, which in turn affected the quality of the coach's interpersonal interactions with players as well as his own mental well-being and ultimately his withdrawal from coaching (see Table 19). The factors were: feeling isolated and incompetent, pressured by others' expectations, need for structure and involvement to support competence and relatedness, and the person behind the coach. The exploration of Daniel's case was initiated by an observation on matchday.

Fieldnote of Daniel

It's a matchday and the under nine team are split down the middle with two matches happening at once. Daniel normally assists James who leads one team, but James was too tired to attend today after finishing his nightshift, so Daniel is coaching them on his own while Kyle, assisted by Graham, take the other team. Derek arrives late but stands with Kyle and Graham. There's no area separating the coaches from their players' parents/guardians, so everybody is mixed in and spectators can often be hard communicating with players during the games. Throughout the games, Daniel appears

noticeably tense and stands relatively quiet. The only time he tends to open his mouth is when he's making substitutions. At one point, Daniel's team loses two goals in quick succession. This causes Daniel to become visibly annoyed, and he exclaims, 'God sake!' from the side-line. Today is only the second time the team has played seven-aside football, and the players forget that the rules are different from five-aside football and begin to play out from the back instead of restarting play at the centre of the pitch, which frustrates Daniel further and he shouts, 'Centre!' in a judgemental tone of voice. After the games had ended, Daniel said that he did not feel confident enough to offer the players advice during the game as he doesn't have a lot of knowledge concerning football tactics. He also said that he was frustrated that he had been left to lead the team on his own, saying 'It's annoying because I'm normally only meant to be here as an extra hand.'

Raw-data theme	Theme
Performative need-thwarting actions Judges ability to coach based on playing background Lack of confidence in coaching knowledge reduces advice offered to player Lack of confidence leads to emotional behaviours to player and unfriendly communication Potency of one off event erasing previous support Threat appraisal influencing behaviour Amotivation towards coaching	Feeling isolated and incompetent
Pressure from parents	Pressured by others' expectations

Balance of autonomy and structure Lacking desire to engage in mentorship	Need for structure and involvement to support competence and relatedness
Anxiety and depression Trusted friend Coaching exacerbates mental health issues Poor mental health literacy as barrier to asking for help Disruption of routine for coping outside of coaching	Person behind the coach

Table 19. Daniel's mental health.

Feeling isolated and incompetent

Daniel explained in an interview how feeling isolated and incompetent at the match (described in the fieldnotes above) had a major influence on his decision to leave the club: “at one of the games... I got left myself, I think that was probably the lowest it got for me, and I think after that I decided I wasn’t gonna do it anymore.” The perceived lack of assistance Daniel received from the other coaches depleted his confidence. Not only that, feeling abandoned in this moment and thus uncared for by the other coaches reduced his sense of relatedness with them, making him irritable and prone to ‘lashing out’ at the players in a similarly uncaring, relatedness-thwarting manner.

Although Daniel suggested that he felt a poor sense of relatedness with the coaching team after being neglected on a match day, he seemed to reflect on his general relationship with them in a more positive way, particularly when they asked for his input, an autonomy-supportive behaviour:

Interview response from Daniel

[When we were] thinking about what to do for a session and stuff, they were always [asking what I thought], they'd take any suggestions you'd have on things.

Interviewer: How did it make you feel?

Definitely good and part of the team and equal and all the rest of it...it just helped build your confidence...it reassured me that they're in the same boat as me. As much as they might have all the experience of playing football and stuff, they're still a bit stuck when it comes to coaching, in the same way we all were at the start...

Yet, despite the apparent closeness – in other words, relatedness – Daniel felt with the group in an overall sense, and the respect he felt his opinion was given as a specific, distal form of relatedness support (autonomy support arguably being the more proximal feeling), the neglect of his strong need to feel competent and cared for by others during the match drove him to quit the club. This finding reveals the potential for intense episodic events to meaningfully alter a person's view of, or in Daniel's case, trust in their environment and the people within it, which in turn can evidently 'tip the scales' on the type of motivational regulation driving their participation in an activity (i.e., intrinsic and self-determined extrinsic motivation or non-self-determined extrinsic motivation and amotivation), and the affective and/or behavioural outcomes they experience as a result.

Examinations of the psychosocial environment coaches experience should not just document the treatment coaches receive in relation to their psychological needs, but also how intense and personally meaningful the treatment they receive is. Such an approach is similar to the potency rating scale in the MMCOS for athletes (Smith et al., 2015). Adding potency considerations to research can reveal the comparative impact of episodic versus more regular and consistent psychosocial conditions on coaches' perceived need satisfaction and motivational orientation, thereby enabling a greater understanding of the relationship between fluctuations in need support, motivation, and behaviour among coaches. Equally, investigating the reasons behind these fluctuations can illustrate contextual sensitivities when it comes to coaches' psychological needs (e.g., Daniel's statements indicated that feeling competent and related was a higher personal priority for him than feeling autonomous).

Pressured by others' expectations

During the game when parents were nearby, their presence acted as an external stressor for Daniel that affected his behaviour. Because Daniel did not feel that he possessed the necessary sport knowledge to coach the players to a standard he felt the parents were “expecting”, he offered minimal advice or encouragement to support players' own competence. He commented: “I think it was parents expecting too much, even when you explain to them, I was only supposed to be helping out.” The capacity for parents to impact a coach's behaviour has only been explored from a SDT perspective by Byrne (2010) who attempted to modify his own coaching behaviours to become more autonomy-supportive. Byrne faced resistance from parents who were openly opposed to his less directive coaching. In the present study Daniel not only felt the need to explain to parents what he was doing, but at one point allowed a group of parents to take over his coaching. Coupled together, these results raise concern over the debilitating impact parents' over-involvement in the coaching process can have on coach's perceived need satisfaction and coaching behaviours.

In addition, the culture of football and coaching may have also contributed to the pressures Daniel felt. He commented that when anxious when coaching he often felt compelled to “put on a brave face and hide behind that.” This action hints at cultural impression management. Footballing culture is known for housing masculine and stoic views about what a coach should look and act like (Cushion & Jones, 2003; Roberts, Baker, Reeves, Johnson, & Cronin, 2018). Furthermore, hiding mental health issues is common in performance-focused environments given the prevailing belief that high levels of resource and competitive or developmental expectations should only be trusted with coaches who project confidence, competence, and stability among other ‘infallible’ characteristics (e.g., Potrac et al., 2002; Roberts et al., 2018). Therefore, showing vulnerability risks being discredited by stakeholders. Daniel's case suggests these cultural pressures and impression management may extend to community coaches as they try to ‘save face’ with parents and other coaches.

Need for structure and involvement to support competence and relatedness

Daniel's short-lived time as a coach before he quit further illustrates the impact of limited need support from coaching colleagues. As a new recruit to the coaching team, and coaching in general, Daniel's primary struggle was taking on more responsibility than he originally expected or felt prepared for. Daniel thought he was

there “just to help” the other coaches. However, he quickly found himself responsible for a team on matchday on his own with no guidance: “see when it comes to doing your own stuff with them, and you don’t have a clue what you’re doing, it’s hard.” He also commented: “I think that was maybe one of the problems... I never knew what I was supposed to be doing. It’s hard to do stuff when you don’t know what you’re supposed to be doing.” The low level of structure negatively affected Daniel’s need satisfaction, motivations for coaching, and behaviours with players. Looking back on his coaching, Daniel summarised it as lacking intentionality and purpose, which is symptomatic of possessing amotivation towards the activity (Deci & Ryan, 2002). He commented: “I think most of the time... it was just grudging my way through it.”

Furthermore, Daniel often felt he wasn’t able to ask for help without losing credibility which led to more distance in his relationships with other coaches such as Graham:

Interview response from Daniel

I never really told them anything, I never made it clear why I was feeling that way and all the rest of it, so I can’t really blame the guy...if I’m not conveying the information to him then how does he know?

However, he confided in James about his anxiety problems, perhaps because James’ son also suffered with anxiety, which suggested some sense of relatedness with James. The two coaches’ longstanding working relationship outside of coaching also appeared to increase Daniel’s trust in James as a confidant. Nevertheless, there were still conditions when Daniel would not disclose his feelings to James (i.e., not during the midst of any problematic and anxious periods), which reinforces the challenge coaching team members may face in identifying and responding to support needs in each other in times of crises:

Interview response from Daniel

Most of the time when I was talking to him [James] in work and stuff, I was always feeling a lot better, but I never actually spoke to him when I was feeling down or anything, when I was feeling those things.

Daniel’s experience corroborates the motivational sequence identified within previous research whereby coaches’ environmental supports impact their perceived

need satisfaction, which in turn determine the quality of their motivation and influence the supportiveness of their behaviours (Rocchi & Pelletier, 2017). Furthermore, Daniel's experience demonstrates the key role structure and involvement can play in the satisfaction (or not) of multiple needs (i.e., competence and relatedness). This expands our understanding of the sequence beyond autonomy-supportive versus controlling environments. The present findings help to remind SDT theorists in sport of the equally important role structure and involvement play in the development and protection of self-determined motivation, and this time from the perspective of the coach rather than the athlete (e.g., Mageau & Vallerand, 2003).

The person behind the coach

The impact that feeling neglected by other coaches had on Daniel's motivation and behaviour can be understood further when the person behind the coach is better understood. In addition to having low confidence to coach independently, feeling isolated and lacking sport knowledge, and being concerned with appearing competent, especially to parents, Daniel also suffered from anxiety and depression, and had challenges in his personal life. All of which made coaching stressful for him. During interviews Daniel revealed: "I think it's [anxiety] always been there, I can't really think of a time that it's never been there." Nevertheless, he thought he could cope with the pressures coaching might bring: "I always felt like I was gonna be out my depth, but at the time I felt more confident about myself so I thought I'd push through it." Furthermore, he commented that at the beginning "I was enjoying it and stuff, for the first couple of weeks...I never really seen it ending," but later "anxiety got the better of me a wee bit, as it tends to do, a wee bit of depression came back." He also commented, "There was a lead up over everything, you know you start having feelings that [make you say to yourself], you know, 'I can't do this,' but that [matchday event] was the tipping point."

At the time that Daniel quit coaching he was also experiencing threats and harassment in his personal life: "A lot of stuff, like [my stepson] Lewis' dad, let's just say he's not the nicest person in the world... it's like a constant cycle of living on edge, worrying about him... It takes its toll on you." These personal circumstances can be argued to have played a distal role in his behaviour when coaching. However, fearing his stepson's father left him no longer feeling safe enough to participate in an activity (i.e., running) that seemed to act as a coping mechanism for his anxiety, depression, and

coaching related stress: “[I used] to be out running every day...it always helped [me cope with my anxiety and depression], makes me feel better about myself... [but]... there’s always that wee element that [Lewis’] dad will pull up in a motor...”

Discussion

The pressures and constraints coaches work under, and the everchanging unpredictable nature of their role (Cushion, 2007; Jones, 2007) means that coaches are inevitably exposed to stressful situations that could create symptoms of anxiety (Olusoga, Bentzen, & Kenttä, 2019). These symptoms may be felt worse, or at least more frequently by coaches like Daniel who suffer from an anxiety disorder. Stress can be defined as a “non-specific response of the body to a demand” (Selye, 1946) and is born out of stressors, appraisals, coping mechanisms, and emotions, all interacting at once (Norris, Didymus, & Kaiseler, 2017). Wider SDT-based research connects environmental supports for competence, autonomy, and relatedness with stress response and coping behaviours through the increased likelihood of controlled individuals entering stress producing situations and having maladaptive affective states that are less useful for regulating their stress in these moments than affective states generated through more autonomous motivational orientations (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011). Therefore, the stress process effectively tests one’s psychological need support. Daniel’s perceived lack of competence support from the other coaches contributed towards a change in his motivational orientation, which was initially self-determined (coaching for the enjoyment [i.e., intrinsic motivation] and challenge and growth opportunity [i.e., identified regulation]) but had become non-self-determined (having no meaningful reason for coaching [i.e., amotivation]).

Non-self-determined individuals are known for having a heightened sense of public self-consciousness and feeling under pressure to fulfil task performance expectations (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Daniel demonstrated these affective states through the preoccupation he had with looking competent in front of the parents attending his match and meeting their assumed performance expectations when coaching. This event was stressful for Daniel and stressful events challenge a person’s ability to process and regulate their emotions.

