



Perceived Supervisor Emotional Regulation and its Impact on Climate and Employee Wellbeing: Insight into Collegiate Athletic Departments

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Stress is a well-recognized aspect of the employee experience, and its consequences range from diminished individual wellbeing to decreased organizational productivity. This necessitates organizations to gauge the stressors of their employees to mitigate the negative consequences. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation, organizational climate, and employee wellbeing conceptualized through a shortened stress evaluation tool (ASSET) framework. Results indicated a significant direct, negative relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation and a fearful organizational climate. There was a significant direct, negative relationship between a fearful organizational climate and employee wellbeing. These findings suggest that fearful organizational climates have a significant negative impact on an employee's wellbeing and potentially employee productivity and retention within collegiate athletic departments. These findings suggest that healthy organizational climates (i.e., psychologically safe climates) can serve as a protective factor for employee wellbeing.

Keywords: organizational climate; ASSET model; climate of fear; psychological safety

An employee's workplace can have a significant impact on their personal wellbeing (Karabatsos et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2017), and employee wellbeing can have a significant impact on organizational outcomes as well as productivity (Baicker et al., 2010; Donald et al., 2005; Gubler et al., 2018). Baicker and colleagues' (2010) meta analysis found that for each \$1.00 organizations spend on corporate wellness programs, the organization saved \$3.27 in health care costs and \$2.73 in absenteeism costs. Further, there is substantial evidence to suggest that employee wellbeing also increases employee productivity (Donald et al., 2005; Gubler et al., 2018). Therefore, it is imperative to understand variables that facilitate and debilitate employee wellbeing. This is particularly important for NCAA Division I athletic departments employees due to the demanding schedule (Schuetz et al., 2021; Weight et al., 2021) and win-at-all-cost mentality (Tygart, 2016) present within sport culture which may exacerbate issues related to employee wellbeing.

Schneider and Hite (2017) conducted a study with collegiate athletic department employees across NCAA Divisions I, II, and III representing a variety of positions (e.g., athletic director, sports information, equipment manager, etc.) about their perceptions of workplace burnout among other variables. The results indicated that 42.6% of their sample agreed or strongly agreed that they felt emotionally drained by their job (Schneider & Hite, 2017). Further, anecdotal evidence suggests that employees working in NCAA athletics may feel stressors compounding resulting in decreased wellbeing and ultimately an exit from the industry. For example, Matt Luke, former offensive line coach for the University of Georgia football team, recently retired at the age of 45 to spend more time with his family (Dellinger, 2022). Other research focused on collegiate athletic employees indicate high levels of burnout, workaholism, and other wellbeing concerns across all of collegiate athletics with some research focusing specifically on athletic academic counselors, early career professionals, female administrators, athletic trainers, and coaches (Hardin et al., 2020, Hardin et al, 2015, Huml et al., 2021; Otto et al., 2019, Pitney, 2006; Taylor et al., 2021).

Thus, there is evidence that employee wellbeing is a concern in the collegiate athletic environment and demonstrates the importance of this line of inquiry within this setting (Kim et al., 2017, 2019, 2021). Work on employee behaviors have primarily focused on wellbeing as a mediating variable in relation to performance or examined variables linked to wellbeing (e.g., burnout; Inceoglu et al., 2018). However, employee wellbeing and mental health is an important outcome in and of itself to consider for both employees and organizations (Meister, 2021). Despite the practical relevance of employee wellbeing, the impact of a supervisor's behavior (perceived and actual) on employee wellbeing is an underdeveloped area in scholarship (Inceoglu et al., 2018).

Examining the role of emotion when exploring employee wellbeing within sport (e.g., college athletics) is important because of emotion's synergistic relationship with sport (Swanson & Kent, 2017). Employee emotions have not always been welcomed within the general workplace; however, it has long been recognized as a distinct element within sport (Lau, 2020; Swanson & Kent, 2017), and supervisors have a distinct role in managing the emotions within the workplace (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011). Additionally, managing the emotions of the group is a key objective within leadership (Humphrey, 2002). A person in a position of authority (e.g., athletic director, head coach) can influence the emotions of the organization by modeling an appropriate emotional response when faced with trigger situations (e.g., stressful events; Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011). This is particularly important because of emotional contagion, which refers to the spreading of emotions within the workplace. Emotional regulation of those in

positions of authority (e.g., supervisors) serves as a primary tactic for controlling emotional contagion among the workplace (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011).

Furthermore, an employee's work environment and the relationships therein can have a significant impact on their overall health and wellbeing. Johnson (2002) suggested, "the established links between work stressors and employee wellbeing places a moral obligation on employers to provide a healthy environment" (p. 135). Decreased employee wellbeing can also influence organizational performance through diminished employee productivity, greater absenteeism, and poor decision-making (Danna & Griffin, 1999). Roderick and colleagues (2017) stated, "mental illness (particularly depression, anxiety and work-related stress) is now the leading cause of sickness absence and long-term work incapacity" (p. 104). Thus, managing a workplace climate may be a mechanism for both facilitating employee wellbeing and organizational performance (Donald et al., 2005). Additionally, Kim et al. (2007) asserted scholars should "investigate factors that influence employees' work experience and wellbeing within sport organizations" (p. 109). Swanson and Kent (2017) also made a call for additional research exploring the role of emotion within the sports workplace, and its impact on employee perceptions and experiences.

Therefore, this research answers both calls within sport management (Kim et al., 2017; Swanson & Kent, 2017) and seeks to fill the gap in literature examining the mediators between supervisor behavior and employee wellbeing (Inceoglu et al., 2018). This study utilizes a shortened stress evaluation tool (ASSET) as a guiding framework (Johnson, 2002) to examine perceived emotional regulation of the supervisor and its impact on employee wellbeing while using organizational climate as a mediating variable in the context of collegiate athletics.

Literature Review

Literature within sport management and the broader social science disciplines pertaining to job stress, emotional regulation, organizational climate, and employee wellbeing are reviewed to inform the current study.

