Side effects of being tired
Burnout among Swedish sport coaches

Erik Lundkvist

Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för
avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt förasvar i
Hörsal E, Humanisthuset,
fredagen den sjätte februari, kl. 13:15.
Avhandlingen kommer att förasras på engelska.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor, Robert Eklund,
University of Stirling, Skottland.
Abstract
Burnout is a psychological concept that have got much attention since it was first defined in the middle of the 1970s. Although the definition of burnout differ there is consensus about exhaustion as the most important part of the concept. Burnout have also been in focus in sport psychology research. Mostly athletes have been studied but interest the coach profession have also been of interest. Research on coach burnout have mostly been directed towards demographic variables, organizational issues, behaviors and emotions and more holistic perspectives covering larger models or theories.

The aims with this thesis was to try to fill some of the knowledge gaps from earlier coach burnout research with three studies. Study 1 aimed to study subjective experiences associated with perceived causes and symptoms of burnout and the subsequent recovery process. Eight elite soccer coaches who previously had been troubled with high scores of the exhaustion was interviewed. We found two burnout profiles that matched the coaches’ perceived causes of burnout. The first was associated with problems in handling the performance culture itself and the second had to do with the overall situation, including workload, family and health. Our findings describe coach burnout as stemming from a combination of issues, related to both home and work. When combined with work overload, coaches who have problems handling the performance culture in elite sports, and who lack the tools to enhance recovery, are particularly vulnerable to burnout.

Study 2 focused on evaluating three self-report burnout measures that are available for researchers to use. Our analysis included Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) and Coach Burnout Questionnaire (CBQ). The main findings were that there are psychometric problems with all three measures and that MBI and OLBI cover similar definitions of burnout and CBQ cover somewhat different dimensions. Of the three methods that were tested CBQ seem to be most suitable for the coaching context. However, CBQ also have several problems and other burnout measures need to be evaluated in the coach context.

Study 3 focused on the associations between workaholic tendencies and combining coaching job with having a family or a spouse, which can be a stressor since the work situation and family situation can be hard to combine. The main findings were that work seem to interfere more with family life than family life interfere with working live. Further workaholic tendencies and exhaustion was not associated.

When interpreting the aggregated results from the thesis there are two main findings. First, the way coach burnout has been measured until now is unsatisfying. Although the development of a coach specific measure (CBQ) is promising, further development is needed, both when it comes to the theoretical aspects of the burnout construct and psychometric issues. Second, the symptoms and perceived causes in coach burnout is highly individual and makes burnout a very personal experience. Future research should focus on both the origins as well as the measurement of this detrimental concept.

Keywords
Coach Burnout, exhaustion, interpretative phenomenological analysis, convergent validity, discriminant validity, quantile regression, work-home/home-work interference, workaholism.