Daniel’s recollection of the event and the fieldnotes taken during it suggest he felt his perceived lack of sport knowledge and coaching competence were unfairly

exposed to parents, and so it can be deduced that the emotions he experienced during the event included anxiety mainly, but also fear of failure and anger. These emotions are congruent with the cognitive appraisal of threat, where the dangers of a situation (e.g., Daniel losing credibility among the parents) are perceived to outweigh one's personal resources (e.g., Daniel's coaching ability) for dealing with the situation, leading to defence- (e.g., Daniel criticising players) and avoidance-minded (e.g., Daniel offering little technical or tactical instruction and allowing parents to take over, then quitting the team altogether) behavioural responses (Weinstein & Ryan, 2011). Daniel's experience parallel those found by Dixon, Turner, and Gillman, (2017) that youth football coaches' experiences of stress, threat appraisals were negatively related to coaches' use of positive feedback and positively related to their use of autocratic (or controlling) behaviours. In contrast, Stebbings et al., (2011) found that the more coaches felt their psychological needs were satisfied, the more positive affect and subjective vitality they had, and the less need-thwarting coaching behaviours they engaged in.

Coaching scholars suggest that coaching can be an extremely stressful activity demanding high levels of emotional regulation by the coach (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003; Potrac et al., 2017). Further, research on factors that influence burnout in coaches has emphasised the importance of non-coaching outlets that allow coaches to mentally detach from coaching and recover from coaching related stress (Mazerolle & Goodman, 2013). The increasing frequency and intensity of Daniel's additional concerns outside of coaching appeared to deprive him of a non-stressful space to rejuvenate. He asserted that this spiralling situation "take[s] its toll on you", with the match-day event representing a "tipping point" in the emotional exhaustion that led to his need-depriving and -thwarting coaching behaviours and eventual withdrawal from coaching. Thus, the present findings demonstrate the capacity for stressful life events to compound issues around controlled motivation, poor wellbeing, and maladaptive behaviours in coaches. This maladaptive process offers support to previous research linking work-life conflict, psychological ill-being, and controlling behaviours in coaches (Stebbing et al., 2012), while building on it by examining the interplay between life events, coach motivation and wellbeing as precursors of coaches' behaviours. The present study demonstrates the need to examine coaches' anxiety experiences as well as unearthing the environmental conditions that contribute to coaches' stress and can lead to increases in their anxiety, with SDT acting as an effective tool for such investigations.

Summary

This first mini-case study documents a coach's well-intended and optimistic entrance into community coaching through to his unfortunate exit soon after. This outcome appeared to be the result of his coaching context not offering him the psychological need support he required to overcome his low perceptions of competence, and outside personal factors exacerbating an already difficult situation. Daniel's story shows how the pressures of coaching without the required social support can quickly deplete one's self-determined drivers and cause amotivation to manifest. It serves as a clear example of the risks researcher and coach developers take in overlooking the health and wellbeing of coaches, even in a community space (Stebbing et al., 2012).

Case – Anthony's para-football coaching

There are physical, cognitive, and emotional differences between players, and the notable impact these variables can have on coaches' provision (or not) of need support is encapsulated by the insight from Anthony para-football coaching. He was adamant that, in comparison with mainstream youth football participants, coaching "with our guys, it's different... 'cos of the nature of ours". This difference is further highlighted by the SFA. They stipulate that "players competing in specific Para-Football competitions are ability banded to ensure fair competition, players are banded either A, B, C, D, E and only play in competitions against players in their own band" (Scottish Football Association, n.d.). Anthony described the characteristics of bands:

Interview responses from Anthony

With the lowest bandings which is E and D, they're the less mobile guys, [with] the less understanding of the game, they know they're playing football [and] they know the ball has to hit the net. As for throw-ins, penalties, fouls, corners, all that, they'll maybe not so much understand that...

...So C and B [banded players], they're the sort of generally more able guys...physically and mentally able to cope with like a high pressure game, and thinking [wise], these are the guys who know where they should be, where they shouldn't be, the guys who can follow instruction... they know right from wrong... they know they need to behave themselves, they can't go about swinging punches or kicking people... You can be firmer with these guys because they know what you're talking about...you can exert more authority you know to say, 'listen, don't do that,' or, 'listen, this is what I want you to do'... you can change your tone with them....

...Your A banding is generally...[for] a lot of [they] guys they've maybe lost fingers, they're ex-military... or... mildly autistic guys that are just...basically off of mainstream [football], but maybe their temperament isn't suited for mainstream [football]... It's similar to how you work with the band below...it's very [much] the same.

Five themes were produced from Anthony's accounts to explain how these bandings impacted his behaviour: increased structure for lower banding; increased choice for players who need it (more); less 'space' for need-thwarting coaching; players' emotional control was a consideration; and parents as affordances, not constraints (see Table 20).

Raw-data theme	Theme
Lower cognitive understanding requires increased demonstration/explanation to set expectations	Increased structure for lower banding
Physical limitation demand player choice Autonomy and relatedness support interact	Increased choice for players who need it (more)
Threat of punishment has less effectiveness Player's literal interpretation of statements makes conditional rewards problematic	Less 'space' for need-thwarting coaching
Surveillance to monitor and assist social interactions Removing players from activities to regulate their emotions and show care Players' lack of control requires patient responses and increased care	Players' emotional control was a consideration
Parents are route to understanding how players function	Parents as affordances, not constraints

Table 20. Anthony's para-football coaching.

Increased structure for lower bandings

Anthony described the characteristics of players of different banding levels and how their banding influenced his interactions with them such as the amount of structure he provides. For example, he felt he offered intellectually slower players more demonstrations and explanations of tasks to compensate for a delay in many of them comprehending what is being asked of them:

Interview response from Anthony

Sometimes they're [needing to be coached on] a one-to-one basis, you know. As a group you can explain what you want them to do, [but] you still need to show and demonstrate it, and sometimes individually... and you need to kinda watch what's happening, if they're going wrong just say, "listen, this is a better way of doing it," and they'll understand that a bit better...there's more man management in that side of things... Training wise we just go over and over and over [coaching points and instructions] until it sticks.

The need to provide a large amount of structure for these players is illustrated below:

Fieldnote and interview response from Anthony

It's midway through a training session and two groups of players are performing a dribble and shoot drill, while another group performs a passing drill. Anthony set up both of these drills and gave very slow-paced demonstrations to each group. Once Anthony gets the drills started, he notices very quickly that the players are experiencing issues and making mistakes at each station. He goes from group to group correcting these issues, appearing flustered but staying patient in the way he re-explains each drill.

You get nights like that where...there's maybe three or four not paying attention, that's when it gets a bit harder, you know cause you're going, 'alright you understand?' I asked them three times there if there were any questions...and they shouted me back over and I'm like, 'ok, here we go again'... demonstrating so they can see that's the way it's to go, rather than saying, 'pass it to the left'... they'd be lost... sometimes you need to repeat [instructions]... We try and keep to a set routine, you know we'll rotate it

every five six weeks whatever just to try and mix it up a bit but keep it the same so they remember it.

Increased choice for players who need it (more)

Focusing on the “less mobile”, or physically less able players, Anthony was found to offer these players more choice in how they approached drills to avoid injuring them:

Fieldnote and interview response from Anthony

It's midway through a training session and Anthony has set up a passing and agility drill where players pass a ball then do fast feet through ladders before receiving the ball again on the other side. Anthony explains the drill multiple times and continuously checks for understanding. He tells some players that once they pass the ball, they can move through the ladders in any way they want (e.g., sideways, forward, backwards) provided it's done at a high tempo.

You need to customise a lot of the drills...[because] the last thing you want is someone who's not very able-bodied hurting themselves...there's one guy in particular who struggles to get over [high hurdles] so I always say to him, 'if you're wanting to just zig zag in and out of them that's absolutely fine.'

Anthony's actions demonstrate how a lack of physical mobility in para football players might make coaches think differently about how best to accommodate them within their sessions, by altering the way player safety and the environmental and athlete related risks posed are taken into consideration. Choice was also offered to players with restrictive cognitive understanding, with Anthony worrying that less flexible drill conditions could confuse and subsequently embarrass players who would not fully understand them:

Interview response from Anthony

For the lesser abled guys we need to customise certain things...you know see if it's like you know touch a yellow cone or something like that, we'll just [say], 'touch any cone,' cause some of these guys don't know their left from their right...[and] you need to keep in mind that some of them will not tell you that they can't...they're maybe too embarrassed or whatever.

In contrast, however, poor information retention in players was also given as an explanation for minimising change to the players' practice routine, which perhaps

further explains why Anthony was found to limit opportunities for players to decide on and lead aspects of their sessions (see ‘increased structure for lower bandings’ section above).

Less ‘space’ for need-thwarting coaching

The prevalence of need-thwarting behaviours within abled bodied youth football coaching environments is well documented (Cushion & Jones, 2006; Kelly & Waddington, 2006; Smith et al., 2017; Tessier et al., 2013). By comparison, the frequency or conditions attached to such behaviours in para coaching have received no attention. Exploring Anthony’s behaviours and their antecedents offered a starting point for future research on this matter. He stated that he felt encouraged to be more patient and less critical in how he addressed mistakes in the performances of players with intellectual disabilities:

Fieldnote and interview response from Anthony:

It’s a matchday and Anthony is leading the white team (E and D banded players) through multiple games at a tournament. Throughout the games, he is very supportive and encouraging, clapping and praising good performances and shouting messages of support when players make mistakes. He tends to give players a lot of positional advice as they have a habit of drifting out of position.

As for the mistakes, I don’t generally flag them up...because sometimes what you tell them and what they hear are two different things... rather than saying, ‘you’re doing that wrong,’ I kind of say, ‘that was good by the way, however I think it’d be better if you tried it this way’... they’ve maybe not picked you up properly even when you’ve asked if there’s any questions.

He also mentioned that he was less prone to using the possibility of rewards to motivate these higher banded players because those with lower levels of comprehension can struggle to differentiate between the possibility of a reward and the guarantee of one:

Interview response from Anthony

So I made a mistake not so long ago, my goalie [for our blue team] (lower banded players) was on holiday, it was a tournament and I made the mistake of saying to one of the other guys [at training], ‘if you play well, I’ll maybe have you in [the blue] team for

this tournament,’ and he just took it as, ‘I’m going into the blue team for this tournament,’ you know and it didn’t quite work out, and he was quite disappointed.

In a similar vein, he stated that he refrains from using threats of punishments to obtain compliance from autistic athletes as they can often interpret them as instructions rather than incentives, so the desired effect of this coercive strategy is difficult to achieve (Bartholomew et al., 2009):

Interview response from Anthony

They wouldn’t understand a lot of that stuff. Some of them you’d say, “you’ll not be playing,” and they’d be like that, “aye no bother,” you know they’d just go stand at the side...a lot of the guys don’t think like that... it’s just their disability...know how the likes of autism and stuff like that, sometimes they take things [very literally].

In contrast, with lower banded players Anthony was less tolerant in cases of misbehaviour. Anthony expected these players to act as role models for their more impressionable and unaware teammates, who often admired them and were consequently prone to copying their behaviour. He also deemed lower banded players to be better equipped to handle criticism, so he said his reprimands for misbehaviour were often delivered in a sterner communication style for quicker impact. The intention being to stop misbehaviour before it spread to the larger group:

Interview response from Anthony

These are the ones the younger guys look up to... so... we kinda say to them, ‘you [guys] better behave’... I’ve done it with Luke, you know if he’s maybe doing a drill and he’s done a wee fancy thing I say, ‘that’s not the drill, you know the drill, that’s not the drill.’...Cause I know... he’ll take it on board, he’ll know he’s been in the wrong, because the problem we’ve got is if he does that you’ve got another two or three people going, ‘I’m doing that because he done that,’ and that’s just a chain reaction...as I say the lesser abled guys you can let some of it go but if everybody starts doing it you just kinda stop it.

Players’ emotional control was a consideration

The antecedent factors linked to how Anthony coached players in higher, and indeed lower bandings, should not be seen as exclusive to those bandings, but rather potential focal points in the considerations coaches might make when working with

athletes from each banding. The players' varied emotional control influenced Anthony's behaviours.

Interview response from Anthony

You need to kinda defuse situations sometimes [with C and B banded players], they've got that many different personalities [so] sometimes they do clash... cause remember a lot of these guys have got learning difficulties so...they might be...a couple of years behind [intellectually and emotionally]... it can be difficult sometimes.

The approach Anthony took to managing temperament issues among players with varied emotional control is illustrated and further explained below:

Fieldnote and interview response from Anthony

It's the final period of a training session, and Anthony's team are playing a match. Before the match began, Anthony was repeatedly telling players that, 'it's just a game so relax and don't lose the rag at things'. The game is between two teams within the same club and is highly competitive because the two teams play in different divisions, with players in the higher division seen as better players, and so the higher division team seemingly wants to win to strengthen that claim while the lower division team wants to win to counter that claim. At one point two players collide by making overly aggressive challenges for the ball. Noticing things are getting slightly out of hand, Anthony stops the match, and assertively tells the offending players, 'Guys you need to cut that out!'. He was straight faced when he said this but didn't shout or act unfriendly towards the players. The players stop tussling and arguing immediately, as if to accept his decision. At another point, one of the boys has an outburst upon losing the ball and shouts loudly and aggressively, 'IT'S NOT FAIR!', to which Anthony replies, 'Right X, calm it down,' then leaves the player alone.