Job Stressors

Sonnentag and Fritz (2015) state, "Job stressors refer to factors in the work environment that may lead to strain reactions such as negative arousal, physical symptoms, or psychological impairments" (p. 73). Job stressors can exist within different categories such as task stressors, physical stressors, and social stressors among others (Sonnetag & Fritz, 2015). Within collegiate sport, research has explored the stressors coaches experience within their occupational roles. Robbins et al. (2015) found that interpersonal stressors are prominent in the occupational stress experiences of collegiate coaches. Interpersonal stressors appeared in their relationships with various stakeholders throughout the department such as other coaches, athletes, and administrators (Robbins et al., 2015). Further, with increased demands within collegiate sport, it is important to understand how supervisors manage these stressors emotionally and how this emotional response impacts others within the organization, namely people working in subordinate positions (Burton et al., 2012).

Supervisor Emotional Regulation

Employees in positions of authority have highly visible roles within the workplace, thus an important impact on the organizational climate. However, this influence can be positive or

negative, and is intrinsically tied to emotion (Brotheridge & Lee, 2008; Fisk & Friesen, 2011). Han and colleagues (2017) stated, “poor management often goes beyond simply being ineffective as a leader to being actively detrimental to the wellbeing and productivity of followers” (p. 21). Because of these employees’ visibility within the organization, it is imperative they understand how their emotions influence the climate of the workplace and the employees therein, thus requiring emotional awareness and skill (Brotheridge & Lee, 2008). Emotional regulation is a cognitive skill that is integral to successfully navigating stressful events and is conceptualized as one of the four components within emotional intelligence (Greenburg et al., 2022; Lee & Chelladurai, 2018; Wong & Law, 2002). Emotional regulation is defined as “the processes by which individuals influence the emotions they have, when they have them, and how these emotions are experienced and expressed” (Aquib & Rizwi, 2020, p. 140). Therefore, those lacking emotional regulation skills may negatively impact the organizational climate and thus, create additional stressors for employees to manage beyond stressors associated with the tasks of their job.

Further, a burgeoning line of research within management has focused on emotional intelligence among organizational leaders. This suggests that “managers who possess emotional and social skills are more likely to be effective in carrying out their work” (Brotheridge & Lee, 2008, p. 112). More broadly, there is significant research suggesting that leaders with highly developed “interpersonal skills” (an umbrella which includes emotional regulation) are more effective leaders (Riggio & Lee, 2007). However, research specifically examining emotional regulation (rather than emotional intelligence more broadly) of leaders is less developed (Fisk & Friesen, 2011).

Within sport, emotional regulation has been explored within coaching populations and Weinberg et al. (2022) concluded “the ability to maintain self-control and regulate emotions under extreme stress is critical to be a mentally tough coach” (p. 359). Further, research on coaches has explored the relationship between emotional intelligence, emotional labor, and individual outcomes such as burnout, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions (Lee & Chelladurai, 2018). Lee and Chelladurai (2018) reaffirmed the centrality of emotions within sport as well as the importance of developing emotional intelligence skills and made a call to explore this phenomenon within other sport leadership positions. These findings suggest emotion regulation and emotional intelligence influence sport employees’ experiences and could potentially impact their wellbeing. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant direct, positive relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation and employee wellbeing.

Organizational Climate

An organizational environment manifests from its culture and climate and is critically important in allowing employees to thrive (Marinova et al., 2019). Organizational climate refers to more salient aspects of the workplace such as employee interactions, decision-making processes, and communication. Therefore, perceived supervisor emotional regulation can theoretically have a distinct impact on organizational climate. Bronkhurst and colleagues (2015) defined organizational climate as the “perceptions of the social and interpersonal aspects of the work situation” (p. 255). Therefore, while organizational climate can be a shared perception among employees, individual employees may have unique perceptions based on their unique social interactions and observations. These perceptions are highly influenced and shaped by

organizational leadership and/or their direct supervisor (Bronkhurst, 2015). Research has consistently linked organizational climate to individual outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, turnover intentions) and organizational outcomes (e.g., team performance, innovation; Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009), thus driving its importance within research and practice. Further, research suggests that a supportive organizational climate (among other variables such as authentic leadership and meaningful work) can also impact the wellbeing of employees and thus their ability to flourish (Kim et al., 2017). Therefore, organizational climate can be referred to as a potential psychosocial work stressor or a potential protective factor for employee stress (Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2003).

Within the sport industry, aspects of organizational climate such as identity leadership and psychological safety have been previously studied primarily with athletes (Fransen et al., 2020; Saxe, Smith, et al., 2022). This work conceptualizes organizational climate as a mediator for understanding differences in outcomes (e.g., performance, satisfaction). However, there has been limited work examining the organizational climates of sport workplaces rather than sport teams. Relatedly, the relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation, organizational climate, and employee wellbeing has yet to be examined within sport management literature.

Psychological Safety. Psychological safety represents a potential emergent construct within organizational climate. Psychological safety is a “shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking” (Edmondson, 1999, p. 354). Therefore, while voicing concerns and sharing ideas can feel risky, if the organizational climate is psychologically safe, it will be enough to overcome and outweigh the appraised risk of the situation (Edmondson, 1999). One of the mechanisms for establishing a psychologically safe climate is through high-quality interpersonal relationships, as well as supportive leadership behavior (Saxe & Hardin, 2022). Theoretically, psychological safety serves as a mechanism for alleviating employee stress within organizational settings because it allows for more freedom of expression and decreased need for self-protective behavior, and therefore, can lead to outcomes of employee wellbeing. Psychological safety has been studied extensively within healthcare and business; however, there has been limited exploration of psychological safety in sport, and this research has primarily focused on psychological safety from the perspective of the athlete (Saxe, Smith, et al., 2022; Saxe & Hardin, 2022). Fransen et al. (2020) conducted a study to explore the relationship between team identification, psychological safety, individual outcomes (i.e., health, burnout) and organizational outcomes (i.e., resilience, teamwork, satisfaction with team performance) with handball athletes. Findings from the study illustrate the significance of psychological safety in sport as it had a significant relationship with improved team resilience and greater satisfaction with performance (Fransen et al., 2020). Further, Smittick et al. (2019) explored the impact of coach incivility on various outcomes within NCAA Division I women’s collegiate basketball teams. The findings revealed that coach incivility mediated the coach incivility and team performance relationship and demonstrated a significant, negative relationship between coach incivility and team psychological safety (Smittick et al., 2019). Smittick and colleagues (2019) concluded that their study “highlight[ed] the criticality of leader behavior for team functioning” (p. 430). Thus, these findings demonstrate the need for further exploration of psychological safety within sport contexts and its relationship with wellbeing in addition to performance.

