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Thematic-Synthesis of Self-Care in Sport Psychology Practitioners

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Abstract

Self-care has been identified as essential for promoting well-being among psychology professionals and an imperative for practitioners. Nevertheless, the value of self-care for sport psychology practitioners (SPPs) has only received limited research attention. A growing body of work has emerged, offering helpful knowledge to SPPs throughout the professional developmental span. A synthesis of the existing literature on SPPs' self-care could offer the knowledge foundation for training programs on SPPs' self-care. We systematically reviewed the existing literature focused on self-care among sport psychology practitioners. Using PRISMA guidelines, an initial database search identified 1,837 research records. After removing duplicate studies, screening by title and abstract, and assessing full-text article eligibility, we selected 15 articles for inclusion. Analysis of these articles resulted in three prevailing themes: (a) sport psychology practitioner's self-care; (b) effective self-care; (c) connected care: A collaborative lens on individual self-care. These findings offer a significant insight to the literature on self-care in sport psychology practitioners. The synthesis also points to the important role in others play in developing, implementing, and maintaining effective individualized SPP self-care. Based on these findings, we offer recommendations for professional bodies and education providers regarding the alignment of training routes and continuing professional development programs with the extant literature on self-care.

Keywords: Effective practice, ethics, professional formation, professional practice

A Thematic-Synthesis of Self-Care in Sport Psychology Practitioners

While engaging in service delivery, sport psychology practitioners (SPPs)¹ have a professional and ethical responsibility to ensure their fitness to practice by maintaining their well-being (Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a) and avoiding risks and harm to their clients (Aoyagi & Portenga, 2010). Moreover, due to a complex interplay of workplace conditions and factors (e.g., high job demands, conflicted expectations for role behaviors, and low support at work; Acker, 2012), practitioners face a variety of occupational challenges, such as psychological isolation and loneliness (Norcross & VandenBos, 2018), emotional exhaustion (Rupert & Dorociak, 2019), stress (Myers et al., 2012; Simpson et al., 2021), burnout (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016), and emotional labor (Van Der Merwe, 2019). Yet, given the niche of the sport psychology profession (Anderson et al., 2001) and the precarity of SPPs' working environments (Wren et al., 2022), these professionals face additional occupational risks that are associated with their roles (e.g., dual relationships), nontraditional working environments (e.g., hotel lobbies, busses), and conditions (e.g., 'water break chats'; Andersen et al., 2001; Etzel & Watson, 2006; Stapleton et al., 2010; Waumsley et al., 2010). The strain caused by these occupational risks may lead to professional impairment and compromise the SPPs' ability to provide ethical and competent services (Barnett et al., 2007). In line with such risks and with the aim of better understanding how SPPs could avoid these adverse outcomes, scholars have begun to explore psychology practitioner self-care (Posluns & Gall, 2020; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a).

In addition to offering protection from the risks associated with the psychological profession (Rupert & Dorociak, 2019), engaging in self-care may also foster personal flourishing

¹ *In this manuscript, we used the term, "sport psychology practitioner(s)" and "SPP(s)", as inclusive of professionals engaged in sport psychology practice, regardless of their formal qualifications and credentials (e.g., licensed, registered, chartered, certified) as they vary among countries and could include or exclude the title "psychologist."*

and promote good practice outcomes and experience (Wise & Barnett, 2016; Zahniser et al., 2017), as well as greater well-being (Colman et al., 2016), compassion satisfaction (Butler et al., 2017), and quality of life (Goncher et al., 2013). Based on these observations, scholars have proposed self-care as an ethical imperative for psychology practitioners (Barnett et al., 2007) and encouraged SPPs to consider making self-care a critical aspect of their professional career and personal life (Quartioli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021). Quartioli and colleagues (2021) recently defined *self-care* in sport psychology as:

the purposeful engagement in activities grounded in one's values. It involves prioritizing, developing, preserving, protecting, monitoring, and restoring holistic (i.e., physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and emotional) health, well-being, and satisfaction with work and life (p. 1361).

While the construct of self-care has started to receive considerable attention in general psychology (e.g., Baker, 2003; Barnett et al., 2007; Carter & Barnett, 2014; Wise et al., 2012), it is perhaps surprising that similar attention has not been evident within the sport psychology domain. Although direct references to the importance of self-care for SPPs can be traced back nearly two decades (Haberl & Peterson, 2006), it is only in the last few years that scholars have explored SPPs' conceptualization and experience of self-care or factors associated with it (Quartioli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021). Nevertheless, in this brief period, a body of salient work has emerged, offering helpful knowledge to SPPs and it is therefore timely to take stock of this work.

Review Aims

To our knowledge, no reviews of self-care in SPPs exist, and in this thematic-synthesis, we aim to synthesize, and thereby significantly advance, the scholarly understanding of this

topic. The value of this work lies in its potential to support SPPs to safeguard their well-being and promote ethical and competent practice. A synthesis of the existing literature on sport psychology practitioners' self-care will inform future research directions, as well as the development and implementation of self-care programs within training and qualification pathways, and individual professional journeys. We also hope this review will inform professional development programs provided by professional organizations.

Methods

Protocol

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines were followed to conduct this thematic-synthesis (Moher et al. 2015; see Figure 1). We undertook a thematic-synthesis as we sought to not only synthesize the existing literature, but also provide new interpretations and analytical themes to advance the current understanding of sport psychologists' self-care. We favored this methodology over other methods of synthesis (e.g., a critical interpretive synthesis or a grounded theory synthesis) as we did not seek to conceptualize new theoretical outputs per se, but rather we aimed to generate new interpretations of existing data from primary empirical qualitative studies (Tong et al., 2012).

[Figure 1 near here]

Eligibility Criteria

We defined the criteria for inclusion and exclusion of manuscripts in this thematic-synthesis a priori and in accordance with the Cochrane guidelines for conducting systematic reviews (Higgins et al., 2019). Eligible manuscripts met the following inclusion criteria: (1) Language – published in English, (2) Population – accredited/qualified or in training to become accredited/certified SPPs, (3) Variables – focused on self-care of SPPs, (4) Publication type – peer-

reviewed articles, thesis, and dissertations, (5) Design – qualitative research designs. We excluded letters to the editor, commentaries, reflections, conference abstracts, literature reviews, and papers that did not empirically investigate self-care-related variables or omitted qualified or accredited SPPs within their sample.

Literature Search Strategy and Information Sources

In April 2022, we used several strategies to identify peer-reviewed published studies to include in the synthesis. Using key search terms, we conducted a systematic search of the following-computerized databases:-PsychINFO, PsychARTICLES, PubMed, Web of Science, Google Scholar; and the EBSCO databases Academic Search Ultimate, E-Journals, Open dissertation, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences, and SPORTDiscus (see Table 1 for the Boolean logic and the keywords included in the search). In addition, we manually searched discipline-specific journals² to identify any relevant articles not already included in our systematic search. Finally, a manual review of the reference lists of included studies was conducted to identify relevant articles missed during the database search.