Usually [it is] a kinda hissy fit, they walk it off or whatever...but if we feel there's some sort of danger...[like] they're maybe a bit unstable, and you're like, 'right they're not gonna get any better,' [then I'll] speak to them, reassure them, calm [them] down, take them away from the situation... We've worked with these guys for a lot of years now so you know which switches some of them on and off and you know how to deal with them accordingly, some of them *you can be quite strict with* [emphasis added], some of them *you need to go kinda around the houses* [emphasis added] [with], distract them a wee bit then say, 'listen that was a bit [too much],' know what I mean...without any raised voices, *[a] calm voice* [emphasis added]...then, if you feel they're alright introduce them back in,

Anthony's reported need to "defuse situations" when working with players with intellectual disabilities not only occurred within training and match-day events, but also when moderating teams' social media channels such as team WhatsApp or Messenger groups.

Interview response from Anthony

They've got a messenger group so we asked to get involved [in that too] just before anything got out of hand [and]...[people start saying], 'we're leaving, I'm leaving.'...Cause what happens is somebody will message me and say, 'he said that,' and another person will message me saying, 'he said that,' and...I'll read it back and go, "right it's a misunderstanding, or he's drunk, put him out the group but put him back in tomorrow.

Parents as affordances, not constraints

During Anthony's explanation of higher banded players, he mentioned the role played by parents in helping him support players' needs: "a lot of times these guys need a carer with them so usually one of their parents...is there...there's a lot of parents who come along so they're always on hand". Not only might the parents help during sessions, interactions with parents can act as a prompt for Anthony to engage in non-coaching related conversations with players. Parents can offer coaches advice around disabled players' medical requirements, but also their knowledge of the emotional needs of individual players. Indeed, signs of mental and/or social issues affecting players and even the potential antecedents can evidently be passed on so para coaches are informed and consequently better positioned to act and help resolve these issues more quickly. This can be understood as a relatedness-supportive form of interaction as such conversations would show care and concern for players' wellbeing (Smith et al., 2015):

Interview response from Anthony

We've got a wee guy who when he's [feeling] under pressure he does that with his thingy and that's something his mum started [alerting us to]...it was his mum that said, 'when he's doing that try and keep an eye on him.'...the parents come to us as well if they've got problems or they've got problems with the player, you know, [one player's parent said], 'this is what's happening in the house so he might be a bit off tonight,'... so I just kind of spoke to him and said, 'listen, we're here, Luke's here, anybody can talk to anybody, don't keep it inside'... A lot of these guys have stuff wrong that if they pick up a bad cold or something like that it can set them back a long time. They're not

like me and you...sometimes we need to [remember that] ... you need to be conscious of that stuff.

Discussion

The importance Anthony seemed to place on explaining and re-explaining drills and activities, offering visual demonstrations, and maintaining a fairly repetitive and thus predictable practice routine for intellectually-challenged players has been reported before (e.g., Townsend, Cushion, & Morgan, 2019). However, the present study contextualises para coaches' responses to challenges over players' memory and information retention within a community football space, rather than within high-performance sport, which is the norm in research around para sport coaching (Townsend & Peacham, 2021). Furthermore, the results demonstrate the subtle methods para coaches may use when giving instructions to set clear expectations for their players and support their perception of competence. In this case, Anthony explicitly signalling the direction players should travel to help those who had difficulty telling their left hand from their right one.

Player safety was also found to influence coaches' behaviours. Previous research has tended to align player safety considerations with more controlling strategies (e.g., reduced choices) (e.g., Cooper & Allen, 2020). In contrast, the findings from Anthony's case position autonomy support as a tool coaches can utilise to increase, rather than jeopardise player safety, but only if the athlete and context allow for choice making without compromising on safety. Hence, less autonomy-supportive (reduced choice) and more controlling (issuing commands) coach behaviours deserve equal recognition for the important role they might play in keeping athletes safe while they participate in sport.

Para athletes' desire and need for psychological needs satisfaction has unsurprisingly been shown to be equal to that of abled-bodied athletes (Banack, Sabiston, & Bloom, 2011), and Anthony's strategy for setting up and offering support during the activities he provides his players can simultaneously be seen as autonomy- (giving choice), competence- (creating a platform for successful engagement), and relatedness-supportive (including all players within his sessions). This observation serves to demonstrate effective practice in para sport coaching, adding a psychological needs perspective to the body of work in this area (Cregan, Bloom, & Reid, 2007; Martin & Wallen, 2014). Furthermore, these findings illustrate how one coach

operationalised need support within a community coaching setting. The third, most pertinent contribution being made, however, is bringing attention to the multidimensional view para sport coaches seem to have of player safety and how this factor influences their need-supportive behaviours.

The communication issue Anthony mentioned has been reported before. In a study investigating the practices of 10 coaches of young autistic people (Kimber, Burns, and Murphy, 2021), the coaches reported that their players would often interpret instructions too literally, delaying the time it took for coaching instructions to be understood and followed correctly. This issue occurs because individuals on the autistic spectrum's obsession with rules in social situations predisposes them to preferring literal interpretation of words, which becomes problematic when those they are speaking to have non-literal intentions with the words that they choose to use (Vicente & Falkum, 2021). Hence, coaches working with autistic athletes are encouraged to adapt their communications styles to suit this common literalist characteristic (Burns & Johnston, 2020).

In a recent study involving 21 athletes with physical disabilities, the athletes felt strongly that how a coach viewed their disability and the connotations they attached to the word disabled impacted the approach the coaches took to working with them, with some recounting experiences wherein coaches underestimated and resultantly under supported their personal agency (or autonomy) (Allan, Blair Evans, Latimer-Cheung, & Côté, 2020). The impact athlete characteristics were shown to have on the motivational environment Anthony created was varied. On the one hand, by not being overly critical of players or telling them they might receive a reward or incur a punishment ahead of time, Anthony was avoiding the use of competence-thwarting and controlling behaviours, respectively (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). These decisions were driven by his belief that the effectiveness of these incentives were weakened on account of his players' apparent inability to understand them. However, in an earlier comment he also mentioned limiting choice and variability in the scheduling of practice, as a means of providing structured and predictable practice sessions that individuals on the autistic spectrum are known to handle more easily (Geckler, Libby, Graff, & Ahearn, 2000). Therefore, the influence of coaching players with learning disabilities and neurodevelopmental disorders on coaches' need-supportive and -depriving behaviours is evidently nuanced and led by the player's condition. Anthony's account shows how

restrictions on players' autonomy can actually have a competence-supportive intent and may enhance their sport experience overall.

Need-thwarting responses to athlete misbehaviour have been noted already in previous research (Carroll & Allen, 2021). The current case adds the withdrawal of pleasantries and use of coercion to the list of potential reactions by coaches. Until now, little research within coaching has considered the interpersonal and motivational effects of reprimands. However, research within education has warned that the short-term compliance reprimands tend to elicit often leads to increased behaviour problems in the long-term (Alber & Heward, 2000). The reason being that frequently infringing on students' need to feel in control of their behaviour and also feel close to others alienates them and weakens their trust in the relationship they have with their teacher, evoking defensive, rebellious reactions. Another consequence was that punishing misbehaviour made teachers hyperalert to it and they became quicker in making reprimands, which exacerbates rather than curbs the issue (Gable, Hester, Rock, & Hughes, 2009). These insights can be somewhat transferred to understand the potential consequences of Anthony's handling of misbehaviour in his players. However, the change in context and unique characteristics of disabled athletes clearly requires targeted investigation to understand the ramifications more fully. One avenue for this may be to consider how coach characteristics can interact with those of their athletes and the context they work within to produce behaviour that appears to be situation specific (Occhino et al., 2014) such as a potential relationship among social hierarchy, power and need-thwarting and -depriving coaching behaviour.

It is recognised that individuals living with an intellectual disability have a higher propensity for emotional behavioural problems than ordinary people (Floyd & Gallagher, 1997), and that such problems appear to be more common in younger people (Matson & Minshawi, 2007). Fortunately, engaging in sport has been shown to reduce emotional behavioural problems in intellectually disabled people, due to its ability to facilitate the development of social and behavioural skills that enable those with intellectual disabilities to learn to interact and work with other people better. Sport also offers a space wherein the negative emotions such individuals are prone to feeling can be discharged (e.g., anxiety, aggression, disappointment) (Farhangi & Hemati Alamdarloo, 2015). To this end, para coaches are tasked with managing situations where players lose control of their emotions, and Anthony's account illustrates a

decision-making process whereby his view of a player's ability to control their emotions determined whether he "can be quite strict with" them – in other words be direct and commanding (i.e., controlling) – in response to emotional outbursts, or "need[s] to go kinda around the houses [with]" them in "[a] calm voice", implying he typically adopted a warmer, more sensitive and relatedness-supportive communication style in such cases. Therefore, this finding reveals changes in coach control and relatedness support that are contingent upon coaches' judgements of players' ability to regulate their emotions.

In Bartholomew et al.'s (2009) widely cited taxonomy of controlling coach behaviours, the surveillance of athletes' behaviour outside of practice by the coach is looked upon as a potential infringement on athletes' sense of autonomy and right to privacy. The present findings adds nuance to this judgement, as Anthony's decision to monitor players' online communication was not done to exert control in a self-serving coach-centred way. Instead, it was an attempt to mitigate the tendency for messages to be misinterpreted and arguments to ensue between teammates possibly on account of their lack of comprehension, and help these mediums remain as added opportunities for players to interact positively and strengthen bonds between one another. Therefore, Anthony's surveillance can actually be seen as an effort to care for players and protect their social relationships within sport and thus is demonstrative of relatedness-supportive as opposed to controlling coaching.

This finding reinforces the importance of understanding the context surrounding coaches' behaviours through qualitative examination, and incorporating this information into any conclusions that are made around the impact of coach behaviour on athlete motivation (Occhino et al., 2014). It is not being suggested that Bartholomew et al. (2009) were ignorant of context when disseminating their advice. In fact, much appreciation for context is given through the qualitative and anecdotal evidence underpinning their suggestions, which is a key strength of their taxonomy, as well as similarly influential taxonomies in this area (e.g., Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). However, the shared outer characteristics of surveillance to control versus surveillance to support that are expressed through Anthony's account are such that, in the midst of increased training around motivational coach behaviours (e.g., Duda, 2013), there is arguably more need to stress the operational nuance of any behavioural advice given. Returning to an earlier discussion around the ongoing tensions in coaching, coaches are

routinely compelled to make decisions over potentially competing priorities and must make imperfect decisions in order to cope and push practice forward. In this case, by offering players' opportunities to connect while ensuring the space is monitored for signs of conflict among them (Barnson, 2014).

Unlike the parent influence documented in Byrne (2010), wherein parents were viewed as an inhibitor of autonomy-supportive coaching, Anthony appeared to welcome parents' involvement in his coaching process because he viewed them as a key source of knowledge around his players' individual needs. The opinion Anthony had of parents aligns with that given by para coaches in previous research who considered parent-coach partnerships to be crucial to achieving success with disabled players, principally because they are able to offer guidance around supporting players' medical needs among other things (Cregan et al., 2007). Although only implications for relatedness support were inferred from Anthony's case, he also spoke about regularly responding to players' physical and cognitive impairments with increased choice even when there were a lot of parents present. This suggests that these parents may have supported or at least accepted his autonomy-supportive behaviours. Therefore, the present findings hint at the possibility that the highly individualised needs of disabled athletes encourages parents to be less opposed to autonomy-supportive coaching. While speculative, it can be assumed that such a dynamic might lower how much external pressure these coaches feel under when coaching in parents' presence, which has already been shown to impact the amount of need-supportive behaviours coaches engage in (Byrne, 2010). Therefore, the present findings extend our understanding of the coach-created motivational environment in youth sport by showing that athletes' personal characteristics might act as a key determining factor in whether parents are viewed as a help or hindrance in this regard, leading to differences in coaches' interpersonal behaviours.

Summary

Across the findings of Anthony's case, it was found that the more players were perceived to be disabled, the more need-supportive and less need-thwarting behaviours Anthony engaged in as a result. This finding is corroborated with prior work in disability sport coaching, albeit until now no research centred on disabled athletes had specifically considered the implications of their cognitive, physical, and emotional characteristics for the coach-created motivational environment. Anthony's account offers a starting point for research into this area by elaborating on where differences in

lower-order behaviours may lie, with his more disabled and higher banded players receiving greater guidance (i.e., competence support) and choice (i.e., autonomy support), and less coercion, bribes, criticisms (i.e., controlling behaviour), and scolds (i.e., relatedness-thwarting behaviour) than others. All of these insights serve to demonstrate the deep impact athletes' characteristics can have on coach behaviours within a para coaching space, as well as interactions between the athlete, coach, and context as determinants of the coach-created motivational environment (Occhino et al., 2014). Anthony's case also revealed what need-supportive coaching can look like beyond standard representations set down in coaching literature (e.g., Mageau & Vallerand, 2003), with behaviours that on the surface could appear need-thwarting actually having need-supportive intention and effects. Furthermore, given the current gap between research and the development of disability-specific coach education programmes (Townsend et al., 2021), Anthony's skilled consideration of the personal characteristics of his players offers an example of the types of interpersonal skills and adjustments that other para coaches would benefit from learning as they attempt to support the psychological needs of their players.