Climate of Fear. Climate of fear, another emergent construct within organizational climate, represents “a generalized experience of apprehension in the workplace” (Ashkanasy & Nicholson, 2003, p. 24). Ashkanasy and Nicholson (2003) stated, “because communication

occurs through social networks and involves sharing of meaning... , personal displays of emotion lead to a shared perception of emotion among organizational members” (p. 24). Therefore, if a supervisor lacks the ability to regulate their emotions in a way that instills fear in their employees, this could result in a climate of fear. Fear is largely invoked as an avoidance mechanism to provide self-protection when there is an environmental threat (Kiewitz et al., 2016). Therefore, when a supervisor engages in abusive supervision, a climate of fear may emerge within the subordinates to protect themselves from further abuse as well as protect their position in the organization (Kiewitz et al., 2016). There appears to be no research specifically examining a climate of fear within sport organizations. However, there is significant research regarding fear of failure and its negative impact on a variety of outcomes for participants within sport such as wellbeing and performance (Taylor et al., 2021). For example, Sagar and colleagues (2010) conducted a study with youth football players and found that fear of failure negatively impacted the participant’s (1) wellbeing, (2) performance, and (3) interpersonal behavior. Further, the most common method of coping with fear of failure was through avoidance. Thus, the variable, climate of fear, will add to the discussion of workplace behaviors, specifically those that may negatively impact employee wellbeing. Psychological safety and climate of fear represent two opposite ends of a continuum, and although opposite are highly correlated. Therefore, the constructs were combined to represent the level of fear in the organizational climate on a spectrum from psychologically safe to fearful. The process of combining these constructs is discussed in more detail in the method section. As such, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant direct, negative relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation and perceptions of a fearful organizational climate.
- Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant direct, negative relationship between perceptions of a fearful organizational climate and employee wellbeing .

Organizational Climate as a Mediator. The ASSET model framework explores the direct relationship between sources of stress (e.g., work relationships, work-life balance) and outcomes of stress (e.g., health and wellbeing) as well as the relationship between sources and outcomes of stress flowing through sources/outcomes of stress (e.g., attitudes toward your organization; Tytherleigh et al., 2005). Therefore, in addition to the direct relationships previously hypothesized, organizational climate is also included, specifically perceptions of psychological safety and a climate of fear as mediators in the adapted ASSET model. Organizational climate provides an ideal construct for mediation between sources of stress and outcomes of stress because it is routinely conceptualized as a mediating variable. For example, psychological safety has been explored as a mediating variable (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Lei, 2014) to illuminate how outcomes manifest. Thus, it is possible that while perceived supervisor emotional regulation is likely directly related to employee wellbeing, it is also probable that this relationship is mediated by organizational climate (i.e., perceptions of psychological safety and/or climate of fear). Additionally, Saxe and Beasley et al. (2022) suggest that meso-level variables (i.e., observing the exchanges of others in the workplace) have a significant impact on wellbeing, an individual-level variable. Thus, it is important to understand how different variables at various levels (i.e., individual, group, organizational) interact with one another to impact employee wellbeing. An examination of both the direct and indirect pathways

would strengthen the understanding of uncovering variables affecting employee wellbeing as well as their pathways within NCAA athletic departments.

Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- Hypothesis 4: The relationship between supervisor emotional regulation and wellbeing will be partially mediated by perceptions of a fearful organizational climate .

Employee Wellbeing

Wellbeing is “a state of positive feelings and meeting full potential in the world” (Simons & Baldwin, 2021, p. 990). Health is generally measured objectively (e.g., body mass index, blood pressure); however, wellbeing can be measured subjectively as it is a representation of one’s appraisal of their health, purpose, and affect (Simons & Baldwin, 2021). Some scholars (see Bayhan Karapinar et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2015) consider employee wellbeing as distinctly different from general wellbeing as it references an employee's wellbeing within the context of work and can be measured through different representatives such as “job satisfaction, work engagement, subjective wellbeing, and work stress” (Bayhan Karapinar et al., 2019, p. 2454). However, employee wellbeing can also be conceptualized as a component (proponent or detractor) of overall wellbeing. Thus, this study employed both general wellbeing measures (e.g., sleep, physical health, emotional health) and employee wellbeing measures (e.g., job satisfaction) to form the wellbeing construct within this study.

Employee wellbeing within sport management has primarily been examined through variables that theoretically detract from wellbeing (e.g., burnout, workaholism, employee exploitation; Taylor et al., 2019; Weight et al., 2021). However, recent work has suggested that flourishing represents a more holistic view of wellbeing (Schuetz et al., 2021). Additionally, organizational psychology recognizes the importance of organizations in supporting individual wellbeing. Wagstaff (2019) stated sport organizations have a role in “developing and maintaining cultures that promote a duty of care and well-being for all individuals within their sphere of influence, and as agents of change toward social responsibility, diversity, and justice” (p. 2).

ASSET Model

The ASSET model was adapted with the unique variables of the study and served as the guiding framework. The ASSET model was originally designed as an organizational assessment tool to examine workplace liabilities related to stress within an organization (Johnson, 2002). The ASSET model examines: (1) sources of stress (perceptions of one’s job), (2) sources/outcomes of stress (attitudes toward one’s organization), and (3) outcomes of stress (employee health and wellbeing). This model has been used to examine perceptions of work stressors and individual and organizational outcomes of heightened work stress within a plethora of industries including higher education, law enforcement, and manufacturing (Donald et al., 2007; Jacobs et al., 2007). However, it has yet to be used within the sport industry. This model is useful when examining the workplace for both employees and organizations as it considers both individual and organizational outcomes which are sometimes seen as competing interests (Van De Voorde et al., 2012). Therefore, this model provided an opportunity to view multiple constructs simultaneously and was adapted based on the previous literature specific within sport settings.

This model was particularly suited for this study because of its utilization of mediator variables within the model. Inceoglu and colleagues (2018) conducted a review of literature within leadership studies examining extant literature examining leader behavior and employee wellbeing. Inceoglu and colleagues (2018) stated, “most studies on leadership behavior and employee well-being did not examine mediators” (p. 182). Therefore, the ASSET model was ideal for this study because it created a framework that explored mediating relationships within the broader scope of workplace stressors and outcomes which would be adapted to the unique context of collegiate sport athletic departments. Therefore, the ASSET model (see Figure 2) was adapted to explore perceived supervisor behavior and employee wellbeing, while simultaneously examining the impact of mediating variables.