[Table 1 near here]

Study Selection

All empirical research articles, theses, and dissertations selected for screening focused on self-care, the variable of interest of this synthesis, and were written in English. We, Ale and Dan, independently screened all articles collected with the initial search by their title and abstract and in

² We chose the top sport and exercise psychology journals according to Scimagojr.com (i.e. – in order, Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology, Psychology of Sport and Exercise; Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sport, European Journal of Sport science, International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, Journal of Sport and Exercise psychology, and The Sport Psychologist) and then we explored discipline specific journals that while not included in the top list from Scimagojr.com often publish articles focused on practitioners (i.e., Journal of Sport Psychology in Action; International Journal of Sport Psychology, and Case Studies in Sport and Exercise Psychology).

line with the eligibility criteria of this study, using three possible labels: yes, no, and maybe. After individually assessing these articles, we met to discuss those we agreed and disagreed on for inclusion. In total we identified 40 manuscripts classified by one of us as ‘maybe’; in these cases, the assessor who classified the manuscript as ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ was asked to offer their reasons for the specific classification. In all cases, we found an agreement leading to the inclusion of 14 of these manuscripts. Further, 18 manuscripts were classified by both assessors with the label ‘maybe’; in these cases, Heather was asked to offer her assessment, which she then shared with us. Based on these discussions, we added six manuscripts to the initial sample. Our disagreements were mainly due to our interpretations of the manuscript's focus (i.e., self-care vs other related constructs). On completing this process, we fully reviewed the 15 included manuscripts to finalize their inclusion or exclusion in the review. When the title or abstract of an article did not provide enough information to enable us to assess its relevance to the review, we screened the entire manuscript. The initial search gathered 1,837 manuscripts which we reduced to 682 after removing duplicate copies. Of these 682, most studies were excluded from the synthesis based on the appraisal of titles and abstracts ($n = 659$). During this screening, we excluded several manuscripts based on their primary variable of interest ($n = 7$) and the publication type ($n = 1$).

Quality Assessment

Once we identified the final 15 articles, we assessed each of their qualitative reporting standards using the tool developed by Lorenc et al. (2014; see also Hawker et al., 2002)³. Lorenc et al. based their assessment process on nine criteria aimed at assessing the relevance, appropriateness, rigor, and quality of the different aspects of each manuscript. The areas of each study considered during the quality assessment were the abstract and title; introduction and aims;

³ The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

methods and data; sampling, data analysis, ethics and bias; results, transferability and generalizability; and implication and usefulness. All manuscripts were scored from 1 (*very poor*) to 4 (*very good*) using a 4-point scale, leading to a possible score range of 9-36 points. In line with the guidelines offered by Lorenc and collaborators, we categorized manuscripts scoring between 30 and 36 points as A (*high quality*), those scoring between 24 and 29 points as B (*medium quality*), and those scoring between 9 and 24 points as C (*low quality*) (see Table 2).

[Table 2 near here]

To promote good practice, we completed an assessment of qualitative reporting standards according to the guidelines developed by Lorenc et al. (2014) and a review of the 15 included manuscripts using the qualitative Critical Appraisal Skills Programme checklist (CASP; n.d.)⁴, detecting several issues (see Table 3). For example, authors provided a description of the recruitment procedures in only 67% of the included papers. Another issue we identified was that in less than half the included studies (39%) did authors critically examine their role, potential bias, and their influence during the formulation of the research questions. Finally, authors offered descriptions of how they explained the research to the participants or how the data presented in the manuscript were selected in only 33% of studies.

[Table 3 near here]

Data Extraction and Synthesis

Given the modest number of articles ($n = 15$) and their qualitative design, we deemed a qualitative synthesis the most appropriate analytical method to engage with these manuscripts. We engaged in a reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) to synthesize and report patterns within the data (Braun et al., 2016) and form an organized and detailed description of them (Sparkes &

⁴ Please see supplemental material for a summary of the articles included in the review.

Smith, 2014). Specifically, we chose to engage in RTA as it provides excellent theoretical and paradigmatic flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2021) and began this process by familiarizing ourselves with the content of the manuscripts. Once we had completed this process, we extracted potentially interesting features from the data that helped us to generate codes from the dataset. After reviewing the codes and grouping data into further themes, we developed a thematic map that enabled us to explore the alignment of themes and sub-themes. After refining each theme, we created labels and a clear definition for each theme. Finally, we selected specific and compelling extracts to relate the analysis to the research questions.

We also established specific measures and processes to facilitate and ensure a rigorous analysis process. To elaborate, we engaged in ongoing reflective exercises throughout the entire analysis process to mitigate the impact of our backgrounds, biases, and research intentions. To provide context, I, Ale, am a transnational mid-career researcher and practitioner mainly studying sport psychologists' professional development from a cultural perspective. We, Dan and Heather, are doctoral students and early career practitioners with a research interest in professional development and practice. Finally, I, Chris, am a mid-career researcher and practitioner with a research focus on professional development and organizational performance.

We engaged in structured team-reflexive discussions (Barry et al., 1999; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Through this exercise each of us engaged in reflections aimed to answer reflexive questions focused on our background and experience of qualitative methodology, our expectations for the synthesis, and our main framework of reference in interpreting the results (Barry et al., 1999). Answering these questions helped us to become aware of our expectations and desires regarding to this study. For example, we started this study with the premise that self-care is an individual construct and that it is the result of individual efforts. Throughout the

analytical synthesis process, we acted as critical friends to one another (Smith & McGannon, 2018; Levitt et al., 2018), encouraging each other to openly challenge our preconceived notions of self-care and biases toward the research area.

Finally, we also engaged in interpersonal reflexivity (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023), deliberately and openly acknowledged and discussed the existing formal hierarchies among us. Specifically, we attended to the relationships between Ale and Chris, in our role as supervisors and Dan and Heather, in our role as supervisees, and their impact on the analysis of data and the development of themes. Yet, we also noted that our extended experience working together created a working environment characterized by openness and reciprocal respect. As previously discussed, we also implemented additional steps to ensure the credibility and rigor of our synthesis methodology.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of data led to the creation of three primary themes with a total of 10 related sub-themes which will be presented alongside contemporary literature findings. The primary themes of the data analysis were: (a) Sport psychology practitioners' self-care, (b) Effective self-care, and (c) Connected care: A collaborative lens on individual self-care (see Table 4).

[Table 4 near here]

Sport Psychology Practitioners' Self-care

This theme highlights the multifaceted role of self-care in fostering holistic well-being and effective functioning for sport and performance practitioners. The challenges posed by the demanding professional landscape were highlighted, including unrealistic expectations and identity-related struggles, while also emphasizing the need for organizational support to facilitate successful self-care practices within the field. This theme is comprised of the following sub-

themes: (a) Self-care as a multifaceted foundation of balance and effective functioning and (b) the impact of the professional landscape.

Self-Care as a Multifaceted Foundation of Balance and Effective Functioning

Across the papers included in this synthesis, there existed multiple understandings and meanings attached to self-care. Yet, the shared pattern identified was that self-care is a multifaceted construct that moves individuals toward holistic well-being (Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019). SPPs' holistic conceptualization of self-care provides a view of self-care that presents it as the primary approach to foster their well-being across the various domains of their personal and professional life as well as a tool to establish a foundation for balanced and effective functioning across these domains (Arnold et al., 2015; Champ et al., 2021; Elsborg et al., 2015; Martin et al., 2022; Quartiroli, Knight et al., 2019; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a; 2019b; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021).