Case – Peter's familiarity with players

The final mini-case study related to coaches' familiarity with players and players with each other, and the impact on coaching behaviours. The coaches had been working with their players for different lengths of time, and their contrasting levels of exposure to, and knowledge and understanding of the players appeared to have implications for how they acted towards them. Indeed, Kyle alluded to the notion that the interpersonal dynamics between a coach and their players evolve over time when he spoke about the importance of "knowing what does tick their box as both individuals and as a group...you get to know them more than anything else". Three themes were generated around this topic: experimental exercises to learn about players and their personalities, group versus individual familiarity, and spiralling behaviours (see Table 21). Similar features were found in several coaches but the case of one coach – Peter - shall be focused on in order to illustrate how the many aspects of familiarity can connect with one another.

Raw-data theme	Theme
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Use of experimentation to gauge players' character	Experimental exercises to learn about players and their personalities
Controlling base level approach at group level Less stern communicating style with players one-to-one	Group versus individual familiarity
One controlling behaviour after another	Spiralling behaviours

Table 21. Peter's familiarity with players.

Experimental exercises to learn about players and their personalities

Starting at the beginning of a coach-athlete relationship, Peter – who at the time of the study had only been working with his players for around two months – reported being in an almost reconnaissance phase where he felt compelled to experiment with different activities and behaviours in an attempt to better understand his players' personalities and subsequently offer more individualised support:

Fieldnote and interview response from Peter

It's the very start of a training session, and as part of the warmup, Peter gets a group of players to race one another. One player got to the end of the race before the rest of his teammates, and Peter instructed this player to do a comical dance in front of everybody as a fun reward (or forfeit depending on how this instruction is received) for winning. Peter laughs as he gives this instruction, as do the rest of the group, and some of them join in with the winner to carry out Peter's instruction.

The thinking behind it is purely just to [get to know the kids better], I don't know the kids that well, so it's a learning exercise for me...and it tells me as to how outgoing they are or how introverted or extroverted or whatever they may be, because obviously you need to treat them differently, all kids are different.

Group versus individual familiarity

There was also evidence that elaborates on Kyle's earlier comment about coaches building relations with players at different levels. Peter discussed how he behaves towards a new crop of players at a group level:

Interview response from Peter

You get to know them obviously as the time goes on, but I don't have a long relationship with a lot of the kids, so I raise my voice at the football in an authoritative manner, it's not in an aggressive manner... it's certainly not shouting, it's trying to be authoritative.

The above excerpt suggests that at the time of speaking he was prone to using commanding – and in this context controlling – communication methods to manage the players at a group level. Meanwhile, the next excerpt suggests that when it came to managing them on a one-to-one basis, he was adopting a gentler approach, but intended to vary and where necessary be harder with his interaction style once he got to know individuals better:

Interview response from Peter

You would go from a softly [spoken] approach to a more familiar approach, familiar being you know the kid well enough that if they need to be told off they'll take a telling, or when they need praise when to give them it, whereas you've got that steep learning curve when it's a new kid who you don't know, who's very quiet and you don't know their motivation [so you act differently].

The difference between how Peter reported working with unfamiliar athletes at a group and individual level demonstrates a balancing act of coaches seeking to build connections with individuals while having to manage and control the larger group. No comments were provided to examine how Peter's group level behaviours might evolve over time, so there is no indication of whether individual and group levels of familiarity interact to help shape the coach-created motivational environment. Future research might look to address this unknown in order to deepen our understanding of the impact of this factor. For example, could a rise at the individual level of coach-athlete familiarity explain a rise at the group level, and how might coaches' interpersonal behaviours be impacted during the intervening periods.

Spiralling behaviours

In Peter's first excerpt, he repeatedly used the term "authoritative", but at the same time insisted that he would not behave aggressively towards players during these moments. This juxtaposition suggests a level of comfortability with the approach taken

but also a need to once more distinguish between commanding behaviour to engage and organise and commanding behaviour to coerce and pressure (echoing previous findings from Kyle in the ‘need-supportive lessons from the work place’ sub-theme section). Therefore, in this finding additional nuance is provided that enhances our understanding of how coaching behaviours can take on different meaning depending on their tone and importantly the way they are received by players, with a coaches’ intent being vulnerable to distortion if not communicated clearly enough (Erickson & Cote, 2015). When observing Peter during a moment that seemed to align with his claim of trying to engage and organise players, the players’ reactions, coupled with the subsequent responses from Peter, hint at the possibility that authoritative language leaves little room for de-escalation due to its innately commanding nature. As such it can be seen as a trigger for more explicitly controlling behaviours, in this case the threat then actual use of punishments:

Fieldnote of Peter

It’s midway through a practice session, and Peter and James are trying to organise the kids into teams for a match. The kids, after taking their bibs, have split up into separate halves of the pitch and are talking to one another, not listening to Peter’s follow up instructions on the conditions of the game. Sensing this, he shouts, ‘guys, guys’ multiple times in an attempt to regain their attention. Then, after seeing no improvement, Peter calls everyone into the middle and says, ‘right, listen, if you don’t listen, we’ll forget about the game, and all we’ll do running for the rest of the session. Now, I don’t want to do that, guys, but I will if I need to, so listen.’ The kids become very quiet at this point and listen for his instructions. Later in the same session, a repeat of the earlier incident occurs when Peter is trying to swap individual players across teams in order to make the game more competitive. He tells everyone to get a partner and do laps around the pitch.

Discussion

Peter’s race and dance activity was well received by his players. However, it is unknown whether a less outgoing player would react as positively to having to dance in front of others. A different player may have felt a reduced sense of belonging (i.e., relatedness) to the group had their reaction been dissimilar to the rest. Peter’s inability to predict some of his players’ reactions to the task illustrates the potential risk of coaches using experiments, especially polarising ones, to gain a better understanding of

who they are working with. Experiments that inadvertently neglect or actively thwart an athlete's need to feel competent and autonomous are also a possibility. More studies are needed that explore the strategies community coaches use to get to know new players. Importantly, however, such studies should also examine the impact these strategies have on players' perceived psychological need satisfaction, to help in determining the risk-to-reward ratio for the coach-created motivational environment.

That Peter appeared to look for signs of athlete personality traits during these experiments is also noteworthy, as players judged to be introverted in their personality – meaning naturally more introspective, distant, and shy (Beauchamp, Jackson, & Lavalley, 2007) – were seen as potentially requiring more of an “arm around the shoulder” (i.e., relatedness-supportive) coaching approach than extroverted players. Extroverts are found to be naturally more social, action orientated, and conversational with others (Costa & McCrae, 2008), and, according to Peter, may not require as sensitive care. A relationship might therefore exist between coaches' perceptions of players' inborn personality traits and the way they interact with them, justifying and answering a previous call by Matosic et al., (2017) to consider athletes' personality traits in research investigating determinants of coach behaviour. Given that the same study found coaches high in narcissistic personality traits to be more likely to engage in controlling behaviours than their non-narcissistic counterparts, it can be argued that coaches' own personality traits should also be considered in future work. But even more useful might be research that considers the personality traits of both individuals at once, as such work might identify dyadic trait combinations that have adaptive and maladaptive implications for the type of motivational environment coaches then go on to create in response. Support for this idea is given in a study carried out with undergraduate students who were instructed to evaluate profiles of individuals displaying different amounts of narcissistic qualities while also evaluating their own narcissistic traits (Wallace, Howard, & Parkhill, 2015). Results showed that narcissistic evaluators were less negative about narcissistic others and less positive about non narcissistic others than non-narcissistic evaluators, so their social judgements were affected by their personal qualities. This raises questions for future research combining SDT with personality trait theory to answer, such as, would extrovert coaches have judgements of extrovert versus introvert players, and vice versa, that differ from those

given by more introverted coaches, and would this affect their interactions in ways relevant to players' psychological needs?

Research around behavioural escalation in classroom settings advocates understanding triggers in disruptive students in order to prevent escalation (Shukla-Mehta & Albin, 2003). The present finding illustrates the need for coaches to understand their own triggers so as to lessen the likelihood of failed attempts at gaining athletes' compliance bringing about ever more controlling actions by coaches. Interpersonal behaviours are usually discussed for their impact on athlete outcomes, as opposed to their impact on other interpersonal behaviours. Therefore, the present finding offers a new insight into the way authoritative language, while not necessarily meant or even perceived in a controlling way, can create power-based tension in coaches that set in motion increased forms of controlling behaviour if compliance is not elicited. Particularly if coaches lack the ability or knowledge to pivot in a more autonomy-supportive fashion (e.g., by explaining the reason behind the initial instruction, by offering choice etc.). Peter's case revealed the risks of coaches using even 'light' controlling behaviours for organisational purposes in their practice, while paving the way for future research to uncover and validate need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting behaviours as potential antecedents in themselves rather than simply end points in the discussion. This revelation notably deepens the conversation on what causes coaches to act the way they do with players.

Summary

Overall, the above findings add to those of previous studies looking at longitudinal changes in the coach-created motivational environment, but with the additional contribution being that, rather than just offering insight into what and when changes manifest, as has been the case in the past (e.g., Adie et al., 2012; Pelletier et al., 2001; Reinboth & Duda, 2006). The present study reveals specific reasons for why observed changes in coach behaviour have possibly come about, and links these changes explicitly to increases in familiarity, rather than other reasons (e.g., period in the competitive season). The reasons given reveal the impact coaches' perceived familiarity with players, and also their perception of players' familiarity with each other, can have on their behaviour. The initial stages of this relationship were suggested to involve culturally informed and socially risky experimentation by coaches who may look for and act in accordance with trait like behaviour in players. Beyond these key

findings, analysis of the information gathered also revealed the potential for one coach behaviour to influence another coach behaviour, and together these results suggest that the narrative of coaches' decisions on how to treat players, both at a group and one-to-one basis, matures and evolves over time. Research has previously been conducted to look at the evolution of coach-athlete relationships and their influence on players' personal, mental, and athletic growth (Philippe, Sugar, Huguet, Paquet, & Jowett, 2011). However, the present study is the first in sport to have specifically considered athlete familiarity as a potential antecedent of need-supportive – depriving, and -thwarting coach behaviour.

Athlete familiarity was mentioned as a secondary variable when discussing other antecedent factors in earlier sections (see 'perceptions of athletes' motivation as a non-linear predictor of support' sub-theme section for an example). In contrast, the present findings reveal the direct influence of familiarity on the interpersonal dynamics between a coach and their athletes, demonstrating the capacity of antecedent factors to affect behaviour collectively and independently at various levels (Occhino et al., 2014). Recent research by Carroll and Allen (2021), wherein coaches' personal orientation was found to not only interact with athlete gender, but also affect behaviour on its own, corroborates this view. Together, these qualitative studies add to the limited evidence that exists on the topic. How familiarity, as a time-based factor that by its nature brings about other influences, interacts with other antecedent factors remains an important line of enquiry to continue to understand the extent of the impact familiarity has on behaviour. Focused longitudinal examination would appear to be one appropriate route for answering this question. For example, what role does familiarity play – both on its own and in unison with other factors – in longitudinal changes in perceived need satisfaction among athletes and coaches across seasons, and what are the trends in the cause-and-effect relationship between familiarity and need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting coach behaviour. Are adaptive behaviours more likely to transpire at the start of a relationship than further in, and under what conditions?

Chapter 9. General Discussion

Overview

The present study explored factors that influenced the need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting interpersonal behaviours of youth football coaches working in the community in Scotland. The coaching context, athlete related factors, and the coaches' personal orientations were all found to affect the quality of the motivational environment they created for players. Findings on contextual factors centred around the support structures available to the coaches to plan sessions, manage administrative duties, and cope under ambiguous and difficult working conditions. Each of these demands affected the coaches' interactions with players, as did the amount time they had available within sessions, the number of players they had under their charge, and the type of activities they were running. Even the state of the physical environment they coached within triggered changes in their behaviours.

Meanwhile, the characteristics of each sport participant also played a role in the coaches' thinking. Indeed, how confident players appeared, the types of motivation they seemed to demonstrate through their behaviour, and the level of their many abilities – cognitive, physical, and sport related – were seen as requiring differing responses by the coaches. Familiarity with players and their perceived readiness for autonomy were used as frames of reference for the coaches when considering these differences and acting accordingly.