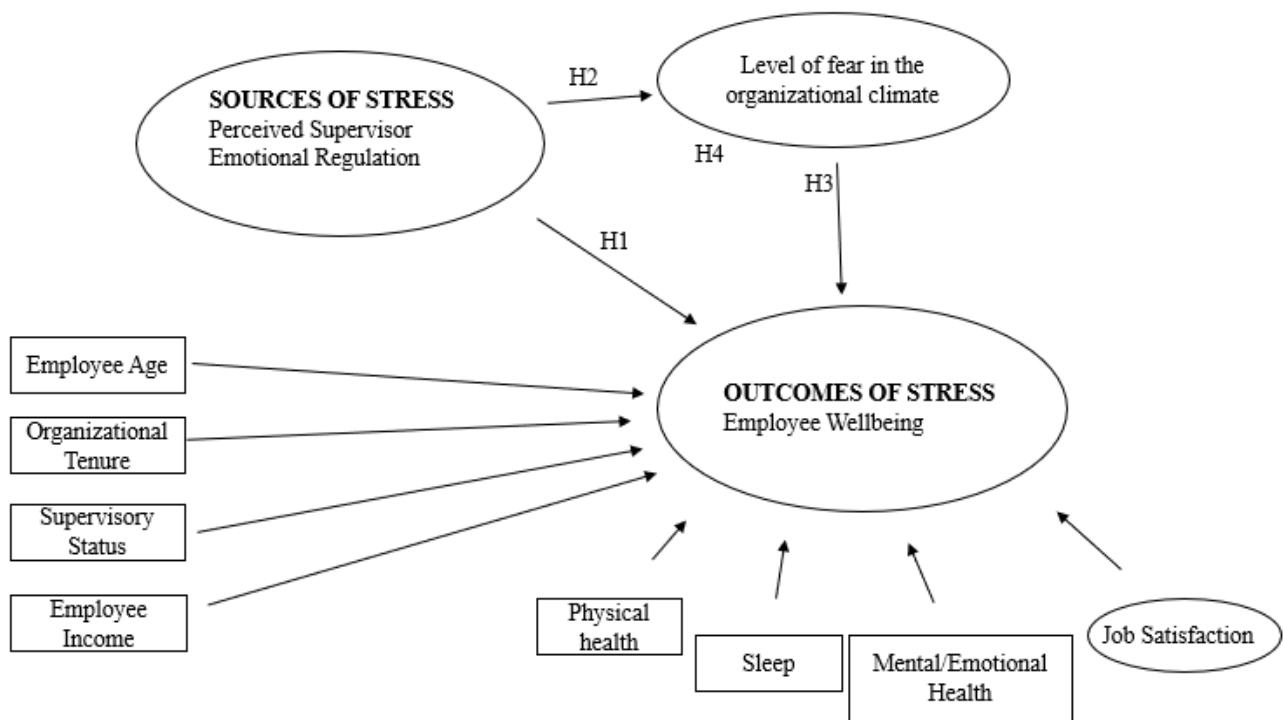


Figure 1.

Adapted ASSET Model

Note. Hypothesis 4 measures the indirect relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation and employee wellbeing through psychological safety and climate of fear.

Methods

The setting for this study are athletic departments within NCAA Division I autonomous conferences. NCAA athletic departments have a unique combination of employees within their organization including full-time administrators, coaches, and support staff as well as graduate assistants and interns. Employees within intercollegiate athletic departments were eligible to participate in this study.

Participants

Participants were 819 NCAA athletic department employees nested within the five NCAA Division I autonomous conferences (e.g., Big 10, Southeastern Conference). Full-time

employees accounted for 88.7% of the sample. The gender identity of the participants was approximately 55% male and 44% female. The racial breakdown of the sample included 78.3% White, 10.3% Black, 4.7% Hispanic, and 2.3% Asian participants. This gender and racial breakdown reflects previous research on collegiate athletics (Huml et al., 2021; Taylor et al., 2019; Weight et al., 2021) as well as the most recent publications of the Racial and Gender Report Card published by the TIDES Center at the University of Central Florida and from the NCAA (Lapchick, 2020; National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2021). Seventy eight percent of participants were between ages 23-50. Position titles included: coach, sports medicine, academic services, and sports information/media relations among others. The majority of the sample did not supervise other employees (54.06%) and the mean tenure with their current institution was 2.86 years ($SD=1.50$). See Table 1 for complete participant demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Employment Status		
<i>Full time</i>	723	88.71
<i>Part time</i>	29	3.56
<i>Volunteer</i>	6	0.74
<i>Graduate Assistant</i>	32	2.39
<i>Intern</i>	19	2.33
<i>Other</i>	6	.074
Gender Identity		
<i>Female</i>	357	44.07
<i>Male</i>	443	54.69
<i>Non-Binary</i>	1	0.12
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	9	1.11
Sexual Orientation		
<i>Heterosexual</i>	731	91.15
<i>Gay/Lesbian</i>	26	3.24
<i>Bisexual</i>	10	1.25
<i>Other</i>	6	0.75
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	29	3.62
Age		
<i>18-29</i>	283	34.94
<i>30-50</i>	386	47.66
<i>51+</i>	141	17.40
Race		
<i>White/Caucasian</i>	661	78.32
<i>Black or African American</i>	87	10.31
<i>American Indian or Alaskan Native</i>	3	0.36
<i>Asian</i>	20	2.37
<i>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</i>	9	1.07
Supervise Employees		
<i>Yes</i>	373	45.94
<i>No</i>	439	54.06

Table 1 (continued)

