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Conference Abstract

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Career transitions and occupational well-being of women in leadership:

The case of women as sports coaches

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**Introduction:** The United Kingdom (U.K.) is working to develop the world's leading sports coaching system. However, women currently make up only 28% of the profession and very few reach senior levels. Little is known about why career pathways are gendered or how women coaches' occupational experiences affect their health and well-being. Therefore, the aim of this study was to further understanding of the occupational health and well-being of female sports coaches and to investigate the facilitators of and barriers to their careers and life transitions.

**Method:** Following institutional ethical approval, women coaches (n = 162) based in the U.K. volunteered to take part. Each coach completed an online version of the Shortened Stress Evaluation Tool (ASSET; Cartwright & Cooper, 2002). This questionnaire is a valid and reliable measure of job characteristics, organisational commitment, health, and psychological well-being. Descriptive statistics were computed using a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences to provide a broad overview of the data.

**Results:** 97% of the sample categorised themselves as 'White', 'White Irish', or 'White Other;' that the number of respondents over the age of 55 (n = 6) was dramatically lower than the number of responses from younger coaches (n = 156); and that 67% of the sample was educated to undergraduate degree level or higher. Over half of the sample (53%) was employed as a head coach at the time of completion and 56% of these head coaches were employed on a part-time basis. When compared to the normative data for ASSET, our sample reported above average psychological well-being (M = 27.75, SD = 4.87), sense of purpose

( $M = 18.72$ ,  $SD = 4.01$ ), and engagement ( $M = 19.18$ ,  $SD = 3.78$ ), and reported less strain on their psychological health ( $M = 21.06$ ,  $SD = 6.91$ ). However, the results also demonstrate that the coaches experience poorer work-life balance ( $M = 13.33$ ,  $SD = 5.35$ ), job security ( $M = 14.20$ ,  $SD = 5.39$ ), and work relationships ( $M = 18.02$ ,  $SD = 7.88$ ) than the normative sample. Conclusions: The findings suggest that, on average, our sample of women coaches are highly engaged with their role, feel a sense of purpose during their coaching practice, and are psychologically well. The results do, however, suggest that women coaches require better work-life balance, more job security, and more meaningful relationships with their colleagues. These findings provide insight to potential facilitators of and barriers to career progression for women coaches and offer interesting applied implications for national governing bodies (NGBs). In particular, NGBs should pay acute attention to interventions that support women coaches to connect with other coaches and effectively balance their personal and occupational commitments.

References:

Cartwright, S., & Cooper, C. L. (2002). *ASSET: Management guide*. RobertsonCooper Ltd, UK.

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