Across the included studies, many SPPs cited balance and functioning as their primary reasons for engaging in self-care, which they typically describe as beneficial for improving their functioning in both a personal and professional capacity. To elaborate, these SPPs described self-care as promoting a sense of balance and 'normality' in their lives (Elsborg et al., 2015; Martin et al., 2021, 2022; Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a; 2019b; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021). For example, SPPs in training describe fostering balance as the intended outcome of their self-care practices, seeking to gain a sense of stability during the often-turbulent training process in which many SPPs experience a sense of imbalance in their workload or between their personal and professional lives (Martin et al., 2022). In several of the included studies (Cropley et al., 2016; Elsborg et al., 2015; Hings et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2021; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021), SPPs also acknowledged how self-care is key

to optimal functioning. At the personal level, they describe using self-care to maintain personal well-being as paramount to supporting their professional self and improving their professional quality of life (Martin et al., 2021; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, Zakrajsek, et al., 2022; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021). Specifically, effective functioning might comprise caring for oneself so that one remains holistically well and able to support and care for others; an important consideration given the caring nature of an SPP's role (Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019). At a professional level, SPPs view self-care as a tool to enhance professional performance (Martin et al., 2022; Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, Zakrajsek, et al., 2022). Indeed, by caring for, managing, and regulating oneself, one's relationships, and one's emotions, an SPP may be better placed to improve their role performance and the degree of satisfaction they take from their professional experiences (Hings et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2021). Moreover, Arnold and Sarkar (2015) alluded to a deficit-based perspective that described how the absence of care for oneself as an SPP may lead to detrimental and non-desirable outcomes for one's professional performance. Due to the positive function that self-care plays in SPPs personal and professional lives, several authors made calls for the earlier development of self-care-related practice as needed to maintain effective functioning in SPP training pathways (Hings et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2021; 2022; Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019).

The Impact of The Professional Landscape

The landscape of the profession and the professional environments in which practitioners operate were mentioned as important factors impacting the self-care of SPPs. The articles included in this synthesis described the nature and unique demands of the sport psychology profession and the challenges this can pose to individual practitioners' self-care. For instance, SPPs reported how the demands on their time and emotional resources could lead to a neglect of

their self-care (Elsborg et al., 2015; Hings et al., 2020; 2018; Martin et al., 2021). Moreover, the unrealistic expectations that clients, stakeholders, and the public often hold of SPPs (e.g., to work miracles with athletes, to never need help themselves, etc.) were listed as challenges to self-care that SPPs encounter (Hings et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2021; Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019). SPPs also reported challenges related to their identities, specifically their racial (e.g., SPPs of color working in predominantly white spaces; Hyman et al., 2021) and gender (e.g., female SPPs working in male-dominated environments; Champ et al., 2021) identities while navigating pervasive cultural norms in sport. SPPs described the negative impact of the challenges associated with these experiences within their professional contexts, which, in turn, could hinder their self-care (Champ et al., 2021; Hyman et al., 2021). On the other hand, SPPs perceived rewarding experiences to contribute to their satisfaction and foster their self-care, such as the network with colleagues and other professionals and the flexibility that their professional role allotted them (Elsborg et al., 2015; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019b).

From a contextual perspective, the misalignment of values between the SPPs and their professional context was cited as a factor that impacted SPP self-care (Hings et al., 2018; 2020; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al. 2019b). Specifically, SPPs reported how work environments that respected their autonomy and supported their personal needs fostered their self-care (Martin et al., 2022; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al. 2019b). Conversely, the opposite led them to enact more emotional labor (Hings et al. 2018; 2020), which may obstruct one's positive engagement in self-care. SPPs also described how they perceive professional organizations to not actively support self-care enough (Martin et al., 2022; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a) and call for organizations to take more responsibility to proactively facilitate self-care development in SPPs across their professional development (Cropley et al., 2016; Elsborg et al., 2015; Hyman et al., 2021).

Finally, within the literature SPPs called for more racial and gender-balanced representation in the field as a foundation for self-care. Specifically, SPPs highlighted how being often unable to see and work with SPPs like them presented significant challenges to their well-being and hindered their ability to maintain a proactive engagement in self-care (Champ et al., 2021; Hings et al., 2018; Hyman et al., 2021).

Critical Summary.

These findings align with contemporary conceptualizations of self-care within the counseling psychology (Dorociak et al., 2017) and sport psychology (Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021) literature. Specifically, the definition of Sport Psychology Self-Care (SPSC) provided by Quartiroli et al. (2021) made explicit reference to the prioritization, development, preservation, protection, monitoring, and restoration of holistic well-being across the physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and emotional domains of one's life. The findings of the current synthesis align with the sentiment underlining this definition by demonstrating the multifaceted nature of self-care as a construct and its foundational role in a SPPs' journey. In these studies, SPPs viewed self-care as foundational to their personal and professional functioning, which seems to align with more recent conceptualizations of this construct, wherein researchers have alluded to a close relationship between self-care engagement and personal and professional well-being (Dorociak et al., 2017; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, Zakrajsek, et al., 2022). An important finding of this study is the salient role played by the socio-demographics of the sport psychology professional landscape.

Our findings show how a predominantly white and male professional context, such as the sport psychology field and profession, may represent a difficult space for women, people of color, and SPPs who identify with other underrepresented identities. These findings are

supported by the existing literature highlighting the whiteness (McCarver et al., 2019) and male-dominated (Krane & Waldron, 2021) professional demographic in sport and exercise psychology. In this professional space, SPPs must navigate an unequal requirement for emotional labor due to the need to negotiate everyday micro-aggressions and Eurocentric, male-centric dominant ideologies, and perspectives (Champ et al., 2021; Hings et al., 2018; Hyman et al., 202; Krane & Waldron, 2021; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019b). For the participants in literature reviewed here, these experiences are counterproductive to developing and maintaining their self-care (Quartiroli, Wagstaff, Zakrajsek, et al., 2022) and a positive professional identity (Quartiroli, Wagstaff, Hunter, & Martin, 2022).

It would appear from these data that self-care is critical to supporting SPPs in their experience of their role as performers (cf. Poczwardowski, 2019). As performers, SPPs must articulate knowledge, skills, and abilities and regulate themselves in their roles, and self-care may be instrumental in supporting them in these processes. That self-care can impact professional practice by supporting SPPs' well-being and satisfaction may also support arguments for self-care engagement to be seen as a moral and ethical responsibility (Barnett et al., 2007; Smith & Moss, 2009; Wise et al. 2012). It follows that self-care may foster SPPs' holistic well-being and support their professional fulfillment and ethical practice (cf. Aoyagi & Portenga, 2010), indirectly supporting the maturation of the field.

Effective Self-Care

The data indicate that effective self-care is associated with the facilitation of holistic well-being and professional development over time. This theme discusses the importance of alignment between one's behaviors and values, the development of self-awareness of one's needs, and purposeful engagement in proactive practices that are meaningfully tailored to one's

needs. This theme encompasses the factors associated with effective self-care as experienced by the SPPs participating in the included studies and comprises three sub-themes: (a) understanding and alignment of values, (b) awareness of own needs, and (c) purposeful engagement.

Understanding and Alignment of Values

The development of effective self-care is underpinned by SPPs' awareness and understanding of their values and the alignment between them and their self-care behaviors. SPPs from the included studies described the adverse outcomes associated with the misalignment between their values and behaviors, such as feelings of incongruence and inauthenticity (Champ et al., 2021; Elsborg et al., 2015; Hings et al., 2018; Hyman et al., 2021). On the contrary, SPPs also highlighted the positive impact of such an alignment on their self-care (Quartioli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021). This sense of congruence between the personal and professional selves has been noted as key to professional development in both counseling (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003) and sport (Tod, 2007) and have been discussed in relation to self-care (Quartioli, Etzel, et al., 2019a). For example, SPPs in the included studies described how high levels of congruence between personal and professional selves may lead to increased confidence in engaging in conversations that ensure one's needs are met (Champ et al., 2021; Hings et al., 2018). In turn, one strategy consistently identified as supporting the development of awareness concerning one's values is SPPs' deliberate engagement in reflective practice (Cropley et al. 2016; Hings et al., 2020; Hyman et al., 2021). SPPs have described reflection as a tool to enhance their awareness of their values, and their current behaviors in relation to such values. In reflecting in this way, SPPs can better grasp how their own values and behaviors presently guide them, or not, to engage in self-care that may be effective or ineffective. Reflecting on who they are and the principles by which they wish to act, SPPs may come to better understand which self-care

behaviors and activities are required to support this. This awareness can serve as a foundation for the further exploration and development of effective self-care practices that coherently align with one's values and professional journey (Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021).