Coaching one's child was also a common interpersonal dynamic among the coaches, and the challenges and sensitivities of combining father-son and coach-player roles were brought out in the findings. What the coaches targeted when coaching their sons, as well as how they wished to be viewed by others when doing so affected the way they treated them. Coaching one's child was also shown to impact the coaches' behaviour towards other players too.

Lastly, many of the aforementioned dynamics were found to be affected either directly or indirectly by larger beliefs on not just how to coach but also lead and work with others in more general terms, which underpinned each coach's personal orientation. Creating these beliefs were personal backstories wherein each coach

learned different lessons and developed personal values from experiences they had and people they met across their lives, and brought them forward into their coaching. Commonalities included coaching experiences as players, their upbringing as children, and lessons they acquired from the workplace as adults. These findings enabled shared as well as more unique principles of behaviour – adaptive or not – to be better understood through having access to the coaches’ genesis of thought.

Contributions to knowledge on the coach-created motivational environment

The research in this thesis contributes to and extends our understanding of the antecedents of the coach-created motivational environment in several ways. Firstly, the findings serve to uphold the body of research positioning the coaching context, athlete related factors, and coaches’ personal orientation as fundamental to coaches’ thought processes and subsequent actions (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). They additionally identify more specific antecedent factors, many of which had not been previously documented in the coaching literature to date. Moreover, factors already known to affect coaches were examined on new levels, which strengthened our understanding of them.

The working conditions reported by the coaches add to the modest but growing base of evidence documenting the impact of the coaching context on coaches’ behaviour (Rocci et al., 2013; Rocci & Pelletier, 2017). A key difference between the present findings and previous work, however, is the minimal impact pressure from above (i.e., administrators) was shown to have on the coaches’ behaviour, because the Standard and Legacy club coaches were largely left to their own devices in so far as running their teams. Thus, they illustrate how coaching in community clubs can entail a different set of contextual demands and constraints to the motivational environment a coach creates than what other settings might (e.g., performance environments [Allen & Shaw, 2009; Rocchi et al., 2013]).

In the past, coaches’ perceptions of players’ motivation dominated discussions around athlete related reasons for coaches supporting or thwarting their basic psychological needs (Carroll & Allen, 2021; Mageu & Vallerand, 2003; Rocchi et al., 2013; Rocchi & Pelletier, 2017). However, the present findings have brought many more factors to light (e.g., coaches’ perceptions of athletes’ readiness for autonomy, their cognitive and physical capabilities, and being the child of a coach), and in doing

so widen the scope of future research on this topic. The findings connected to being the child of a coach add fuel to the debate of whether parents should coach their child (Witt & Dangi, 2018), with the present study showing there to be a plethora of both benefits and consequences, not just for the child, but also their parent and teammates. The coaches' interview responses and fieldnotes observations presented the parent-coach as a problematic actor in youth community sport settings, but one often needed to facilitate organised sport experiences for grassroots players, and also one capable of enriching children's experiences too (Pill, Agnew, & Abery, 2022). The present study is the first to explore interpersonal behaviours associated with coaching one's child through an SDT lens, zooming in on the motivations, insecurities, insider insights, and home-based influences impacting parent-coaches' behaviour. These findings compliment previous work linking controlling parent-coach behaviour with maladaptive outcomes for their children (Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes & Pennisi, 2008; Kaye, Frith, & Vosloo, 2015; O'Rourke et al., 2014; Smith, Smoll, & Passer, 2002) by offering possible reasons for why these behaviours may have come about in the first place. The present study also adds to the small list of studies on parent-coaches that are contextualised within a team sport setting (e.g., Weiss and Fretwell, 2005), with most of the current literature set within tennis, track and field athletics, and swimming (Elliott & Drummond, 2017).

Where the impact of a coach's personal orientation on their behaviours is concerned, the present study documented the unique back stories belonging to several of the Standard and Legacy club coaches. These narratives illustrated the impact key individuals and groups in both professional and personal settings can have on one's orientation towards need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting coaching behaviours. They also contribute to our deepening understanding of influences on the coach-created motivational environment by exploring beyond surface level beliefs about coaching, revealing their entanglement with coaches' outside lives, morals, values, and personal goals. The present findings add empirical support for the tenets of SDT as it relates to the relationship between intrinsic values and goals (Deci & Ryan, 2002), and also extends the sequence to account for need-supportive behaviours displayed within coaching.

Insight was also gained on antecedent factors for the coaches' provision or not of competence and relatedness support. These two dimensions of coach behaviour were found to be influenced by the coaching context, players, and coaches' beliefs similar to

how autonomy support was affected, but they possessed their own specific triggers and consequences. Until now these dimensions have been neglected in the literature, despite playing large roles in the cultivation and protection of self-determined motivation and other associated outcomes for players and coaches (Carroll & Allen, 2021; Deci & Ryan, 2002). By unearthing the determinants of structure and interpersonal involvement, the present study makes a significant contribution to understanding why and how coaches might affect all aspects of players' need support.

Interaction effects also became apparent between antecedent factors. These were communicated persistently by the coaches, but also diversely, in that a range of relationships were established. These observations answer Occhino et al.'s (2014) call for research unpacking such interactions, so the complexity of coach behaviour could be sufficiently recognised. The findings emphasise the need to resist viewing antecedent constructs as independent variables when in reality coaches are continuously reacting to different influences and tensions as they attempt to navigate their practice.

The qualitative nature of the findings also boosted their value, as these insights serve as an important counterbalance to the plethora of quantitative work that already exists around this topic (e.g., Iachini, 2013; Matosic et al., 2016; Stebbings et al., 2012), and additionally helped to elaborate on past results. It should also be noted that many of the more novel findings in coaching shared commonalities with antecedent findings in other leadership domains such as education, parenting, and health, and therefore demonstrated the value of looking across different contexts when seeking to understand behaviour in coaching. Thus, the present study offers support to the strategy advocated for in Matosic et al.'s (2016) review of factors influencing interpersonal styles from an SDT perspective.

Within the above findings there were important lessons learned about the motivational environment that deserve extended commentary on their own, which the following sections attempt to cover.

Coach psychological needs support at the centre of contextual barriers to athlete needs support

A recurring theme when observing and interviewing the coaches was the distinct lack of support they received for their own basic psychological needs, which prevented them from offering players the level of need support they wanted, and encouraged them

to engage in behaviours that were less conducive or indeed oppositional to players' need satisfaction. This issue was apparent at multiple levels within the coaches' environment, from how they treated each other as coaching teams, to how they were treated by those above them within the club, to how coach education at a national governing body level was impacting their decision making with players. Previous research has typically focused on administrative support when investigating contextual influences on coach behaviour (Rocchi & Pelletier, 2017; Rocchi et al., 2013). The present study demonstrates a wider scope of issues coaches can encounter at the club level, while exposing influences that sit above the singular club/organisation and instead stem from the governance of the sport at a national level. At the club level the coaches' most pressing concern was a perceived imbalance in the level of autonomy they got to fulfil their role compared to the amount of structure they were given to understand it and engage in it with confidence. While this dynamic was similar to what has been found in performance coaching environments (e.g., Allen & Shaw, 2009), the present study demonstrated how this imbalance can play out and perpetuate in a community youth coaching setting, wherein volunteers might only coach to facilitate organised sport experiences for children (primarily their own children [Green, & Chalip, 1997; Pill et al., 2022]). Coach reports suggested that those facilitating community sport experiences for young people can have limited if any prior coaching experience, and are consequently looking for support from others. For many of the Standard and Legacy club coaches, the level of structure they required was missing, leaving them largely to organise themselves. In the Standard club, adding further responsibility to already hectic family and professional lives was something the coaches felt apprehensive about, and this daunting prospect made some reluctant to help beyond their basic duties. Doing the minimum expected created situations where tasks were delegated disproportionately among group members. Moments of poor need support between coaches were then shown to occur. The consequences included low quality motivation, manifestation of symptoms of burnout and maladaptive behavioural responses to players being exhibited and reported, which aligns with previous research on the topic. For example, in Rocchi and Pelletier's (2017) study of 424 coaches, the authors observed a pattern whereby the coaching context negatively affects coaches' psychological needs, which in turn fosters non-self-determined forms of motivation to coach, and subsequently encourages controlling coaching behaviour. Meanwhile, at the Legacy club, the coaches' preoccupation with running and handling their own teams discouraged support

networks from developing between age groups, an outcome made more difficult by separated training session times and sporadic coach meetings organised by club administrators.

Across both clubs, there were also issues cited around the assistance provided by the SFA in the structure their lower-level coaching awards offered. Particularly when working with players with additional support needs, albeit experiences varied among the coaches in both their learning and level of engagement on these courses. A small number of studies are now recognising the mental pressures community youth coaches can experience, alongside the negative impact such pressures can have on their mental health (Gorczynski et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2020). The present study presents a series of motivations and actions that demonstrate these mental impacts from lower to higher severity, thereby emphasising the need for better understanding of influences on coaches' own need support.

Problems with the translation of current interpretations of SDT into coaching practice

On a daily basis the coaches were found to be managing others' expectations of how they should behave, while also navigating delivery constraints such as not having enough time, structure, or manpower to coach in a way they felt was conducive to the experiences they wished to give players. Players' varied characteristics, desires, and development needs only compounded the operational and interpersonal challenges the coaches faced. In order to cope with these circumstances, the coaches often felt forced to prioritise the provision of one dimension of need support over others (with autonomy tending to be compromised the most), and/or engage in need-depriving or -thwarting actions that they believed at least offered short-term, actionable solutions to the problems they encountered.

The coaches' reports suggested that while they acknowledged the potential flaws in their behaviour, they felt consigned to accepting them as inherent and at times valuable, if imperfect features of their practice. So much so that during the focus groups that explored perceptions of contemporary guidance for adopting SDT as a framework for coaching, the coaches were critical of what they perceived to be 'strict academic' recommendations for promoting supportive motivational environments for players. A rigid adherence to the autonomy-supportive behaviours presented in Mageau & Vallerand (2003) was labelled as idealistic rather than realistic for tackling the everyday

challenges of coaching in a community youth football setting. The coaches also objected to the language used in academic texts to describe the types of strategies and interactions they often relied upon. To the coaches, ‘controlling’ behaviours were akin to management behaviours and they judged them to be useful provided they were not taken to extreme lengths (e.g., reminding players of past wins in competition to increase their confidence in themselves; using authoritative commands to ensure players do not injure themselves through reckless behaviour). Controlling behaviours were even seen as necessary for creating environments where player autonomy could be fostered incrementally, in accordance with the ‘age and stage’ stance the coaches often took on the subject of when their athletes were ready to be given ownership over their development and by how much.

While there were evident gaps in the coaches’ knowledge and understanding of SDT and the motivational environment in sport, the extent of the coaches’ disagreements with how their behaviours could be judged in isolation suggests that the presentation of coach behaviour recommendations in current literature requires improved contextualisation. The risks of decontextualised assessments of coaching are that the critical nuances in coach behaviour that was demonstrated in the coaches’ accounts becomes lost. Furthermore, coaches may disengage from materials that project an unproblematic image of coaching that they cannot identify with, and falls short of displaying enough empathy for the challenges and tensions they face when attempting to support players’ needs across complex situations (Barnson, 2014). That this warning emerged from the data collected justified the decision to investigate the coaches’ behaviours in situ in order to better appreciate the realities of coaching and use these insights to make more measured and fairer assessments of the coaches’ performance (Occhino et al., 2014).

The distinctions made in the present study between coach behaviours that appeared indifferent to the satisfaction of players’ needs (i.e., need-depriving) versus those that actively opposed players’ needs (i.e., need-thwarting) was another attempt to document the coaches’ actions more closely by considering their implications in terms of the gradual versus immediate threat they posed to players’ motivation quality, respectively. Future research in coaching should continue to make these distinctions in accordance with advancements in conceptual theory (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Otherwise, this categorisation issue, combined with the increased onus placed on

coaches to adopt athlete centred approaches in recent years by national governing bodies (Bowles & O'Dwyer, 2020), and the proliferation of studies quantifying need-supportive and -thwarting behaviours among coaches (e.g., Smith et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2017; Tessier et al., 2013), risks creating an audit culture wherein token gestures of need support are given, and potentially useful 'controlling' behaviours are disbanded, all to avoid criticism rather than through a committed desire to foster players' self-determination. A similar effect was observed in Sawiuk, Taylor, & Groom's (2018) study of 15 coach mentors, who felt that constant monitoring – through metrics – of their progress towards specific outcomes set by their respective institutions confined their practice to topics that had variable meaning to their mentees and therefore reduced their ability to cultivate worthwhile, individualised experiences for everyone they worked with. The present study repeatedly demonstrated times where traditional need-supportive principles were modified or switched based on the traits and/or contextualised needs of individual players or collective groups, and coaches expressed a strong resistance to modes of behaviour that would deny them the autonomy to make these decisions. Hence the need for a rethink on how recommended behaviours are presented and assessed in academic texts, with empathy and flexibility needing to be at the heart of practical guidance.