Participant Demographics

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Pre-Tax Annual Income		
<i>Less than 10,000</i>	20	2.48
<i>10,000-19,999</i>	40	4.97
<i>20,000-29,999</i>	33	4.10
<i>30,000-39,999</i>	53	6.58
<i>40,000-49,999</i>	159	19.75
<i>50,000-59,999</i>	162	20.12
<i>60,000-69,999</i>	89	11.06
<i>70,000-79,999</i>	70	8.70
<i>80,000-89,999</i>	34	4.22
<i>90,000-99,999</i>	24	2.98
<i>100,000-149,999</i>	59	7.33
<i>150,000+</i>	62	7.70
Length of time with current institution		
<i>0-12 months</i>	234	28.75
<i>13-24 months (2 years)</i>	99	12.16
<i>25-60 months (5 years)</i>	209	25.68
<i>61-120 months (10 years)</i>	92	11.30
<i>121 months or more</i>	180	22.11
Position		
<i>Sport Coach</i>	169	20.76
<i>Strength & Conditioning</i>	32	3.93
<i>Marketing</i>	23	2.86
<i>Development</i>	33	4.05
<i>Media Relations</i>	42	5.16
<i>Nutrition</i>	20	2.46
<i>Sport Medicine</i>	106	13.02
<i>Academic Support</i>	73	8.97
<i>Life Skills</i>	12	1.47
<i>Senior Exec Staff</i>	27	3.32
<i>Business/Finance</i>	15	1.84
<i>Compliance</i>	28	3.44
<i>Information Technology</i>	16	1.97
<i>Equipment</i>	22	2.70
<i>Event Management</i>	26	3.19
<i>Facility Services</i>	39	4.79
<i>Creative/Graphic Design</i>	21	2.58
<i>Hospitality</i>	5	0.61
<i>Ticket Office</i>	23	2.83
<i>Corporate Sponsorships</i>	5	0.61
<i>Other</i>	77	9.46

Procedure

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to data collection. Following IRB approval, emails soliciting participation were sent directly to athletic department employees from five Division I autonomous conferences with two reminder emails sent seven and 14 days after the original email. The survey included an informed consent document containing IRB required information (e.g., risks and benefits) that if participants agreed to would direct them to the survey instrument. Participants were informed of their right to discontinue participation at any time and that all responses would be collected anonymously. All participants had to verify that they currently worked as an employee within a NCAA affiliated athletic department. Emails requesting participation began in October 2021 and two reminders, each a week apart, were sent to those who did not respond to the initial or second request. To ensure there was not a non-response bias, means and standard deviations for all measures were compared between responders based on which request prompted their survey completion (e.g., initial request, follow up one, or follow up two); no differences were found.

Measures

Perceived supervisor emotional regulation was measured using Wong and Law's (2002) 4-item emotional regulation scale assessed on a 7-point rating scale anchored by 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Directions instructed participants to answer the following questions in relation to their current direct supervisor. The wording of the scale was adapted to fit the perspective of a subordinate evaluating their supervisor's emotional regulation abilities. This adaptation to the original scale (Wong & Law, 2002) has been validated and used in other studies to assess perceived emotional regulation of a supervisor within a workplace setting (Wilderom et al., 2015; Yuan et al., 2022). A sample item is "My boss is able to control their temper so that they can handle difficulties rationally." Libbrecht et al. (2010) suggests that contemporaries (colleagues, subordinates, etc.) can provide an accurate depiction of emotional intelligence components (i.e., emotional regulation) due to competing forces within a self-report such as social desirability and egocentrism.

Psychological safety was measured using Edmondson's (1999) 7-item scale measured on a 5-point rating scale anchored by 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. This is the most widely used scale assessing psychological safety (Harvey et al., 2019). A sample item is "Members on the team are able to bring up problems and tough issues." This scale has been shown to be valid and reliable, with Cronbach's alphas of 0.73 (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006) to 0.83 (Harvey et al., 2019), when examining employees within a range of industries (e.g., healthcare, finance; Harvey et al., 2019; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

Climate of fear was assessed using Ashkanasy and Nicholson's (2003) 13-item scale utilizing a 7-point rating scale anchored by 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. A sample item is "I feel fearful or anxious while I'm at work." Ashkansay and Nicholson's (2003) measure of climate of fear is the widely used scale demonstrating reliability within an acceptable range (Kiewitz et al., 2016)

Wellbeing was assessed by gauging participant's subjective appraisal of their physical and mental/emotional wellbeing, quality of sleep, and job satisfaction (Wayne et al., 2021). Physical and mental/emotional wellbeing as well as sleep quality were assessed using the following three questions: (1) How would you rate your mental/emotional health over the last several months? (2) How would you rate your physical health over the last several months? (3) How would you rate your sleep quality over the last several months? The measurement scale

included five points anchored by 1 = terrible and 5 = excellent. These measures have been used in previous work on employee experiences and were found to have adequate psychometrics with a Cronbach's alphas of 0.79 (Wayne et al., 2021). Additionally, *job satisfaction* was measured using a 3-item scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a 7-point rating scale (MOAQ-JSS, Bowling & Hammond, 2008, Cammann et al., 1979). While the original scale was created using a 5-point rating scale, this scale has regularly been utilized on scales ranging from five to seven points and has been found to be a valid and reliable scale for measuring global job satisfaction (Bowling & Hammond, 2008). A sample item from this scale is "All in all, I am satisfied with my job." Job satisfaction was included as a component of wellbeing because it is an important component of employee wellbeing (Bayhan Karapinar et al., 2019), while the other measures focused on general wellbeing.

Demographic questions including gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, income, supervisory status, area of the athletic department worked, and organizational tenure were also asked.

Analysis

Structural equation modeling was used to test the relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation, organizational climate (e.g., psychological safety, climate of fear), and employee wellbeing, as proposed in the hypotheses. Structural equation modeling was utilized because it allowed for examination of complex relationships among multiple latent and observed variables (Beran & Violato, 2010). The analysis of the proposed model was constructed using AMOS 28. Prior to analyses, descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations were conducted across all scaled measures (see Table 2). Further, multivariate normality tests were conducted to ensure the data was normally distributed. Q-Q plots were used to examine the data for potential outliers, and revealed only three potential outliers. The results did not change with or without the inclusion of the outliers in the sample, and therefore, the outliers were left in the sample. Further, bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals were conducted to minimize measurement error within the mediation model. To test the mediation model, indirect paths from perceived supervisor emotional regulation and wellbeing were utilized through psychological safety and climate of fear using Preacher and Hayes' (2008) conditional indirect effects testing technique using bias-corrected bootstrapping for analysis. The Preacher and Hayes method was utilized as conventional mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986) and the Sobel test has low statistical power in structural equation modeling, which can result in an increased likelihood of Type II error (MacKinnon et al., 2002). Additionally, and as proposed in the ASSET model, specific aspects of participants' jobs including organizational tenure, income, age, and whether or not participants were in a supervisory role were controlled (Johnson, 2002).