Awareness of Own Needs

Building on the self-knowledge around values and alignment of behavior with them, practitioners might seek to understand their own needs and how they might meet them. SPPs' awareness of their own needs has been identified as a primary mechanism for engaging in self-care practices that align with one's values in a way that meets one's needs (Cropley et al., 2016; Elsborg et al., 2015; Martin et al., 2021). A lack of awareness of these needs may hinder an SPP's ability to effectively attend to their self-care (Martin et al., 2022). On the other hand, one's awareness of their needs is critical to explore, identify, and engage in self-care practices that may satisfy them (Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a). For example, trainees and early career SPPs described how the specific challenges associated with the initial phases of their development (e.g., multiple professional roles and responsibilities, lack of awareness regarding their own needs, etc.; Martin et al., 2022) can be detrimental to their well-being and self-care. Specifically, SPPs have highlighted how these challenges limit their ability to devote time to reflect on and prioritize their needs and, consequently, engage in appropriate self-care practices (Martin et al., 2022). The importance of self-awareness here lies in the fact that self-care is conceptualized as inherently personal and individualized (Elsborg et al. 2015; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a). Self-awareness can support SPPs to understand what does and does not work for them and to use this knowledge to enact effective self-care (Martin et al., 2022). It is noteworthy that our findings highlight that SPPs' self-care needs may change throughout the different stages of their professional development in line with their evolving professional experiences and, hence, their

self-care practice will develop over time (Champ et al., 2021; Cropley et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2021; 2022; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a).

In line with the extant professional development literature (Tod, 2007; McEwan et al., 2019), trainee participants from the included studies noted that the challenges they face and their self-care needs evolve as they progress through their professional training. These changes ranged from advances in professional competence that moved SPPs away from needing to use supervisor support within their self-care, to facing challenges that came with gaining employment in elite sport (e.g., workload and travel) and thus one's needs changing once more to proactively support one's self-care in such environments. Further, participants spoke of how individual differences (e.g., gender and age) were factors that influenced how they were perceived at different times in their career, resulting in regular reiterations of their self-care to meet their changing needs. For the experienced practitioner, needs associated with their family, spouses, and maintaining an established career appeared to differ, while not always, to their trainee counterparts. This observation illustrates the individual and dynamic nature of one's self-care needs and the required refinement of practices needed. Finally, it is important to report that the SPPs in the included studies reported how self-awareness enabled them to identify, and place themselves within, environments that support their ability to care for themselves (Hings et al., 2020; Hyman et al., 2021).

Purposeful Engagement

The third avenue to create effective self-care practices identified across the sample of studies in this synthesis is the need for SPPs to engage in self-care purposefully. Specifically, SPPs reported the importance of purposeful proactiveness and refinement of self-care as important factors leading to more effective self-care practices.

A common narrative in the extant literature was that a proactive intent, underpinned by purpose and meaning, was the foundation for SPPs to engage in effective self-care practices. To elaborate, SPPs indicated that effective self-care is supported by a deliberate engagement in self-care practices (Hyman et al., 2021; Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019) that are purposefully aligned with their needs (Cropley et al., 2016; Elsborg et al., 2015; Hyman et al., 2021; Martin et al., 2022) and that are meaningful to them as individuals (Arnold et al., 2015; Elsborg et al., 2015; Hings et al., 2020; Hyman et al., 2021; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al 2019a; 2019b). Further, SPPs in the literature note how they need to identify, develop, and implement practices that fit their values (Martin et al., 2022; Quartiroli et al., 2021). There is also evidence to indicate that effective self-care is enhanced when SPPs foster holistic well-being (Elsborg et al., 2015; Martin et al., 2022; Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019) and engage in purposeful time management, boundary setting, compartmentalization of the self, and alliance-building (Arnold et al., 2015; Elsborg et al., 2015; Martin et al., 2021; McCormack et al., 2015; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a; 2019b).

The articles included in this review point to a consensus about how proactive and purposeful intentions toward self-care may generate the most effective self-care practices. Nevertheless, the apparent benefit of proactive practices does not detract from the potential effect of reactive self-care practices. Indeed, reactive self-care practice may also be characterized by purposeful intent and lead to meaningful self-care outcomes in some sport contexts (Arnold et al., 2015; Elsborg et al., 2015; Martin et al., 2022; Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019).

It would appear that engaging in purposeful self-reflection can serve as an evaluation tool for SPPs to assess the effectiveness of their self-care practices as well as the extent to which these meet their individual needs and align with their values (Cropley et al., 2016; Elsborg et al., 2015; Martin et al., 2022). Such evaluations may also enable SPPs to connect their experiences

to future self-care plans (Martin et al., 2022). SPPs also stressed the importance of reflecting on how one's self-care needs may change across one's career (Champ et al., 2021; Cropley et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2021; Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019) and the need to be cognizant of how one's self-care practices may need to evolve accordingly (Martin et al., 2022). Finally, SPPs in the extant literature have described self-care as a skill that requires refinement and takes practice to develop and hone over time (Martin et al., 2022; Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019). Yet, they also highlighted how more can be done to foster a better understanding of how to develop and refine self-care practices to best promote effective self-care among future cohorts of SPPs (Hings et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2022).

Critical Summary

There exists a body of work that notes the importance of awareness and an alignment between values, an SPP's behavior, and their philosophy of practice (Lindsay et al., 2007; McDougall et al., 2015; McEwan et al., 2019). Moreover, SPPs' awareness of their values has been repeatedly connected to their engagement in reflective practice, which is already considered an essential professional skill (Andersen et al., 2004; Cropley et al., 2007). Nevertheless, self-reflection has also been stressed as an important mechanism to develop, implement, and evaluate effective self-care practices that support the well-being and holistic functioning of SPPs (Martin et al., 2022). This echoes how self-reflection is seen as a foundation of self-care and has been shown as relevant across the career developmental span of SPPs and those in other domains of psychological practice (Dorociak et al., 2017; Rupert & Dorociak, 2019). Scholars have argued for the use of supervision and reflective-based mentorship models to support psychology practitioners in identifying and developing the skills required for effective self-care throughout professional development (Glassburn et al., 2019). Finally, the focus on SPPs' self-care

intentionality aligns with calls for proactive practices within the general psychology literature (Posluns & Gall, 2020). Specifically, scholars have identified proactive intent as an underlying measure of self-care (Dorociak et al., 2017) and proactive engagement in self-care practices to reduce the negative outcomes associated with working in mental health professions (Goncher et al. 2013).

Connected Care: A Collaborative Lens on Individual Self-Care

Throughout this synthesis, we have presented self-care as a construct grounded in the individual's values and focused on the development of an individual's holistic well-being. This primary conceptualization of self-care aside, the synthesis of the included manuscripts led us to develop a third theme that represents the involvement of others (e.g., family, friends, peers, and colleagues) in fostering an SPP's self-care. The theme comprises the following sub-themes: (a) care for others, and (b) care through others.