Bottom-up vs top-down strategies for improving the coach-created motivational environment

Another notable finding of the present study was the extent of the idiosyncrasies of each coach that were found to impact their behaviour. As mentioned already, the coach, context, and athletes affected the quality of interactions athletes faced in a myriad of ways. But there were repeated occasions where each of these antecedent dimensions had more or less of an impact on a behaviour depending on the specific coach involved. To illustrate, the coaching reality Anthony faced in para-football was similar to that faced by the other coaches, but at the same time unique in its specific pressures and allowances. For example, parents of Anthony's players were involved in his practice, but this relationship was more harmonious given the added caring needs of his players, which their parents were well placed to advise on. By contrast, a more fractured relationship with parents was experienced by the Standard club coaches, particularly Daniel. Furthermore, Anthony's players' disabilities aligned heavily with need-supportive strategies, and this dynamic was not challenged by parents, whereas for

the Standard club coaches there was a sense of pressure from parents to engage in more controlling coaching behaviours. Similarly, the issue reported around there being a lack of structure across the clubs was especially pronounced for Anthony given the fact that not enough para-football coaching courses were being run by the SFA to give coaches like Anthony ideas for running sessions with these types of players. At the same time, the diverse range of disabilities present within his team meant there were limitations on what exercises he could reliably transfer into his own practice anyway. These subtle distinctions meant Anthony felt ‘the weight’ of antecedent dimensions differently from the rest of his counterparts. Contextual factors can evidently have more or less of an impact on coaches’ practice due to the subtle differences in each coaches’ environment and their personal characteristics. Hence, the present study reinforces the importance of bottom-up approaches to improving the coach-created motivational environment (Carroll & Allen, 2021), as top-down initiatives are limited in their capacity to cater towards individual coaches and coach settings.

Recommendations for future research

The larger questions generated from the present study’s findings offer a blueprint that future research might follow to further advance our understanding of the coach-created motivational environment. Beginning with the impact of the coaching context, the findings demonstrate that there is much still to be discovered and understood when it comes to contextual factors influencing the motivational environment coaches create. Therefore, to generate meaningful solutions to the problems coaches face, it is imperative that further work be done on coaches’ working environment, and particularly within community sport, which has long been overshadowed by the research attention given to coaching within professional settings (Pill et al., 2022). Given how entangled working conditions clearly are with the quality of interpersonal support coaches then provide (Rocchi et al., 2013; Rocchi & Pelletier, 2017), the proposed agenda is one in the same with increasing the quality-of-care community youth coaches provide to the sport participants under their lead. Furthermore, in the present study fellow coaches, administrators, and the national governing body were all found to be complicit, in some respect, to the frustrations of coaches’ needs, which creates an imperative for future research to gain an understanding of what causes those at each level to act or not in a way that offers support to coaches’ needs. Thereby further illuminating the web of influences on the

coach-created motivational environment while better supporting coaches, players, and other key actors as a result.

Given the heavy involvement of parents as coaches throughout the Standard and Legacy clubs – similar to most other community sport settings – understanding more about what occurs within a parent-coach's motivational environment, and why, is important for challenging parent-coaches to be critical and aware of their own behaviour. To this end, more research taking parent-coaches' perspective into account is needed (Elliot & Drummond, 2017). Particularly that which gauges the antecedents of the behaviours of female parent-coaches, given the all-male sample examined in the present study as well as other relevant studies to date, to continue to give a voice to parents in appreciating their experience of taking on coaching and parenting responsibilities simultaneously. Gauging mother-coaches' perspective could help to better establish common issues experienced across different types of parents, while generating new insight into unique support issues and interpersonal dynamics specific to being a mother-coach that warrant attention and assistance. Whether parent-coaches' behaviours change depending on the gender of their participants is another potentially fruitful avenue of enquiry for future research to explore.

Since the present study's findings highlight the potential utility of a bottom-up approach to improving the coach-created motivational environment, the next step for intervention studies in coaching is to trial the use of findings on antecedent factors to guide a coach's learning, while also working on the support structures in the environment surrounding the coach in order to give them the best chance of following through with their intentions. This appreciation for the individual and the environment surrounding their practice capabilities is possibly missing from coach education programmes that focus on prescribing behaviours rather than understanding how behaviours fit in with a coach's way of thinking, the context they work in, or the athletes they work with (e.g., Duda, 2013). Of course, top-down approaches to coach education programmes also have value in their use of limited resources such time and manpower to learn about and support coaches individually, as well as their consistency in the breadth of information coaches are often given. Therefore, another question for future research to consider and explore is how best to blend these approaches for the purpose of reaching the most coaches and having the greatest impact possible (to this end, a suggestion is given in the 'practical implications' section that follows).

The present work also demonstrates the difficulties coaches can face in actioning rigidly conceived interpretations of effective practice based on motivational theory. This outcome can be seen as a by-product of the overly idealistic way coach behaviour is often judged. Thus, it is also recommended that future research be more empathetic when judging and reporting on coaches' behaviour, and consider how individual actions fit in to the overall functionality of the coaching process before drawing conclusions about a coach's level of effectiveness. Adding need-depriving behaviours to the spectrum of environmental dimensions would fit within this strategy of tempering opinions over what a coach does towards their athletes and the potential impacts from a motivational standpoint. Taking this stance does not ignore the risks any amount of need-depriving and -thwarting behaviours can pose to players' health and functioning (Appleton & Duda, 2016), and the proposed allowance does not go so far as to actively promote coaches' use of such behaviours. Rather, it encourages tolerance towards the presence of these behaviours in small dosages, in the hopes of making academic texts and the guidance they provide more representative of coaching 'in the real world'. Coaches who are still learning how to implement autonomy-supportive principles, for example, or feel prevented from doing so as fully as they ideally would like, or are still wrestling with the difficult prospect of releasing control to players while at the same time being responsible for their development, may feel less harshly judged for using alternative strategies that aid them in managing the difficulties they are presently experiencing. Less or at least more considered use of controlling strategies could simultaneously be targeted in the long run through coach education and/or improvements in the facilitative structures surrounding each coach's motivational environment. Precedent already exists for the type of flexible thinking academic writing on coach behaviour is now being tasked with modelling. Indeed, coaching has been recognised as a non-linear, complex, and context bound activity that sits "at the edge of chaos" and consequently demands improvisation from the coach at regular intervals in order to cope (Bowes & Jones, 2006, p. 241). Therefore, it can be argued that setting rigid expectations for how coaches should interact with players without openly supporting their agency to go 'off script' and adopt less adaptive behaviours as needed is not practical or conducive to improving the coach-created motivational environment. This is because such guidance risks upsetting an already fragile sense of stability for coaches and, ironically, is likely to be rejected as a result of the lack of coach autonomy it offers.

To aid future research and coaching practice in targeting these goals, the vision of the coach-athlete motivational sequence expressed in the present study's findings has been brought together to build a representative model. The following section elaborates on the rationale for the model and clarifies its place in the current literature.

A qualitative reimagining of the coach-athlete relationship

Since the inception of Mageau and Vallerand's (2003) MMCAR, a plethora of research has advanced our understanding of the antecedent, features, and effects of coaches' behaviour with respect to the quality of the motivational environment they create (Occhino et al., 2014; Matosic et al., 2016). Hence, the model has and continues to prove highly valuable in applying the tenets of SDT to sport coaching (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007). This is why it continues to heavily underpin much of the research in this area. For example, Carroll & Allen (2021) recently used the MMCAR as their guiding framework for exploring the antecedents of community youth coaches' autonomy-supportive and controlling behaviours. However, like any model, limitations exist in the design, intentions, and lifespan of the MMCAR that allows space for alternative means of viewing and consequently researching this topic. Research and our understanding of phenomena are constantly evolving, which necessitates refining the arguments that are used to inspire future investigations. Therefore, this section is aimed at critically assessing the MMCAR in light of not only the findings in the present study, but also the research that the MMCAR has inspired. A sister-model will then be introduced that serves to compliment the MMCAR, and also compensate for its short comings.

Firstly, the MMCAR is weighted heavily towards classifying features of coaches' autonomy-supportive behaviours and their impact on players' need satisfaction and intrinsic and self-determined extrinsic motivation. With the antecedents of coaches' behaviours presented more as an afterthought. Research has since evidenced the powerful capacity of the coach-focused elements of the MMCAR to drive behaviours (e.g., Iachini, 2013; Mallett, 2005; Stebbings et al., 2012), thus making a case for coaches' background and experiences to at least be given more consideration within theoretical frameworks that involve them so heavily.

Also neglected in the MMCAR are antecedent factors linked to coaches' provision of structure and interpersonal involvement. The present findings show that the

coaching context, coaches' personal orientation, and athlete characteristics can also impact the degree to which coaches offer players relatedness and competence support. As discussed earlier, isolating these other dimensions of coach behaviour on the pretence that autonomy support impacts perceptions of competence and relatedness anyway downplays the critical role direct support for these two needs plays in the growth and maintenance of intrinsic motivation for participating in an activity, as well as the internalisation process of extrinsic factors (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Based on the large imbalance in research looking at autonomy- versus competence- and relatedness-supportive features of the coach-created motivational environment, it could be argued that the effects of undervaluing competence and relatedness have been negative. Indeed, the present study is one of the few, if only attempts at considering such factors in line with, and also in collaboration with, autonomy-supportive ones. The argument for increasing considerations for the structure and interpersonal involvement a coach provides has been modelled within the present study, wherein understanding these other needs has strengthened our understanding of autonomy by expanding on their close interrelationships.

Another criticism of the MMCAR is its lack of explicit acknowledgement around the interacting effects of its three antecedent dimensions to create behaviour. Previous research by Carroll and Allen (2021) has already highlighted the need to view antecedent factors as integrated mechanisms through which to view coaches' behaviours, because singular reasons rarely explain why coaches act the way they do. The present study's findings reinforce this view.

In much the same way that antecedent factors operate closely together, so too do the different dimensions of coach behaviour, which the present study also illustrates. The coaches' need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting behaviours were not mutually exclusive, but rather existed together within each of their practices, as already established in previous research (e.g., Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011; Tessier et al., 2013). Nor were they found to be uniformly defined, or accurately understood outside of the context in which they were exhibited. This relativism is in stark contrast to the positivism that dominated much of the research informing the MMCAR, as well as the research the MMCAR inspired (e.g., Iachini, 2013; Rocchi et al., 2013; Stebbings et al., 2015). The value of research adopting an objective, positivistic paradigm cannot be understated due to its ability to observe, record, and predict trends in behaviour that

show where behaviour change programmes may be best positioned in terms of their focus and behavioural targets (Smith et al., 2016; Tessier et al., 2013). But equally, an interpretivist paradigm is crucial in generating hypothesis that ‘zooms in’ on and establishes the boundaries of predictions made based on quantitative studies (Carroll & Allen, 2021). The exploratory nature of an interpretivist paradigm also allows the social element of SDT’s psycho-social premise to be fully elaborated upon. A criticism of traditional positivistic psychology is its tendency to focus too much on isolated constructs to do with the individual at the expense of sufficiently considering and bringing into question other acts and events happening around them. The dearth of qualitative SDT research in coaching arguably reflects the dominance of positivism in this area, which the MMCAR is partly responsible for.

Diagrammatical issues around the MMCAR’s two-dimensional appearance are also brought to question with the paradigm adopted by the present study. Here, much of the coaches’ practice were found to have a mirror image in that similar actions were reported but, depending on the situation and context they were employed within, they took on different meaning in relation to players’ need-satisfaction. Based on the view that environmental dimensions have the potential to share lower-order behaviours, the MMCAR’s two-dimensional pathway can be seen as representing a rigid and linear means of understanding, classifying, and assessing coaches’ practice, which contrasts with the malleable meaning and nature of behaviours.

