

Super support! A supportive supervisor, life satisfaction, and the mediating presence of coaching satisfaction

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Abstract 229**

Research aimed at the salient issues impacting the transient profession of intercollegiate coaching is continually evolving (e.g. Pastore, 1991, 1991). Extant literature have examined such topics as access discrimination (e.g. Cunningham & Sagas, 2005); conflict in roles with friends or family (Pastore, 1991, 1992; Sagas & Ashley, 2001); lack of financial incentive (Lovett, Lowry, & Lopiano, 1991; Pastore, 1991 & 1992); satisfaction with the coaching profession (Ogasawara & Chelladurai, 1998; Pastore, 1993); and desire to become a head coach (Everhart & Chelladurai, 1999; Sagas et al., 2000; 2006). Still, a stark imbalance remains within the coaching profession between the diversity of gender (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006) and race (DeHass, 2007). Further, many of these outcome-based studies have often revealed a negative self-perception of the profession by college coaches on the aforementioned work outcomes, and more. Thus, many questions currently face the enigmatic college coaching profession, including the importance of the supervisor and the impact upon both work and non-work variables.

The concept of supervisor support is defined as the extent to which supervisors provide encouragement and support, in addition to maintaining a positive contribution to the subordinate's career development (Griffin, Patterson, & West, 2001; Kram, 1985). Supportive supervisors improve teamwork settings (McIntyre & Salas, 1995), enhance subordinates' job satisfaction (Agho, Mueller, & Price, 1993) and career satisfaction (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990), and lower turnover rates (Shore & Wayne, 1993). Supervisors are pertinent in the everyday job experience as they possess the ability to influence the structure of the work environment and provide valuable information and feedback to employees (Griffin, Patterson, & West, 2001). In fact, the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship has been shown to significantly contribute to the direct job and career satisfaction of college coaches (Snyder, 1990; Weaver, & Chelladurai, 2002).

While supervisor support was abundantly tied to job satisfaction, a slighter connection existed between support and life satisfaction - a non-work variable. However, a highly-significant relationship exists between job satisfaction and life satisfaction (for review, see Tait, Padgett, & Baldwin, 1989). Life satisfaction is traditionally viewed as the result, in part, of satisfaction with various life domains (e.g. family, health), which explains about 50% of the variance in overall life satisfaction (Andrews & Withey, 1976). Another of these life domains impacting overall life satisfaction was work, or job, satisfaction. According to the disaggregation hypothesis, the importance of work in a person's life could potentially influence the job satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship (Rice, Near, & Hunt, 1980). Thus, if a coach's job possesses immense importance in that person's life, job satisfaction might maintain a powerful influence over life satisfaction, where the converse would also be true. Ultimately, the relationship between job and life satisfaction remains firm (e.g. Tait et al., 1989) and, more importantly, both components have been significantly impacted by both work and non-work variables. Therefore, the aims of this study were to examine the relationship between supervisor support, coaching satisfaction, and life satisfaction. Specifically, it was expected that supervisor support would be positively related to life satisfaction for coaches; additionally, it was expected that coaching satisfaction would mediate the relationship between supervisor support and coaching satisfaction.

The data were collected from randomly selected cluster samples of National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) spring sport coaches using a web-survey as part of an overall study on coaching satisfaction. Coaches were selected through random cluster sampling procedures with schools randomly selected from a list on the NAIA webpage and all listed coaches from track, baseball, softball, and tennis selected. NAIA coaches were studied as many NCAA college coaches are oversampled, which may create an additional barrier for data collection (Turner et al., 2006). A total of 288 coaches received a survey link with 139 (48%) usable surveys received after 4 contacts with participants. All participants were offered an opportunity to do a paper version of the survey. As suggested by Ryan and Sagas (2006), no significant differences were found on the variables of interest between early, late, paper, or non-completion responders, suggesting some support for external validity. Supervisory support was measured using 5 items from Greenhaus et al., (1991). Reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha) were good ($\alpha = .91$). Coaching satisfaction ($\alpha = .80$) was measured using 6 job satisfaction items from Cammann et al., (1983). Three items from Diener et al.'s (1983) Satisfaction with Life scale were used to measure life satisfaction ($\alpha = .74$).

Results confirmed a significant bivariate relationship between all variables in the study ($p < .001$ for all). Using regression, supervisor support ($\beta = .25, p < .01$) was significant in predicting life satisfaction. However, when supervisor support and

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coaching satisfaction were used to predict life satisfaction, the mediator, coaching satisfaction ($\beta = .30, p < .01$), maintained its effect on life satisfaction. However, supervisor support was insignificant ($\beta = .13, ns$), suggesting the predicted mediated relationship ($R^2 = 13.3\%$). Notably, this implies that while supervisor support has a direct affect on life satisfaction, coaching satisfaction is one significant process through which this component of job satisfaction acts on an individual's satisfaction with life.

The implications for sport managers, especially those who supervise coaches, are meaningful. Besides the expected positive relationship between supervisor support and coaching satisfaction, it is implied that the supervisor has an impact on a coach's life satisfaction. A potential explanation for this may be found in the high role identification that a coach has with his/her chosen profession (Sage, 1987), and since supervisor correlates with job satisfaction (Jiang & Klein, 2000), it is not surprising that supervisor support would be linked with life satisfaction. However, it is suggested that sport managers be cognizant of how their action (or non-action) may be a significant factor in coaching or life dissatisfaction which could lead to turnover (Ryan & Sagas, 2006). Athletics administrators are also in need of deeper insight into the identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and the salience of these identities (Stryker, 1980). Specifically, knowing the salience of specific roles would prepare administrators to provide for a more supportive coaching culture, thus, potentially influencing the place of race and gender within the coaching profession. This enhanced culture of coaching would consequently improve job, or coaching, satisfaction leading longer careers (e.g. Pastore, 1991) and higher rates of entry (Everhart & Chelladurai, 1999) subsequently influencing the landscape of the coaching profession. Perhaps, an enhanced understanding of life satisfaction and its domains (Andrews & Withey, 1976) for coaches and administrators would encourage an assessment into the congruence of coaching satisfaction domains and life satisfaction domains. The disaggregation hypothesis (Rice et al., 1980), in accordance with role salience (Aryee, 1999), would then explicate how these particular domains can impact individual coaches. It is suggested here that future research include more of the domains that account for life satisfaction (Andrews & Withey, 1976) and the extent to which they are impacted by the roles or identities affected by belonging to the coaching profession. Research implications here would greatly impact those athletics administrators who directly supervise college coaches and, indirectly, the coaching profession.

Additionally, the findings may add to theoretical research examining the impact work factors have on non-work life. Furthermore, the mediating effect of job satisfaction builds on the theoretical linkages between work and life constructs (e.g. Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Tait et al., 1989), and echoes the sentiments of literature indicating the mediating power of coaching satisfaction upon the coaching profession (e.g. Clopton, Ryan, & Sagas, 2007). Still, a paucity of research remains detailing this satisfaction with non-work satisfaction. Further work is needed to explore the effect of role salience (Aryee, 1999) and sport season consequences on the three constructs of interest in this study.