Care for Others

SPPs across the studies included in the synthesis described their engagement in self-care encompassing their efforts to support others (Martin et al., 2021; 2022; Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019; Quartiroli, Etzel et al., 2019a; 2019b). SPPs identified themselves as caring individuals and stressed how they receive a sense of fulfillment from supporting not only the clients with whom they work but also their families, friends, students, mentees, and colleagues (Martin et al., 2022; Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019). Specifically, experienced SPPs referred to giving back to the profession and the sense of value and gratification they received from supporting the development of early career SPPs and trainees through mentorship and contributing to the development of the profession (Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019). The professionals in the

reviewed articles identified these acts as self-care practices that enabled them to foster their professional (and personal) journey within the sport psychology profession.

Care Through Others

In addition to highlighting the importance of caring for others, SPPs appear to describe the value they attribute to self-care through seeking support from people around them (Martin et al., 2022; McCormack et al., 2015; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019). Professional networks, personal relationships, and supervisory relationships are all possible avenues mechanisms for supporting SPP self-care through other people given their potential use for actively seeking help-seeking and problem-solving in these relationships.

The first area highlighted in the collected research is care through other professionals. For example, building alliances within the multidisciplinary team (Arnold et al., 2015), seeking guidance and role modeling from experienced practitioners, as well as connectedness and community from peers (Cropley et al., 2016; Elsborg et al., 2015; Hings et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2022; Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, Zakrajsek, et al., 2022). In line with this finding, SPPs also mentioned the importance of pursuing more professional support for their well-being, such as attending personal therapy (Hings et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2022). Specifically, SPPs discussed the significance of seeking support through supervision, describing supervision as a space for SPPs to purposefully reflect on their well-being and self-care (Hings et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2021) and to proactively work on their self-care (Arnold et al., 2015). The SPPs in the studies reviewed here also paid particular attention to their relationships outside the professional context. SPPs highlighted the importance of confiding in friends and family when they need more support as an essential mechanism for maintaining well-being (Elsborg et al., 2015; McCormack et al., 2015; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a). Further, SPPs in these studies

also reported the importance of actively maintaining healthy relationships and making time for friends and family as an act of proactive self-care (Martin et al., 2022; McCormack et al., 2015; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a; 2019b). Conversely, SPPs also highlighted the costs to well-being associated with not maintaining those relationships and being unable to rely upon one's structured personal and professional support systems to foster self-care practices (Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a).

In addition to fostering self-care through others by actively seeking their support, SPPs in the included studies also describe the importance of being cared for by others (e.g., friends, family, and supervisors) without explicitly seeking their support. SPPs described being cared for by others primarily through their support systems. On their professional journey, supervisors were often mentioned as playing a key role in actively contributing to their self-care (Arnold et al., 2015; Cropley et al., 2016; Hyman et al., 2021; Martin et al., 2021; 2022). SPPs described how supervisors and mentors independently tailor their approach to the supervisees' identities, experiences, challenges, needs, and values, offering bespoke and empathic support. Through this support, supervisors offer supervisees and mentees validation and permission to care for themselves compassionately while actively contributing and encouraging adherence to their self-care plans (Hyman et al., 2021; Martin et al., 2021; Quartiroli, Hunter, Martin, 2023). Yet, SPPs who identified as women or people of color reported experiencing challenges when receiving supervision from supervisors who do not share similar identities (Champ et al., 2021; Hings et al., 2018; Hyman et al., 2021). Similarly, families, partners, and friends supported SPPs' care using their close relationship with and understanding of the SPPs, without the SPPs' active engagement in these efforts (Martin et al., 2021; 2022; McCormack et al., 2015; Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019; Quartiroli, Wagstaff, Zakrajsek, et al., 2022).

Critical Summary

This theme encapsulates the notion that SPPs' self-care not only concerns the individual SPP but can be considered a nuanced set of practices, behaviors, and activities, which may be influenced by and include family, friends, peers, colleagues, and supervisors. SPPs foster their self-care directly by caring for these individuals or seeking their support. These findings align with the general psychological literature describing how professional (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007; Thériault et al., 2015) and personal (Barnett et al., 2007) tangible support are valuable elements of psychology practitioners' self-care (Dorociak et al., 2017; Posluns & Gall., 2020; Rupert & Dorociak, 2019).

As highlighted in the sport psychology literature (Martin et al., 2022), a strong link exists between practitioners' satisfaction with personal support, greater self-esteem, psychological flexibility, and professional functioning (Kuyken et al., 2003). Our findings, however, also highlight the importance of the invisible support the SPPs received from key players in their lives like family, friends, colleagues, and supervisors. Bolger and colleagues described invisible support as a type that occurs "between the lines" and either goes unnoticed or is not interpreted as support (Bolger & Amarel, 2007; Bolger et al., 2000). Interestingly, the findings of this synthesis indicate that using others' support, including engaging in personal counseling (Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021), is an important facet of self-care. Nevertheless, mental health professionals often report barriers to seeking support or help from others, such as stigma, privacy concerns, and attempts to solve their issues independently (Bearse et al., 2013; Edwards et al., 2017), limiting their ability to benefit from this support. Such disparity requires further exploration to understand better which barriers toward seeking support exist despite clear evidence for its benefit for practitioners' well-being.

Our results also highlight the role that individual identities may play in the supervisory relationship and its impact on trainees' self-care. Previous counseling psychology literature shows how gender (Hindes & Andrews, 2011) and racial (Brown & Grothaus, 2019) differences between supervisees and supervisors can impact the effectiveness of this relationship. Specifically, identities perceived as similar may lead to stronger openness, connection, and trust in supervisees (Brown & Grothaus, 2019; Hindes & Andrews, 2011). SPPs across the career span have noted the important role played by supervision in fostering (when positive) or hindering (when negative) their self-care (Martin et al., 2022; Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019a). It is therefore possible that identity-related characteristics may play a role in the development and implementation of a SPPs self-care. This role could occur during reflective practice for self-exploration of needs and values, which are essential to developing a self-care plan (Quartiroli et al., 2023). Additionally, this reflection could serve to highlight the value of self-care for one's practice (Martin et al., 2022), and the foundational intersection between identity and practice.

Cultural Reflections

It is important to note that despite the growth of literature exploring cultural sport psychology and cultural competence within SPPs (Blodgett et al., 2014; Ryba et al., 2013; Quartiroli, Schinke, et al., 2023; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009; Schinke et al., 2012), the work synthesized in this study is heavily grounded in western and Eurocentric sport psychology literature. Indeed, within the scope of the present synthesis, there exists a limited representation of culturally diverse experiences in relation to the self-care of SPPs. While few studies reported the ethnicity or race of their participants, a distinct lack of exploration of self-care exists in SPP populations around the globe. This absence clearly limits our global understanding of self-care in SPPs, with the current body of knowledge being predominantly limited to western and

Eurocentric perspectives (Quartiroli, Vosloo, et al., 2021). Scholars have highlighted the challenges SPPs from marginalized, underrepresented, and non-westernized cultural and ethnic backgrounds experienced (Carter & Davila, 2017; Yu et al., 2016). We echo these sentiments and stress how expanding our knowledge of cultural differences in self-care remains imperative. There is a need for scholars to pay specific attention to the meaning and purpose of self-care, and the development and implementation of self-care practices and plans, beyond the currently embraced western and Eurocentric perspectives. Specifically, we believe it is important for scholars to explore how SPPs from historically marginalized and underrepresented backgrounds and cultural and ethnic groups, experience and assign meaning to self-care.