Due to all of the above factors, a qualitative alternative to the MMCAR is proposed below (see Figure 2) based on the findings from the present study. In this model, the antecedents and features of the coach-created motivational environment are given greater detail to promote more consideration for the coach-focused elements of the motivational process than has been displayed in the literature to date. The pyramid outline of the model similarly signifies the depth of actions and events contributing to players’ motivational orientation and related outcomes, which sit at the tip of the pyramid. This motivational process begins with coach-, context-, and athlete-related factors interacting to influence the behaviours of coaches, who as unique individuals are affected by antecedent factors differently (as signified by the contrasting weightings of factors influencing each hypothetical coach). The interpersonal coaching behaviours that follow can support, thwart, or neglect sport participants’ sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The coach’s intent coupled with the unique dynamics of

their coach-athlete relationship can influence the presentation and category of each of their behaviours. Placing need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting environmental dimensions together on a revolving axis offers multiple angles by which to view singular actions, in order to represent this complexity and move attention away from uniform assessments of the motivational environment. The frequency and potency of coaches' need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting behaviours then affect players' perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which influences not just their motivational orientation towards the activity, but also other outcomes associated with their participation (e.g., fear of failure, persistence, performance). The model has stemmed from an in-situ exploration of coach behaviour in a community coaching context, and can thus be viewed as a model *of* coaching, rather than for coaching, in contrast to the MMCAR. The purpose of positioning this model within current literature is to demonstrate its value as a stand-alone insight into how motivational processes might play out in real world coaching practice (Occhino et al., 2014), and by doing so push future research to integrate SDT's central tenants and interpersonal recommendations more closely with the everyday mentalities, situations, and behaviours of coaches.

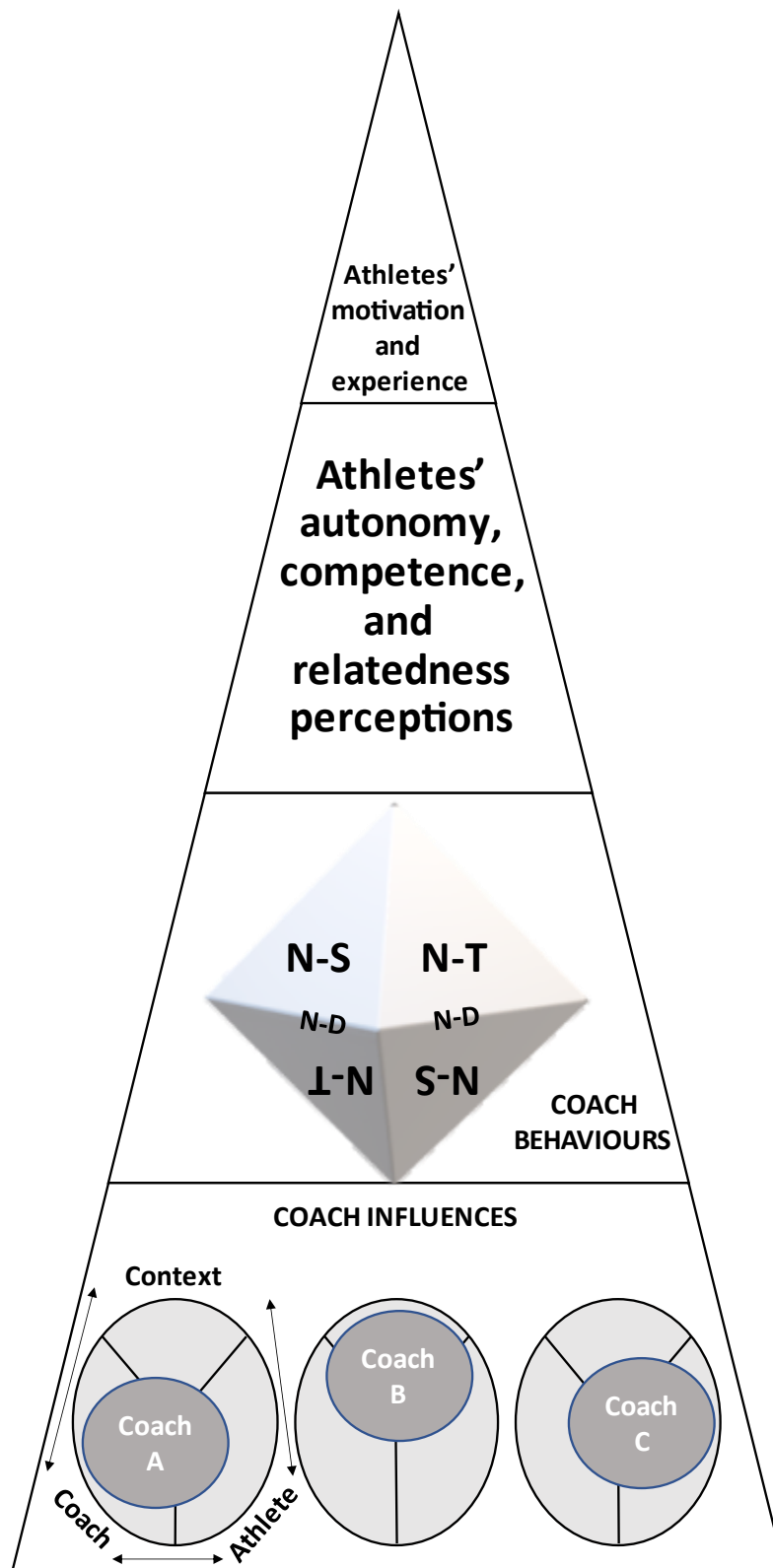


Figure 2. Alternative model of coach-athlete motivational sequence.

Chapter 10. Conclusions

In this final chapter, the practical implications stemming from the study's findings will be communicated, followed by an evaluation of the study's strengths as well as its limitation. Lastly, concluding remarks will be given, going back to the study's aims and summarising how they have been met.

Practical Implications

Several practical recommendations came out of the present study's findings, and sit at both the local (i.e., coach teams/wider club) and governing body levels. Starting locally, the findings around the coaches' confusion and isolation indicated that community youth clubs/organisations should pay attention to the requirement to support coaches' psychological needs, particularly through the provision and balance of structure and autonomy, respectively (Vansteenkiste et al., 2012). Having little understanding of how to plan sessions was a common issue among the coaches, most of whom had little previous coaching experience. Therefore, a clear starting point would be the development of resources containing content for training sessions that these coaches could access and use to make their planning less chaotic and give them more confidence, and therefore sense of competence, in what they are delivering.

In addition, the findings suggested that more experienced members of clubs could mentor less experienced coaches in the delivery and evaluation of sessions. Such help would assist with supporting coaches' competence satisfaction in two ways: one, by helping them actually improve their performance; and two, by helping them recognise the strengths they already possess as coaches, thereby increasing their present perceptions of competence and fuelling their desire to keep gaining further competence (Hall et al., 2019). A mentor's active involvement with coaches would also help to make them feel looked after and cared for, thereby increasing their perceptions of relatedness too. Further benefits for mentored coaches would include increased self-awareness and reflection on their practice so that improvements in the motivational environment they create for players become more likely and occur at a quicker rate (Carroll & Allen, 2021). Throughout the process of mentoring, mentors ought to be mindful of finding an appropriate balance of structure and agency for each coach so as to avoid their actions being perceived as controlling by coaches. Efforts may also need to be made by the governing body to improve coaches' awareness of SDT and its application and

importance within coaching, so that coach mentors might offer more considered advice to coaches and use their position of influence to positively impact the environments community sport participants receive.

The limited interaction and therefore limited collaboration the coaches reported having with coaches from older and younger age bands in their respective clubs pointed to the need for clubs to build stronger support networks whereby coaches and coach teams work with and support one another's competence (and thus perceptions of competence). Separate training times and locations were cited as a possible barrier to such interaction, and the low availability of public pitches was mentioned to be the root cause of this dynamic. Therefore, other opportunities for coaches to interact may need to be explored. A possible alternative could be for clubs to bring coaches together for collaboration in online spaces (Stoszkowski & Collins, 2017), as face to face in-service nights reportedly received poor attendance due to schedule clashes. Efforts should also be made to improve the wider support culture at clubs, to the point where coaches feel encouraged and empowered to step forward with support needs that they have, and do not feel obligated to lead on any ideas they might have for improving support measures. This way, such meetings can be received as opportunities for growth rather than gateways to added responsibility, which is difficult to manage for volunteer coaches with already busy lives outside of coaching.

Staying on the topic of responsibility, imbalanced distributions of tasks led to some of the coaches feeling burned out, let down, and even taken advantage of by their fellow coaches, which in turn fostered low perceptions of relatedness. These experiences were seen as detrimental to the motivation quality, and even retention of those affected. Therefore, creating harmony and equity between members of coaching teams appears crucial to both their immediate and longer-term motivation quality for coaching, and sustained involvement in community sport. Task distribution among coaching teams is never going to be an even split, but the present study's findings suggest that if coaches recognise, appreciate, and discuss one another's roles and contributions towards shared objectives, they can each feel heard (a key aspect of autonomy) and respected (important for relatedness). Furthermore, if coaches can offer one another advice and support for handling their separate responsibilities, they will each benefit from the added structure and likely perform better as a result (Allen & Shaw, 2009).

At the higher level of influences on the coaches' behaviour, the SFA's approach to coach education came under scrutiny in so far as its potential impact on the coach-created motivational environment in community sport. SFA tutors were reported as not only exhibiting but also actively and uncritically promoting behaviours which posed risks to players' need satisfaction (e.g., the unrestrained use of competition as a means of increasing engagement among players). This possibility, coupled with the coaches' inclination towards taking the advice of SFA tutors at face value, means that efforts may also need to be made to improve tutors' awareness of SDT and its application and importance within coaching, so that, like coach mentors, they can act as a positive influence on the motivational experiences of community sport participants. Refining the SFA's knowledge in this area could also help by inspiring them to rethink their policies, which were suggested to have influenced Kieran's behaviours, albeit indirectly, through his decision to increase players' exposure to competitive activities in training as response to moving into a competitive league format with them at the age of 14.

Generally speaking, the coach findings also offered a possible blueprint for formal and informal coach education aimed at them and similar others. Influences specific to coaching in the community (e.g., parent-coaching, time constraints, work-life balance, lessons from the workplace) were found to impact on the coaches' behaviour, yet did not always do so in a uniform way. It is thus recommended that coach developers (e.g., coach tutors, coach mentors) consider the utility of adopting a bottom-up approach to coach education aimed at improving the coach-created motivational environment. The present study's findings suggest that when coaches are consulted and observed, coach developers can gauge which dimensions of behaviour will fit within their practice and which could present a challenge for them to take forward, either because they do not wish to or they feel unable because of their environment (Carroll & Allen, 2021).

Retrieving information on challenges and enablers to different coach behaviours could be instrumental to providing more meaningful training and support for coaches, as coaches could then engage in tailored development plans, as well as receive targeted support within their environments to develop their practice. Based on the findings on coaches' personal orientation, this could include coach developers encouraging coaches to think about their coaching values and importantly the sources, or original stories, of these values, as a coach's biography can then act as a base point for critical reflection

around their behaviour and its triggers, and also congruence or incongruence with players' support needs. Where personalised programmes cannot be produced (e.g., in the running of large-scale formal coach education courses, Duda's [2013] PAPA project offering one such example), common challenges expressed by coaches for engaging in motivationally adaptive behaviours can still be collated and built into the course design. This tactic was used to aid amateur football coaches with handling confrontation with players and parents through the creation of a course built with this problem in mind (Jacobs, Knoppers, Diekstra, & Sklad, 2015).

A key factor in the success of such initiatives may be that coaches are also shown empathy for the challenges they face and coach behaviours are presented as unfixed and innately complicated (Barnson, 2014). Only then might coach developers elicit the type of buy in and persistence they desire from coaches. This study's findings suggest that the challenges community coaches face may not be given adequate consideration at local or governing body levels, therefore addressing coaches' own support issues ought to be a priority target for coach developers given the heavy indirect impact poor coach need support has on players' experiences (Stebbing et al., 2011).

Strengths, limitations, and future directions

The success of the present study can be attributed to various strengths in its design, planning and execution. Beginning with the research paradigm, adopting a qualitative approach nested in interpretivism was instrumental to sourcing rich, detailed commentary on the coaches' experiences and perceptions (Potrac et al., 2014). It also revealed unanticipated channels of enquiry due to the capacity for the project to flex and expand on interesting topics that emerged during the research process. For example, Daniel's account led to the momentary deviation into developing an understanding of the mental health concerns for coaches in unsupportive environments. The qualitative nature of the present study also offered an insight into the operational dynamics of the clubs being examined. This approach prevented the analysis from failing under the false assumption that the Legacy club would have had more administrative involvement than the Standard club based on their structural classifications alone, when in reality they operated similarly due to stronger underlying factors innate to their shared settings.

Meanwhile, adopting a relativistic ontological lens allowed each truth expressed by the coaches to be accepted and investigated rather than rejected on grounds of a lack of objective support (Smith & McGannon, 2017). This approach paved the way for new thinking around topics based on unexpected interview responses and observations, which future research might go on to explore and examine further. Furthermore, the subjectivist epistemology empowered the research to consider and assess behaviours observed in the coaches differently from more conventional classifications of need-supportive and -thwarting behaviours. This subjectivity paved the way for more nuanced accounts of coaching being both captured and formulated, including the incorporation of need-deprivation as a commonly overlooked environmental dimension of the coach-created motivational environment. Moreover, the multiple case study methodology enabled the research to be embedded in situ to stimulate insight that had contextual grounding (Occhino et al., 2014), and allowed the analysis to explore what was unique to each case but also similar across cases for the purpose of making tentative generalisations on coach behaviours within the community coaching environment (Stake, 2013). As with all qualitative inquiry, questions can be raised over the empirical strength of the relationships posed in the present study, but it is precisely one of the purposes of qualitative research to generate hypotheses that can be tested on

a larger scale without being reliant on the outcome of such investigations to validate the relative truths of select individuals (Bryman, 2017).