Measurement Model. Cronbach's alphas scores were calculated for each scale to ensure the internal consistency and reliability of the previously established scales used within this sample. All scales met an acceptable alpha within social science research (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). Additionally, a measurement model was conducted using confirmatory factor analysis to calculate the average variance extracted (AVE) for each latent construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The AVE for perceived supervisor emotional regulation was satisfactory with all items included (0.692). However, one item loaded below 0.70 and thus was dropped from the latent construct resulting in an AVE of 0.864. All items on the job satisfaction scale loaded above 0.74 with an AVE of 0.800. Psychological safety and climate of fear were highly negatively correlated (-0.927, $p < .001$) demonstrating the need to combine the constructs into one

latent construct. Therefore, all items from both scales that loaded below 0.70 were excluded from the latent construct. This resulted in six items being dropped from the psychological safety scale and eight items being dropped from the climate of fear scale. The resulting construct included four items from the climate of fear scale and one item from the psychological safety scale (reverse coded) which combined for an AVE of 0.530. However, climate of fear was measured on a 7-point scale while psychological safety was measured on a 5-point scale. Therefore, a z-score transformation was conducted to create standardized scores (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). As such, we measure organizational climate with a singular variable that includes items from both the psychological safety and climate of fear scales. This updated organizational climate variable was utilized as the mediator within our model.

See Table 2 for average variances extracted from each construct.

Table 2
Average Variance Extracted Construct Estimates

Construct	Number of Items on Scale	Factor Loadings	Construct AVE estimate prior to eliminating items	Construct AVE after eliminating items
Supervisor Emotional Regulation	5	0.948 0.967 0.082 0.85 0.947	0.692	0.863
Psychological Safety	7	0.738 0.569 0.634 0.605 0.655 0.49 0.607	0.382	0.527
Climate of Fear	13	0.465 0.766 0.731 0.754 0.741 0.43 0.734 0.53 0.032 0.683 0.565 0.517 0.607 0.704	0.384	
Job Satisfaction	3	0.898 0.861 0.913	0.794	NA

Note. All items that loaded less than 0.70 were dropped from the construct.

Therefore, our adapted ASSET model proposed direct effects between (a) perceived supervisor emotional regulation and wellbeing, (b) perceived supervisor emotional regulation and organizational climate, and (c) organizational climate and wellbeing. Further, the indirect relationship between supervisor emotional regulation and wellbeing as mediated through organizational climate was examined.

Results

To assess model fit, standards recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999) and MacCallum et al. (1996; i.e., CFI of .90 or greater, AGFI of .80 or greater, and RMSEA of .10 or less) were utilized. The results of the structural model analysis indicate the model provided adequate fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 358.412$, $df = 28$, $p < .001$; CFI = .891; GFI = .913; AGFI = .830; RMSEA = .12). Figure 2 illustrates the standardized path coefficients on the finalized model.

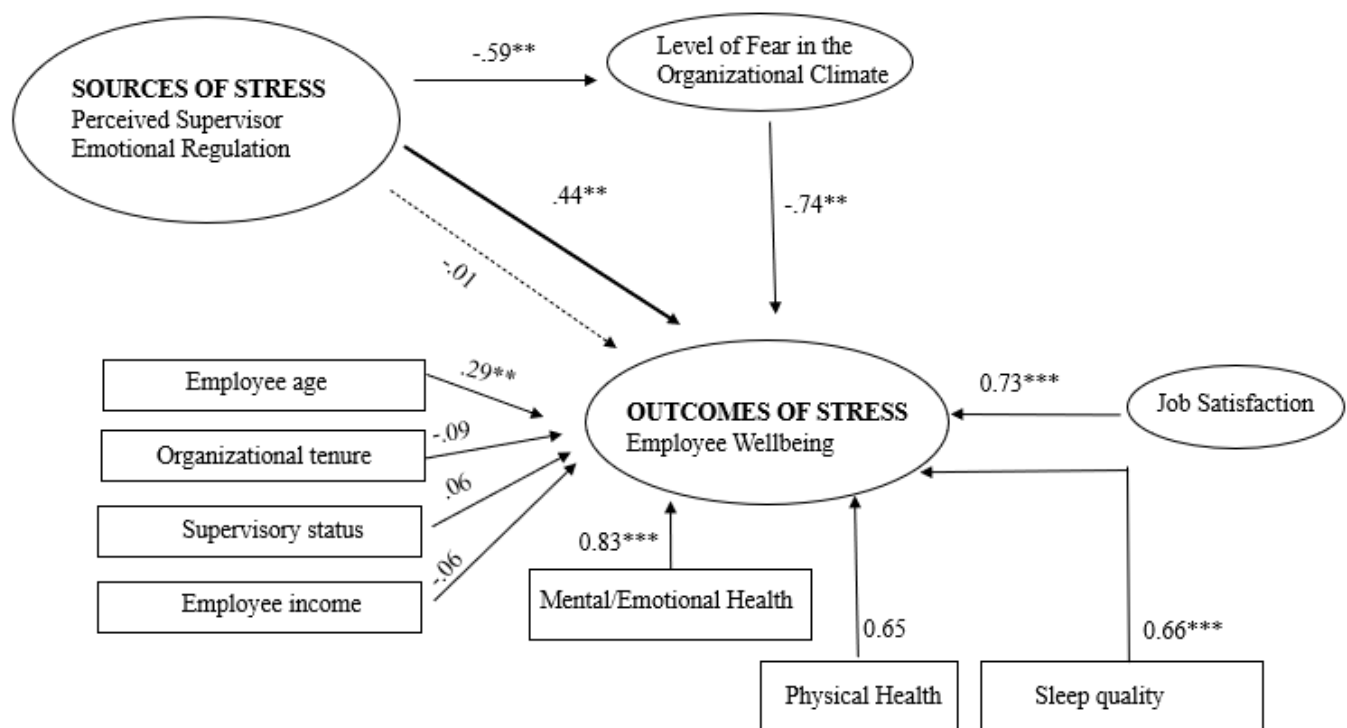


Figure 2.
SEM Model with Standardized Path Coefficients

Note. *** designates significance at the <0.001 level ** designates significance at the <0.01 level, * designates significance at the <0.05 level.