Applied Implications

In terms of applied implications from this synthesis, we start with the significant implications from the consistent observation within the literature of the multifaceted nature of the self-care construct and its foundational role in a SPP's journey. As SPPs consistently note that self-care is foundational to their personal and professional functioning, we must act to attend to such messages as a profession. This observation is all the more important when we consider SPPs-as-performers who must articulate knowledge, skills, and abilities, regulate themselves in their roles, and provide competent and ethical service delivery. Indeed, we infer from the results of this synthesis that we may be at the point at which we "cross the Rubicon" towards truly holistic well-being among SPPs. This "crossing" would be characterized by self-care practices being developed by all individual practitioners as an essential aspect of their personal and professional lives, with these ideally being shared with colleagues in one's place of work to promote connected care, and whereby individuals in systems support their colleagues to reduce objective and subjective barriers to adherence in self-care practices. Where such ideals may be

challenged or challenging, we might reiterate the arguments noted throughout the extant literature that self-care engagement should be seen as a moral and ethical responsibility that indirectly supports the field's maturation.

The results of this synthesis confirm the individual and non-prescriptive nature of self-care practices and self-care plans. They underscore the importance for SPPs to engage in their own self-reflective and purposeful exploration of their needs and values. This process serves as a foundation to understand what practices would best fit them and how they could be integrated into their personal and professional lives. Recently, scholars have offered an example of a self-reflective process aimed to develop a self-care plan (Quartiroli, Hunter, & Martin, 2023). In line with our findings, Quartiroli and colleagues (2023) described how SPPs can begin their individual journey to develop a self-care plan by engaging in a series of self-reflection exercises. These exercises focus SPPs on exploring their own lives, values, and self-care needs, and demonstrates how the outcomes of these reflective exercises can be brought together to develop a plan which they can adjust throughout the course of their careers and lives.

Given that one's values may extend beyond the domain of professional practice into their broader lived experience through self-care, the present synthesis provides further support for the imperatives of effective self-reflection by individuals, the use of supervision, and reflective-based mentorship models throughout SPP professional development and formation to support their self-care. Once qualified, professionals should also consider the salience of invisible supports in their lives (e.g., family, friends, colleagues, and supervisors) and ensure that proactive and formalized mobilization of these supports is not impeded. In doing so, SPPs must ensure that the support that exists "between the lines" does not "fall between the cracks."

A proactive approach to mobilizing this support could be developing a community of practice that may facilitate the development of shared reflections to help trainees and SPPs across the span of professional development exchange ideas, reflections, and experiences related to their self-care. Wagstaff and colleagues offered insight into how organizations might develop reflective systems that SPPs interested in embracing this shared practice could implement in their journey (Wagstaff et al., 2023). Scholars and practitioners have also discussed the impact and effectiveness of communities of practice to support the professional development and practice of early career and advanced SPPs (Cogan et al., 2012; Poczwardowski & Lauer, 2006), which could support SPPs in their reflective process aimed to develop their individual self-care plans. Along with these communities of practice, another approach to integrating self-care in the professional development of SPPs is by training and encouraging supervisors to bring self-care to the center of the supervisory relationship (Martin et al., 2022). Nevertheless, it is paramount to consider the identities (e.g., gender, race) of supervisors and supervisees and the potential impact that these identities may have on the supervisory relationship. Thus, it may be important to discuss these identities to enhance the relationship with supervisees (Chang et al., 2004; Gatmon et al., 2001).

Finally, SPPs are mandated by the ethical guidelines of their profession to maintain the highest ethical standards while reaching their fullest potential (Aoyagi & Portenga, 2010; Barnett et al., 2007; Knapp et al., 2017). For this reason, it is paramount that training programs, professional organizations, and qualifying and credentialing bodies consider self-care as part of their professional developmental and continuing education curricula. This process could be implemented by offering continuing education programs focused on self-care (Wise & Reuman, 2019), and by embedding self-care among the foundational competencies to practice psychology (Neimeyer & Taylor, 2019; Wise & Reuman, 2019).

Conclusion

In this synthesis we aimed to examine and qualitatively analyze the existing literature on self-care in SPPs. The main contribution of this synthesis is to highlight the essential role of self-care in the professional development and practice of SPPs. For this reason, those leading training programs and professional organizations must consider integrating elements of self-care education and practices (cf. Quartiroli, Hunter, & Martin, 2023). For instance, self-care could become the focus of specific modules aimed at developing one's awareness of self-care and understanding how to develop a self-care plan and engage in self-care practices. Nevertheless, attention to self-care must be more holistically integrated into the training of future (and current) SPPs; for example, self-care-related reflections might be integrated into supervision and mentoring experiences and the demonstration of self-care practice might form part of professional development provision and assessments (Fogaça et al., 2023).

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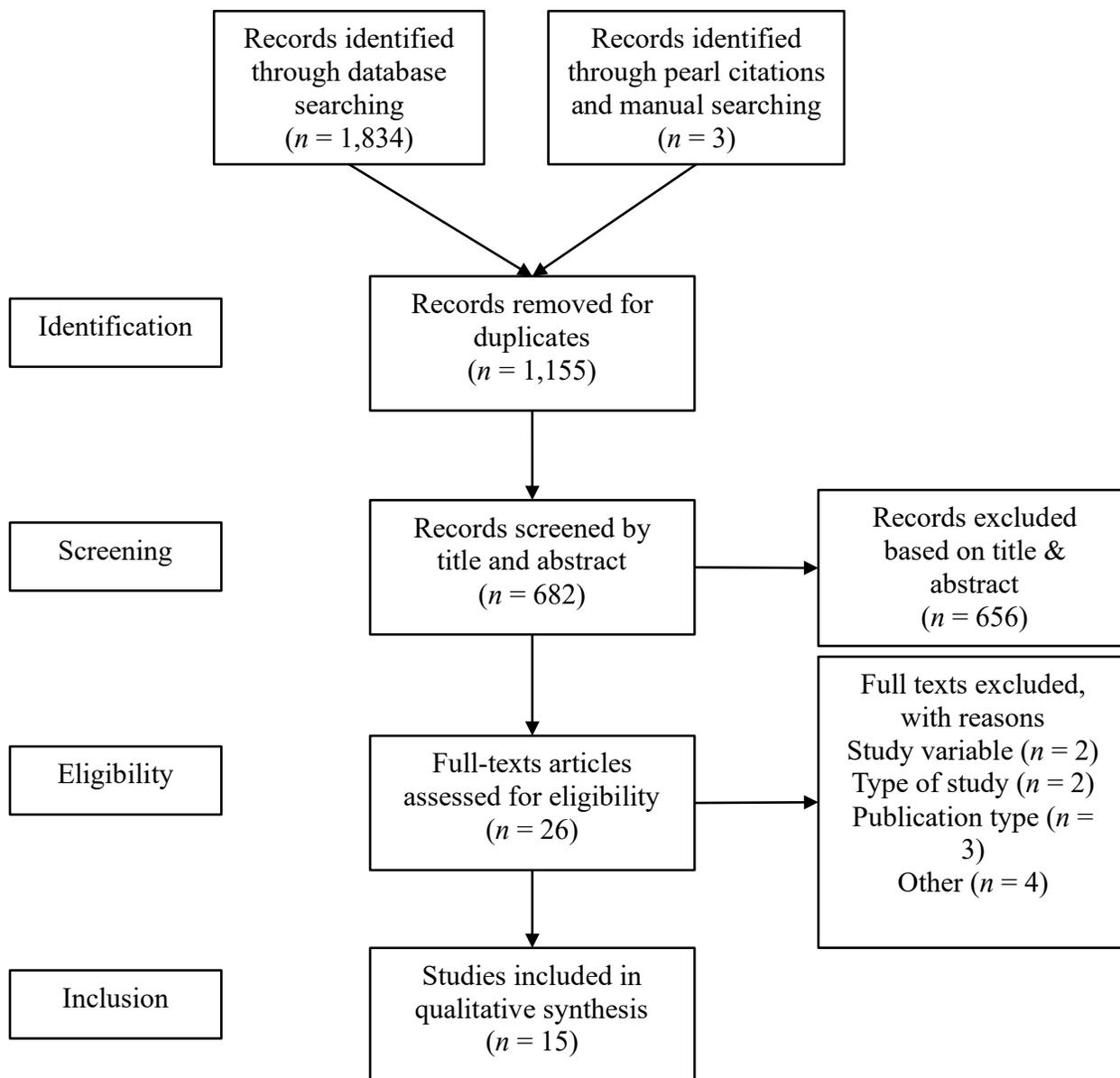
Figure 1*PRISMA Flow Diagram*