With regards to the data collection methods, conducting interviews with the coaches in both semi-structured and unstructured formats, away from and also within their 'natural' coaching environment, enabled detailed self-reports to be gathered. Varying the interview format and location was effective in eliciting information about coaching influences and thought processes that were at play across coaches' practice as well as specific to behaviours noticed in their observed sessions. Likewise, naturalistic observation helped in building an intimate knowledge of the coaches and their contexts (Cowan et al., 2012; Denzin, 2009). This strategy increased the quality of the interviews held afterwards by allowing personalised questions to be discussed which arose from behaviours observed in sessions. The observations also allowed comparison between the coaches' self-reported and actual behaviours, which led to the finding around self-awareness as an antecedent of behaviour and target of coach support. These benefits were made possible through recording fieldnotes, which helped in capturing the setting and closely reconstructing events to aid the coaches' stimulated recall and also allowing the reader closer to their lived experiences (Dennis, 2010; Jackson, 1990). Lastly, the use of focus groups was successful in bringing about conversation topics produced by the coaches' responses to one another and thus prevented the line of questioning and the value of the answers retrieved from being limited to the reach of the researcher's own understanding (Acocella, 2012). Using these conversations to explore and critique contemporary frameworks for motivationally adaptive coaching was also useful for not just gauging the coaches' understanding of motivational processes, but also exploring the translation of theory into practice at a closer level than research had previously managed (Occhino et al., 2014).

The ethnographic style in which these different tools were used together mitigated the impact of time constraints limiting the duration of time that could be spent with the coaches, by necessitating full immersion by the researcher into the coaches' environment. It was also effective at increasing the quality of the analysis process by enabling the triangulation of different data sources for a fuller understanding of each topic (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2017). Importantly, the above methods were employed, and the resulting evidenced analysed, through an axiological lens that was committed to showing empathy for and seeking to understand rather than judge the coaches in an

overly critical manner. This values-based approach to conducting research generated insights that gave, where possible, coaches the opportunity and confidence to fully explain their behaviour, in line with the central premise of the study (Potrac et al., 2014). It was integral to the formation of a bottom-up approach to understanding the coach created motivational environment generated from the coaches' reports and observation, and to retaining the participation and reflections of the coach Daniel, who dropped out of coaching during the data collection period. The latter outcome was largely achieved through empathic communication helping to broke down barriers to reaching and hearing the coaches, and thus providing psychologically safe spaces the coaches felt they could trust and engage in. This philosophical underpinning led to balanced conclusions being drawn about what coaches could do better as individuals and what can realistically be expected of them, particularly in the absence of adequate training and support. While also raising important questions about how well coaching is understood and represented in the SDT literature to date.

The data collection and analysis process was further helped by the adoption of a jointly inductive and deductive reasoning technique, in order to give the project's search for antecedent factors some structure by building on previous findings as a starting point, while empowering it to venture down more novel paths as they appeared and consequently discover previously unidentified antecedents (Ely et al., 1997; Kovács & Spens, 2005). Other strengths of the analysis process included the fact that the member reflection allowed for feedback from the participants on how their data had been interpreted, as well as further theme production through their elaboration on gaps or points of interest in the initial interpretations. This process succeeded in keeping the participants involved as collaborators in the research process and helping the themes being generated stay aligned to their experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Tracy, 2010). Underpinning these consultations, as well as the finalising of themes and the arguments they supported, was thematic analysis, which was effective in allowing for statements and observations of significance and relevance to the research question to either be integrated with similar findings, or kept apart due to their unique meaning. Thematic analysis also allowed these themes to sit at both individual and collective levels, to respectively layer the issues being discovered (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

An unplanned but useful addition to the analysis process was the incorporation of complimentary frameworks to assist in reaching and explaining antecedents of the

coaches' behaviour. The effects of the coaches' behaviour could adequately be considered within the principles of SDT, but the diversity and complexity of the associated determinants were such that they occasionally exceeded the limits of what the motivational continuum in SDT was designed to explain. Therefore, other theoretical frameworks were integrated within the present study's analysis with good effect. In particular, the theories of emotional intelligence, personality theory, and impression management theory showed great potential in their capacity to explain and help improve the coach-created motivational environment. Future coaching research embedded in SDT may benefit from drawing on these or other theoretical frameworks, where applicable, and examine their synergies and utility in advancing our understanding of coaches' behaviours. The proposed strategy aligns with previous research by Matosic et al. (2017) which used personality theory to establish a positive relationship between narcissistic traits and controlling coaching behaviours, as well as the multi-disciplinary approach embedded within North's (2013) critical realist proposal for coaching research.

In terms of the conceptual successes of the present study, there are three main contributions. Firstly, the work extends the range of behaviours examined from autonomy-supportive and controlling to all nine types of behaviour associated with the coach-created motivational environment. The inclusion of these behaviours vastly extended the range of behaviours known to be impacted by different factors. Thus, the current work represents a major turning point for research looking at determinants of the motivational environment. Also, incorporating an exploration of need-depriving behaviour enabled consideration of alternative explanations about the implications of coaches' behaviour than would applying the term need-thwarting to any actions that were not actively supporting players' needs. The hope is that this differentiation will become commonplace in the sport coaching literature based on this example set here and elsewhere (Bartholomew et al., 2011).

Secondly, the work revealed interactions between antecedent factors, which was effective in building a more complex – and in essence truer – web of reasons for why the coaches acted the way they did, in contrast to more unidimensional coach reports that have come previously (Occhino et al., 2014). A final conceptual contribution of this project lies in the formation of a novel, qualitative perspective on the motivational process in a community youth sport coaching context. The model offers fresh, original

perspectives on how researchers and coaches might define, assess, and support the motivational environment through harnessing the lived experiences of the coaches in the present study, and problematising the translation of theory into practice, which the current study champions. At the same time, the current model requires testing to determine the potential strength of its tentative generalisations in predicting how the motivational process might play out in a community sport setting.

Inevitably there were also notable limitations to the present work, which must be mentioned to aid future research. Firstly, from a methods standpoint, while the use of fieldnotes enabled the reactions of players before, during, and after the coaches' behaviours to be recorded, how the behaviour impacted players could only be speculated based on what was discernible through observations and in tandem with some of the findings and predictions made in previous studies. The decision not to interview the coaches' players felt justified given the study's focus on coaches' experiences of factors influencing their decisions, and the fact this work was set against a wider body of research wherein athletes and coaches' perceptions of the motivational environment have already been combined (e.g., Smith et al., 2016). Furthermore, athletes' perceptions of coaches' motivational behaviours has received the majority of attention (Occhino et al., 2014). Hence, the study's desire to concentrate its limited resources on the coaches through the methods that were employed. Nevertheless, future research could address this limitation by discussing player-coach interactions with players themselves, and comparing these reports with coaches' explanations for their actions. The reaction of other meaningful stakeholders might also be examined to further our understanding of the influences on coaches' behaviours and reactions to them. For instance, understanding what onlooking parents thought of the coaches' behaviours would have helped justify or perhaps even challenge the worry expressed by some coaches over the perceived pressure by parents to act in particular ways.

Furthermore, the coaches and clubs in the present study, while diverse in the age groups they coached, their outside jobs, and the technical classification given for the community club they each represented, all belonged to the same sport, type of participant (male), and level of sport (recreational). Thus, there are limitations to the transferability of the present findings for helping to understand antecedent factors as they might relate to coach behaviours in other community sports (e.g., hockey, athletics) and also other sport settings (e.g., adult sport, female sport, performance sport). The

natural next step for research is therefore to engage coaches in other contexts to gain wider contextualised insight into the antecedents of coaches' behaviours. The fact the coaches recruited were all white, heterosexual males should also be remembered. This critique builds on an earlier discussion from the 'being a parent-coach' major theme section, whereby only exploring father-coaches' relationships with their sons limits our wider understanding of parent-coaches' behaviour due to the absent voice of mothers who might also combine their role as parent with a coaching role. Diversifying who is being coached also matters. For example, are father-daughter coaches more or less autonomy-supportive of their daughters? How does their perception of their daughters' motivation or confidence or readiness for autonomy influence how they interact with them and other girls? In the same vein, coaches of different genders, ethnicities, and sexual orientation should be included within future investigations into the antecedents of coach behaviour, in order to diversify opinion and insight, while avoiding the trap of 'single stories' shaping the way we view a population group (Adichie, 2009). Multiple case study work is still susceptible to the dangers of a single story, as the homogenous racial, sexual, and gender profile of the coaches involved restricts understanding of coach behaviour to just this specific group, despite their diverse personalities, biographies, and roles in a coaching space.

Concluding remarks

The purpose of this study was to explore the antecedents of the need-supportive, -depriving, and -thwarting interpersonal behaviours of youth football coaches in Scotland, based on a SDT framework. Knowledge in this area was lacking (Occhino et al., 2014), and such insights could be used to better understand the training and support needs of coaches. There has also been limited research exploring the lived experiences of community sport coaches, to help contextualise the help given.

Within these wider objectives, this project has achieved the six aims set after reviewing the current literature. The first was to discover how coaches' experiences and perceptions of coaching contribute to our understanding of differences in coaches' behaviours. Findings suggested that the unique and challenging features of each situation the coaches encountered in their practice necessitated imperfect yet functional approaches to supporting players' needs. This situated and often paradoxical decision making process regularly manifested in differences that were observed in the coaches' behaviours.

The second, third, and fourth aims centred around unpicking context, coach, and athlete related influences on the coaches' motivational behaviours, respectively. Coaches were revealed to be operating under high levels of autonomy but with little structure to help them navigate the agency their coaching environment afforded them. This dynamic, coupled with low need support among coaching teams, brought notable levels of stress and anxiety to each coach, which occasionally resulted in maladaptive behaviours towards players, as well as burnout in coaches and even their exit from coaching. Coaches' behaviours were further influenced by their perceptions of players' characteristics, and these judgements often had roots in the (lack of) self-awareness coaches had about their beliefs and behaviours. The coaches' beliefs and behaviours could be traced back to values they each held, that were borne out of their personal histories, including wider experiences they had outside of coaching.

The fifth aim of the project was to identify the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the guidance given to coaches for embedding SDT within their practice. While there was consensus over the moral positioning of SDT as a route towards athlete centred coaching in its most ideal form, the coaches reported challenges with applying SDT to coaching, which highlighted a lack of flexibility in the behaviours

recommended and discouraged, and coaches felt this rigidity left little room for responding to complex situations they encountered.

The sixth and final aim of this study was to give an insight into experiences of community youth coaches while testing the effectiveness of SDT as a tool for explaining these experiences. There were instances where the coaches derived large amounts of pleasure and meaning from the opportunities they provided for young people to take part in organised sport. However, findings made around the second, third, and fourth aims evidence the innate challenges presented to coaches working in a community youth sport context. SDT proved to be extremely useful for making links between these experiences and the coaches' psychological needs and motivational drivers. However, limitations of SDT also became apparent in the difficulty observed with applying the theory's teachings within the community youth coaching domain. Particularly due to the emphasis placed on satisfying coaches and players' need for autonomy, and connected behaviours presented as largely unproblematic and universally useful. For the coaches, having independence was not the same as having their autonomy supported. And for players, readiness for autonomy and indeed desire for autonomy needed to be considered more carefully along with the provision of structure to support autonomy.

Together, these findings establish new antecedent factors for the coach-created motivational environment, while also enhancing our understanding of factors already known to affect coaches' behaviour. In addition, the full spectrum of motivational coach behaviours were explored for the first time, including their interactions. Collectively, the findings present a strong argument for coach developers to focus attention on bottom-up approaches to supporting and training coaches in creating a motivationally adaptive environment for their players. Furthermore, the finding argue for more functional guidance from researchers for managing the coaching environment in alignment with SDT, why promoting SDT's own evolution as a universal account of human behaviour and optimal functioning, by highlighting the place of all dimensions of coach behaviour within the coaching process. The exploration of the coaches' behaviour culminated in the conception of a qualitative sister model to that of Mageau and Vallerand's (2003) MMCAR. This model of coaching could help inspire a new chapter of research on coach behaviour, by laying down an imperfect – and thus possibly truer – view of the coach-created motivational environment that is innately

complex, challenging, and built on personal relationships between coaches and their players.

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