Hypothesis 1 predicted the direct relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation and employee wellbeing would be significant and positive. The structural model indicated the relationship was not significant ($\beta = -.007$, $p = .832$), thus rejecting Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2 predicted a significant direct, negative relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation and perceptions of a fearful organizational climate. The structural model indicated the relationship was significant ($\beta = -.590$, $p = .008$). Hypothesis 3 predicted a significant direct, negative relationship between perceptions of a fearful organizational climate

and employee wellbeing. The structural model indicated the relationship was significant ($\beta = -.744$, $p = .010$). Hypothesis 4 predicted the relationship between perceptions of supervisor emotional regulation and wellbeing will be partially mediated by perceptions of a fearful organizational climate. The structural model indicated the relationship between perceptions of supervisor emotional regulation and employee wellbeing were fully mediated through organizational climate ($\beta = .437$, $p = .006$).

The results of the direct and indirect mediated effects are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Standardized Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Effect	Path	β Weight	95% bias-corrected CI	P value	Hypothesis Outcome
H 1	Direct	Supervisor Emot → Wellbeing	-.007	-0.69, .089	.948	Rejected
H 2	Direct	Supervisor Emot → Climate	-.590	-.643, -.537	.008	Confirmed
H 3	Direct	Climate → Wellbeing	-.744	-.828, -.660	.010	Confirmed
H 4	Direct	Supervisor Emot → Climate → Wellbeing	.437	.378, .524	.006	Partially Confirmed

Note. Supervisor Emot = perceived supervisor emotional regulation, CI= confidence interval, H=hypothesis

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of workplace stress (i.e., perceived supervisor emotional regulation) on the workplace organizational climate and the wellbeing of NCAA Division I autonomous institutions' athletic department employees. The study also responded to the call within management literature for more empirical research on emotional regulation of supervisors (Fisk & Friersen, 2011) and sport management literature for more empirical research on employee wellbeing (Kim et al., 2017) and emotion within the sports workplace (Swanson & Kent, 2017). Results indicated a significant, negative relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation and organizational climate and a significant, negative relationship perceptions of organizational climate and employee wellbeing. Further, in contrast to hypothesis 4 and the ASSET model, there was not a significant direct relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation and employee wellbeing. This indicates a fully mediated model through perceptions of the organizational climate.

The results of this study have important theoretical and practical implications. First, it provides additional empirical evidence to support the theoretical relationship between the organizational climate and employee wellbeing. More practically, it highlights the direct effect of emotional regulation on organizational climate and the critical importance of organizational climate in influencing the wellbeing of employees and thus likely impacting their work contributions and retention. Thus, the results suggest that emotional regulation should be considered as a part of professional development within intercollegiate athletics for persons in a supervisory role and organizational climates should be considered as a mechanism for cultivating heightened employee wellbeing.

Theoretical Implications

The adapted model demonstrates an indirect relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation and employee wellbeing, thus highlighting the importance of organizational climate. Lower perceptions of supervisor emotional regulation led to higher levels of perceived fear within the organizational climate. This is consistent with extant literature regarding the role of a leader and their influence on organizational climate (Bronkhurst, 2015; Kuenzi & Schminke,

2009). However, this study provides tangible insight into mechanisms (i.e., emotional regulation) that influence the organizational climate and thus influence subsequent outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, employee wellbeing). This is particularly important to understand within the context of sport because of the intertwined nature of emotion and sport and extends its importance to a broader segment of the sport industry rather than only coaches and athletes (Weinberg et al., 2022). Additionally, this adds to the understanding of how psychological safety “shows up” which Edmondson and Lei (2014) recognized as necessary for a deeper understanding of the construct. Therefore, supervisors who have this understanding, as well as skill to understand and regulate the expression of negative emotions, are likely to cultivate an organizational climate with lower levels of fear (i.e., a psychologically safe organizational climate). This is critically important because psychologically safe organizational climates have been associated with higher levels of learning behavior, enhanced innovation and creativity, increased and more productive communication, heightened wellness and increased performance (Frazier et al., 2017; Saxe & Hardin, 2022). While research does suggest a relationship between psychological safety and wellbeing (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016; Fransen et al., 2020), this relationship is not well-established in the literature (Saxe & Hardin, 2022). Therefore, this study provides further evidence to strengthen the theoretical relationship between psychological safety and wellbeing.

In contrast, supervisors who fail to regulate their emotions (particularly negative emotions), can instead cultivate an organizational climate with high levels of fear which can be damaging to employee wellbeing. This is consistent with literature outside of sport management. Lubbe and Belle (2013) found that positive family affective climates had a significant, negative relationship with anxiety and depression and negative climates had a significant, positive relationship with anxiety and depression in children. However, negative climates had a stronger positive relationship with psychopathology in comparison to positive climates’ negative relationship (Lubbe & Belle, 2013). This further reinforces the impact of fear. Fear’s purpose is to alert a person to a potential threat in the environment that could affect their physical or social wellbeing (Power, 2016). This suggests that even if there is no “real threat” to an employee’s physical health, exposure to a fearful organizational climate and a constant state of fear can itself have an impact on an employee’s wellbeing. This could be exacerbated in sport because of the extended hours exposed to the environment, thus explaining the similarities between the affective climate of a family on a child’s wellbeing and the work climate within sport on employees’ wellbeing.

While this study found a direct relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation and organizational climate as well as organizational climate and employee wellbeing; there was not a direct relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation and employee wellbeing. This relationship was fully mediated through organizational climate, thus suggesting that the organizational climate may have the greatest impact on employee wellbeing. Additionally, this suggests that the emotional dysregulation of one person (even in a position of authority) may not have the ability to directly impact the wellbeing of an employee and monopolize their perception of the workplace climate. Therefore, the employee may seek other resources to buffer the supervisor’s emotional dysregulation (i.e., lean into relationships with coworkers). For example, perceptions of psychological safety or a climate of fear should be fairly consistent and include observations and perceptions of not only a supervisor, but also different members of the organization, as well as policies and procedures. These perceptions will have a daily influence on how an employee “shows up” and feels within their workspace thus directly influencing their wellbeing. However, the supervisor, and their emotional regulation (or dysregulation), is only one factor contributing to the emergent organizational climate.

Additionally, the supervisor and employee may have more limited direct interactions and an employee may have consistent interactions with coworkers which could further point to the lack of a direct relationship between supervisor emotional regulation and employee wellbeing. Further, sport has relatively normative and consistent turnover within the industry (Shiperd et al., 2019). Therefore, if a sport employee works with a supervisor who has low levels of emotional regulation, they may not internalize this experience to the point of diminished wellbeing because they may not see this relationship as long-term (i.e., they expect either themselves or the supervisor to turnover).