Table 1

Keywords and Search Strings *, ** (e.g., ^{a, b})

Trunk	(sport psychologist OR "sport and exercise psychologist" OR "sport psychology consultant" OR "sport psychology practitioner" OR "sport psychology professional" OR "mental performance coach" OR "mental performance trainer" OR "mental coach" OR "performance coach" OR "performance psychologist" OR "mental trainer")
AND	(self-care OR selfcare OR self care)
AND	(wellbeing OR well-being OR wellness OR welfare)
AND	(stress* OR burnout OR impairment OR demand* OR organizational stress* OR emotional exhaustion OR emotional lab* OR emotional depletion)
AND	(self-care practice* OR self-care perception* OR self-care behavi* OR self-care strateg* OR compassion OR self-compassion OR career sustaining behavi* OR self-care intentions OR self-care engagement)
AND	(work-life balance OR professional functioning OR life balance OR professional wellbeing OR professional development)
AND	((self-care (self-efficacy OR importance OR changes OR patterns))
AND	(sustaining factor* OR resilience OR self-awareness OR awareness OR continuing education OR time management OR healthy living OR active living OR self-reflecting OR personal counsel*)
AND	(personal resources OR professional support OR social support)

* *Search string used across APA PsycArticles, Academic Search Ultimate, Business Source*

Complete, E-Journals, OpenDissertations, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, APA PsycInfo, SocINDEX with Full Text, SPORTDiscus with Full Text

** *Changes in truncation and syntax used were made to the above for use in PubMed, Web of Science, and Google Scholar.*

Table 2*Report of Quality Standards*

Study	Abstract & Title	Introduction & Aims	Method & Data	Sampling	Data Analysis	Ethics & Bias	Results	Generalizability	Implications	Total	Grade
Arnold & Sarkar, 2015	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	4	28	B
Champ et al., 2021	4	4	4	1	3	3	4	3	4	30	A
Cropley et al., 2016	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	4	28	B
Elsborg et al., 2015	4	4	3	4	2	2	3	3	4	29	B
Hings et al., 2018	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	4	4	33	A
Hings et al., 2020	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	3	4	32	A
Hyman et al., 2022	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	34	A
Martin et al., 2021	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	31	A
Martin et al., 2022	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	32	A
McCormack et al., 2015	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	27	B
Quartiroli, Knight, et al., 2019	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	30	A
Quartiroli, Etzel, et al. 2019a	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	30	A
Quartiroli, Etzel, et al., 2019b	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	31	A
Quartiroli, Wagstaff, Zakrajsek et al., 2021	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	4	32	A
Quartiroli, Wagstaff, & Thelwell, 2021	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	31	A

Table 3*Critical Appraisal*

CASP Criteria	Number of Papers meeting criteria (%) (n= 15)
Is there a clear statement of the aims of the research? What was the goal of the research, its importance and relevance?	15 (100)
Is a qualitative methodology appropriate? Consider if the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants	15 (100)
Was the research design appropriate to address the research aims? Did the researcher justify the research design (e.g., did they discuss how they decided which methods to use)?	15 (100)
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? Did the researcher explain how the participants were selected? Did the researcher explain why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study? Were there any discussions around recruitment (e.g., why some people chose not to take part)?	13 (87) 12 (80) 9 (60)
Were the data collected in a way that addressed the research aims? Was the setting for data collection justified? Was it clear how the data were collected (e.g., focus group, semi structured interview etc.)? Did the researcher justify the methods chosen? Did the researcher make the methods explicit (e.g., for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews were conducted, did they use a topic guide?) If the methods were modified during the study, did the researcher explain how and why? Is the form of data clear (e.g., tape recordings, video material)? Did the researcher discuss saturation of data?	15 (100) 15 (100) 14 (93) 15 (100) 0 15 (100) 0
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? Did the researcher critically examine their own role, potential bias and influence during the formulation of the research questions? Did the researcher discuss how they responded to events during the study, including the implications of any changes in the research design?	8 (53) 0
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? Were there sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained? Did the researcher discuss ethical issues raised by the study (e.g., confidentiality, informed consent, the effect of the study on the participants)? Was approval sought from an ethics committee?	4 (27) 3 (20) 14 (93)
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? Was there an in-depth description of the analysis process? If thematic analysis was used, was it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data? Did the researcher explain how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process? Were sufficient data presented to support the findings? Were contradictory data taken into account? Did the researcher critically examine their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation?	13 (87) 5 (100) ^a 4 (27) 15 (100) 0 7 (47)
Is there a clear statement of findings? Were the findings explicit? Was there adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments? Did the researcher discuss the credibility of their findings (e.g., triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst)? Were the findings discussed in relation to the original research questions?	15 (100) 15 (100) 12 (80) 15 (100)
How valuable is the research? Did the researcher discuss the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g., did they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research-based literature?) Did the researcher identify new areas where research is necessary? Did the researcher discuss whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or consider other ways the research may be used?	15 (100) 12 (80) 3 (20)

^a This question was only applicable to five studies

Table 4*Constructed Themes*

Themes	Sub-Themes
Sport psychology practitioner's self-care	Self-care as a multifaceted foundation of balance and effective functioning The impact of the professional landscape
Effective self-care	Understanding and alignment of values Awareness of own needs Purposeful engagement
Connected Care: A collaborative lens on individual self-care	Care for others Care through others

