

Citation:

Simpson, R and Didymus, F and Williams, T (2021) Toward An Understanding of Psychological Well-Being among the Coach-Athlete-Sport and Exercise Psychology Practitioner Triad. In: 15th International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP) World Congress, 30 September 2021 - 04 October 2021, Taipei, Taiwan. (Unpublished)

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Toward an Understanding of Psychological Well-Being among the Coach-Athlete-Sport and Exercise Psychology Practitioner Triad

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Psychological well-being (PWB) is a pillar in global policy and holds important ramifications for health and performance, especially within the high stakes realm of performance sport. Recent United Kingdom governmental white papers, such as the duty of care report from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, has led to uncertainty regarding whether the PWB, welfare, and safety of individuals in performance sport are given the priority and consideration they deserve. Despite this perturbing insight and previous relevant sport psychology enquiry, little is understood about PWB within and among athletes, coaches, and support staff. In particular, beyond an individual lens, there is a dearth of research that explores the interpersonal nature of PWB in the coach-athlete-SEPP triad. In this presentation, we will share novel insight that explores the individual and interpersonal meanings, antecedents, and outcomes of PWB within the coachathlete-SEPP triad. We will also highlight key resources and strategies that can be used to maintain and bolster individual and interpersonal PWB. Underpinned by an interpretative paradigm and a social constructionist epistemology, we conducted individual and triadic interview methods with three coach-athlete-SEPP triads (n=12, >18 years of age) who were working within individual sports (e.g., athletics). We analysed data using abductive reasoning during reflexive thematic analysis. We found various factors that nourished and malnourished individual PWB among athletes, coaches, and practitioners, including: personal (e.g., prior experience), situational (e.g., controllability), social (e.g., relationship quality), behavioural (e.g., responses to others), and organizational (e.g., culture) factors. In addition, interpersonal well-being within the triads was influenced by relationship (e.g., dynamics), personal (e.g., openness), organizational (e.g., psychological safety), and situational (e.g., uncertainty) factors. Our findings also highlight that PWB can be transferred via a range of interpersonal mechanisms (e.g., interpersonal coping, emotional contagion, and social appraisal). Key strategies and resources, such as mutual sharing, individually tailored support packages, and cultivating environments where relationship can flourish, were identified by the participants as ways to protect, maintain, and bolster PWB. These findings implicate several recommendations for researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders. First, we recommend that researchers continue to develop interpersonal understanding of PWB in sport to generate a broader evidence base. In addition, we encourage sport organizations to consider how interventions (e.g., mentoring) can be tailored to augment and manage individual and interpersonal PWB among those at the front lines of sport.

Keywords: Eudaimonia; Hedonia; Performance Sport; Triadic; Welfare