Further, it is important to recognize that an organizational climate occurs along a continuum, and it is not either psychologically safe or a climate of fear. Rather, these are opposite ends of the spectrum and the organizational climate could emerge closer to one end of the continuum than the other with various other emergent organizational climates in between.

These findings demonstrate the importance of organizational climate and its direct impact on employee wellbeing. As such, organizational climate should remain a key consideration for sport organizations as they seek competitive advantage and ways to enhance employee wellbeing.

Practical Implications

This study suggests that when a supervisor has a limited ability to regulate their emotions, it can contribute to cultivating a fearful organizational climate and negatively impact employee wellbeing. While cultivating an organizational climate riddled with fear may establish a superficial sense of control, the consequences (i.e., decreased productivity, increased turnover, bad employee morale) are likely counter to the intended outcomes and can impact the sustainability of the organization as well as the functionality of relationships within the organization. Therefore, emotional regulation is an important mechanism within sport supervision and can be used to impact the organizational climate and thereby the wellbeing of employees. However, because emotional dysregulation has been championed (i.e., fans cheering when a coach is thrown out of a game for yelling at a referee) within sport, this skill may not be as intuitive within collegiate sport employees and demands attention during professional development. Additionally, emotional dysregulation, a potential conduit for abusive supervision, should continue to be examined and eradicated from sport to begin to cultivate a new normal within the sport culture that champions emotional regulation of its supervisors. This will not only create desirable organizational and team climates (i.e., psychological safety) but also impact the wellbeing of employees which will likely lead to increased organizational productivity and retention of employees. This is particularly relevant because of the heightened turnover rate within collegiate athletics compared to other industries. Recent research demonstrated that Division I athletic departments have a 48% turnover rate over a two-year period (Huml & Taylor, 2022). This is double the turnover rate within corporate America and higher education outside of athletics (Huml & Taylor, 2022). Huml and Taylor (2022) concluded that these findings demonstrate the “arduous college sport working conditions” (para 9). Thus, the demands of working in collegiate athletics are well documented and are clearly impacting the sustainability of this career path for employees. Therefore, these results suggest that organizations should use their organizational climate as a protective factor for employee wellbeing, thus likely impacting the longevity of an employee’s relationship with the organization and the collegiate athletics industry. Further, while various aspects of collegiate athletics may seem “unchangeable” such as working nights and weekends, organizations should

seek to focus on what they can control to bolster employee wellbeing and ultimately the athletic department's wellbeing by cultivating psychologically safe organizational climates.

While many organizations provide external resources to enhance employee wellbeing (i.e., corporate wellness programs, subsidized gym memberships), it is also important to consider the climate within the actual workplace. As such, wellbeing should not only be an external factor for organizations (i.e., encourage employee wellbeing outside of the workplace), but rather an internal consideration combined with external considerations. Therefore, while employee wellbeing is not necessarily within the control of an employer, it is the organization's responsibility to provide both internal and external resources for employees to thrive. When considering mechanisms for bolstering employee wellbeing, organizations should first consider internal options which are directly within their control. This can include intentional education and training for supervisors to better understand how to cultivate psychologically safe climates (and mitigate a climate of fear) and opportunities for employees to provide periodic feedback on their perceptions of the organizational climate to recalibrate when necessary. This should work in conjunction with external resources such as employee assistance programs (i.e., access to mental health counselors) rather than solely relying on external resources and expecting employees to engage with these resources voluntarily.

Limitations and Future Directions

Future research should continue to explore the relationship between a supervisor's emotional regulation, emergent organizational climates, and employee wellbeing. A potential moderating factor to explore is the amount of time an employee spends with the supervisor. Some employees may have a more distant relationship with the supervisor (i.e., athletic director and head coach) while others may have a more intimate relationship with the supervisor (i.e., head coach and assistant coach), and the proximity of this relationship may moderate the impact of supervisor emotional regulation on employee wellbeing.

Another potential factor to explore is the consistency of the supervisor's behavior and its impact on employee wellbeing. Research suggests that inconsistency in behavior can serve as a primary stressor for subordinates (Saxe, Smith, et al., 2022). Therefore, future research is necessary to explore how consistency or inconsistency of supervisor behavior (whether positive or negative) within the sports workplace acts as a stressor and impacts employee wellbeing.

Additionally, while perceived supervisor emotional regulation did not have a direct impact on employee wellbeing, other sources of stress may directly affect employee wellbeing. Thus, the ASSET model provides other sources of stress (i.e., stress that is intrinsic to the job, stress from an employee's role in the organization, stress from career development, stress created by relationships at work, and stress caused by organizational structure and climate) that should continue to be examined in relation to employee wellbeing within sport contexts. This would provide further insight into specific stressors within sport contexts that significantly detract from employee wellbeing, thus providing practical implications for the field.

Although this study contributes to the field of sport management both theoretically and practically, there are certain limitations that deserve acknowledgement. First, the study explored a specific context within the sport industry (i.e., college sport), limiting the generalizability of the findings to the entire sport industry. Therefore, future research should examine these variables within other areas such as youth sport and professional sport. Further, the current study utilized a single, cross section data collection. Though a large, representative sample was secured, the cross sectional nature of data collection limits whether the results are representative of a constantly changing field such as collegiate sport. Additionally, the sample lacked racial and

ethnic diversity, and although the sample reflected the overall population, it is important to acknowledge that employees from historically marginalized groups likely have different experiences than their White counterparts. Therefore, future research should specifically explore the experiences of employees from historically marginalized groups to further understand their experiences of stressors within the sports workplace and its impact on wellbeing.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the burgeoning line of research regarding emotional regulation of persons in a position of authority and its impact on the organizational climate and employee wellbeing. The findings suggest a significant direct, negative relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation and organizational climate and a significant direct, negative relationship between organizational climate and employee wellbeing. However, there was not a direct relationship between perceived supervisor emotional regulation and employee wellbeing. Thus, demonstrating the importance of organizational climate to impact employee wellbeing, as illustrated by the fully mediated relationship. Additionally, the findings demonstrated the practical importance of professional development surrounding managing emotions in the workplace. Further, the findings offer organizational climate (i.e., specifically psychologically safe organizational climates) as a potential protective factor for employee wellbeing. Future research is needed to fully understand specific emotional expressions of supervisors that contribute to cultivating these emergent climates.

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