Table 5*Articles Included in the Review*

Author(s)	Research Design	Participant information	Main Results
Arnold & Sarkar (2015)	Cross-sectional interview study.	15 practitioners (12 M, 3 F) with a combined 228.50 years consulting with Olympic athletes and teams ($M = 15.23$ years, $SD = 8.83$).	Analysis of semi-structured interviews revealed 28 themes within 5 categories: Olympic stressors, success and failure lessons, top tips for neophyte practitioners, differences within one's own consulting work, and multidisciplinary consulting.
Champ et al. (2021)	Longitudinal Ethnography, creative non-fiction vignettes.	One trainee sport and exercise psychologist.	Vignettes explored discourses of traditional masculinity in professional football shaped by the first author's sense of self and subsequent behaviours. Suggestions for SPP identity development are presented with considerations for the development of contextual intelligence and cultural proficiency for a trainee SPCs survival during early and later career stages of working within elite and professional sport environments.
Cropley et al. (2016)	Mixed methods study	Study one: 29 SPCs (20 M, 9 F) aged between 26–53 years old ($M = 37.9$, $SD = 7.3$). Study two: six SPCs (4 M, 2 F) aged between 30–48 years old ($M = 38.8$ years, $SD = 7.9$), had been practicing for 8–21 years ($M = 14$, $SD = 5.5$).	Participants had a statistically significant preference to using problem-focused coping strategies. Further, interviews suggested that coping strategies were primarily developed through reflection on experiences in different contexts. The impacts of coping/not coping and the practical development implications raised were discussed.
Elsborg et al. (2015)	Cross-sectional qualitative interview study	11 SPCs (7 M, 4 F) aged 35–52 from eight different countries on three different continents.	Extend the knowledge on sport psychology consultancy at the Olympic Games by showing individual contextual differences between the consultants' perceptions and by identifying four SPC roles at the Olympic Games.
Hings et al. (2018)	Cross-sectional qualitative interview study	18 professional sport medicine and science staff comprised of sport and exercise psychologists ($n = 6$), strength and conditioning coaches ($n = 5$), physiotherapists ($n = 5$), one sports doctor and one generic sport scientist.	Three overarching themes were identified following a thematic analysis (a) factors influencing emotional labor enactment, (b) emotional labor enactment, and (c) professional and personal outcomes. The omission of emotional labor from professional codes of conduct and the studies support for its inclusion was a main implication. Furthermore, an education-training-practice gap in relation to emotional labor and the need for greater reflective practice training were identified.
Hings et al. (2020)	Cross-sectional qualitative interview study	20 participants recruited, comprising: Master's level sport and exercise psychology students ($n = 5$), (2) trainee	Following a thematic analysis, themes were collectively grouped according to the participant groups with the following thematic structure (a) master's students (emotional labor as theory, practice), (b) trainees (emotional labor to survive, a professional development tool), (c) neophytes (emotional labor as a new

		SEPs (n = 5), (3) neophyte SEPs (n = 5) and (4) experienced SEPs (n = 5).	professional, self-care) and (d) experienced sport and exercise psychologists (emotional labor as a professional resource, lifelong learning). The authors provide implications for the profession in relation to the need for greater training and development of emotional labor skills within sport and exercise psychology.
Hyman et al. (2022)	Cross-sectional qualitative interview and focus-group study	6 female psychologists of African descent with a minimum of 3 years applied sport psychology experience.	A phenomenological approach centred in feminist methodology produced seven main themes (1) the professional is political, (2) sense of responsibility, (3) be the change, (4) vigilance with colleagues, (5) acceptance and resistance, (6) White ally-ship and (7) representation. Participants highlighted the pervasive nature of Whiteness and masculinity within the field and the lack of representation. Insights included the resilience of Black female practitioners, the significance of community, and professional recommendations for sport psychology as a discipline.
Martin et al. (2021)	Cross-sectional qualitative interview study	14 neophyte sport psychologist practitioners (9 F, 5 M) from the UK. Age ranged from between 24-52 years ($M = 33.08$, $SD = 8.64$), and all participants held a Master's degree in sport and exercise psychology.	Following a reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), five main themes were identified (a) individual conceptualization of SP-PQL, (b) the evolution of SP-PQL, (c) the perceived barriers to SP-PQL, (d) the aspects of the profession that nourish SP-PQL, and (e) the strategies implemented to foster SP-PQL. Implications included greater emphasis on SP-PQL within British sport psychology development pathways, and considerations for educators, such as the provision of educational resources and curricula to better inform and support future neophyte's SP-PQL.
Martin et al. (2022)	Cross-sectional qualitative interview study	18 self-identified white neophyte SPPs residing in the United Kingdom (12 F; 6 M), aged between 24 and 52 years ($M_{age} = 31.94$, $SD_{age} = 7.81$).	Five main themes were constructed following a reflexive thematic analysis of data. These themes were: (a) What self-care means to neophyte SPPs, (b) The cornerstones of self-care, (c) What facilitates neophyte's selfcare, (d) The self-care hurdles that neophytes face and (e) The self-care actions that neophytes implement. The key mechanisms, such as self-awareness, that underpin self-care as well as the facilitating and challenging aspects related to engaging in self-care are discussed.
McCormack et al. (2015)	Cross-sectional qualitative interview study.	30 practitioners (18 M, 12 F) certified by a relevant organization currently working within a high-performance environment.	Results showed that burnout among sport psychologist practitioners was a frequently experienced phenomena despite high levels of work engagement. The sources of social support used by practitioners' difference between those experiencing high burnout versus low burnout, similarly, so was reference to the dimensions of work engagement.
Quartiroli, Knight, et al. (2019)	Cross-sectional qualitative interview study.	20 senior-level SPPs (10 M, 10 F) from 7 different countries on 4 different continents, with an average professional practice experience of 23.9 years ($SD = 8$).	Following a Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) process, three main domains and 38 categories related to the SPPs' ability to maintain their SP-PQL were revealed in the data: "Challenges to SP-PQL," (15 categories); "Personal strategies to foster SP-PQL," (4 categories); and "Professional strategies to foster

Quartiroli et al. (2019a)	Cross-sectional qualitative interview study.	20 (10 M, 10 F) internationally located, experienced, and senior-level SPPs with an average professional experience of 23.9 years.	SP-PQL,” (15 categories). Implications for those who train and educate sport psychology practitioners are presented with regards to the importance of SP-PQL. Following a CQR process, researchers identified 3 main domains for SPPs: defining self-care, describing the self-care challenges they faced, and identifying strategies to overcome those challenges. Experienced and senior-level practitioners recognized a need to sustain a balanced approach in their professional and personal lives, and identified self-care as an important contributor to their sport psychology professional quality of life. Study findings have implications for both novice and more experienced SPPs.
Quartiroli et al. (2019b)	Cross-sectional qualitative interview study	20 experienced, senior-level sport psychology practitioners participated in the study (10 M; 10 F) from seven different countries and four different continents (i.e., Europe, North America, Asia, and Oceania).	Five main domains were derived from the data using a CQR process, these include: “SP-PQL as lived experience”; “The nature of the profession”; “SP-PQL as an ongoing journey”; “SP-PQL as deliberate engagement”; and “SP-PQL as interconnections between the personal and the professional”. These findings provide a novel exploration and identification of the attributes of sport psychology-specific professional quality of life, drawing attention to the elements of a SPPs personal and professional life that may help the development of long-standing and positive careers.
Quartiroli et al. (2021)	Delphi-study	Multi-national panel of 23 SPPs (13 F, 10 M), with an average of 13 years’ experience in the field.	Following three rounds of a Delphi-study, where participants were invited to outline their definitions of self-care, a working definition of self-care, relevant to SPPs, was created. Consensus was sought in relation to the outcomes of self-care which included: enjoyment of life, positive professional quality of life, developing effective and ethical practice. The findings of this Delphi-study provide implications for the importance of self-care being embedded in personal values and the importance of engaging in purposeful behaviours to foster self-care.
Quartiroli et al. (2021)	SC&SP-PQL	20 SPPs (10 M, 10 F) working across university, private practice, and governmental experience, with an average of 23.9 years of professional practice.	Using a CQR process, one main domain and six categories were developed from the research data. The overarching domain “Interdependence between SP-PQL and Self-care” was made of six categories which were: “Inextricably interrelated”; “Personal relationships”; “Professional Relationships”; “Role Model”; “Influence of SC on SP-PQL”; and “Enhancement of professional effectiveness”. Provides considerations for SPPs in relation to why they may explore, develop and implement strategies to enable their personal flourishing to enhance their professional career and effectiveness.
