Organizational Stressors, Coping, and Coping Effectiveness in Collegiate Squash Players

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Coping is defined as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141). It has been suggested that research is needed to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of the coping strategies that athletes use to deal with the organizational stressors they encounter (Fletcher, Hanton, & Mellalieu, 2006). Therefore, this study explored the relationships between the organizational stressors encountered and the coping strategies employed to manage them. Furthermore, the effectiveness of these strategies was examined. Data were collected from eight Caucasian male squash players (M_{age} 20.88, SD = 1.46 years) using daily diaries over a 28-day period of training and competition. The results reveal that participants encountered a wide range of organizational stressors, the most common being "factors intrinsic to the sport" and "sport relationships and interpersonal demands". The most common coping strategy employed to manage these demands was problem-focused coping, few strategies were used to cope with more than one stressor, and the effectiveness of the coping strategies used varied for each dimension of stressors. By investigating the relationships between organizational stressors and coping, and examining the effectiveness of these strategies, this study furthers our understanding of coping in sport performers and highlights the important role of effective coping in the organizational stress process. Furthermore, the results suggest that the most effective coping strategies were stressor-specific, which has important implications for applied practitioners. In order to implement effective psychological skills training and encourage athletes to manage the array of organizational stressors that they encounter, the stressor-coping relationships should be considered to allow practitioners to educate athletes on the most effective ways to deal with different stressors.