

Coaching style, basic needs and athletes motivation

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Background

• Athletes, especially elite athlete, need beyond their physical abilities, mental abilities as well, in order to face the different challenges they encounter. Therefore, coaches and athletes as one, acknowledge the importance of motivation in sports. The research literature in different sports points to the coach, specifically his coaching style as a central factor influencing the athlete's motivation, persistence and functioning (Pelletier, Fortier, Vallerand, & Briere, 2001).

• A central part of the self determination theory is the distinction between different coaching styles, especially between autonomy supportive versus controlling or autonomy frustrating coaching style (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Thogersen-Ntoumani, 2010). Autonomy supportive is characterised by the coach acknowledges the athletes feelings and point of view, and provides the athletes with opportunities for decision making and voice their opinions (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). On the other hand, controlling or autonomy frustrating coaching style is characterised by the coach threatening and intimidating his athletes by verbal abuse and punishment, exaggerated personal control, and use of pressure in order to make the athletes behave and think in certain ways (Bartholomew et al., 2010).

• As the theory distinguishes between the two aspects of coaching styles, so does it defines two general motivational orientations and different performance levels that derive from acting in an autonomy supportive or frustrating environment. Specifically, the theory states that autonomy supportive is correlated with autonomous motivation (which includes aspects of interest and recognition of the importance of the activity) and improved functioning. Controlling style is correlated with controlled motivation (that includes aspects of coercion and pressure).

• The current study shed light on the relationship between the coaching style of the coach to the motivation and positive and negative outcomes of female athletes in team sports.

Objectives

Hypotheses:

1. to what extent autonomy supportive or controlling coaching style predicts motivation and functioning of professional female athletes.
2. (2+3) the research examined the possibility that satisfaction of the three psychological basic needs (autonomy, relatedness, competence) can mediate the relationship between coaching style and the motivation and functioning of the female athletes.

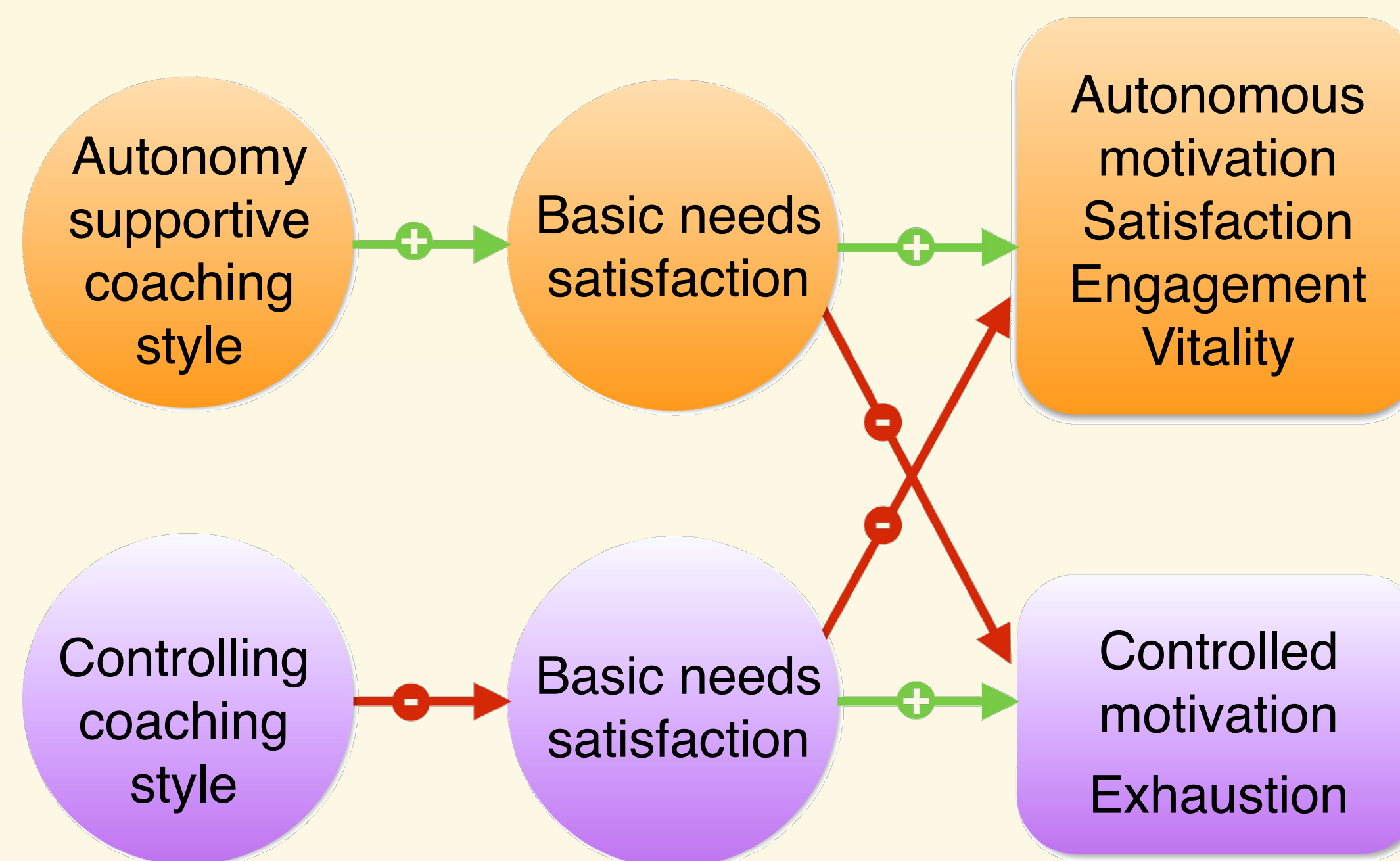


Figure 1- a theoretical model of basic need satisfaction level as a mediating variable between coaching style to basketball players outcomes.

Measures and methods

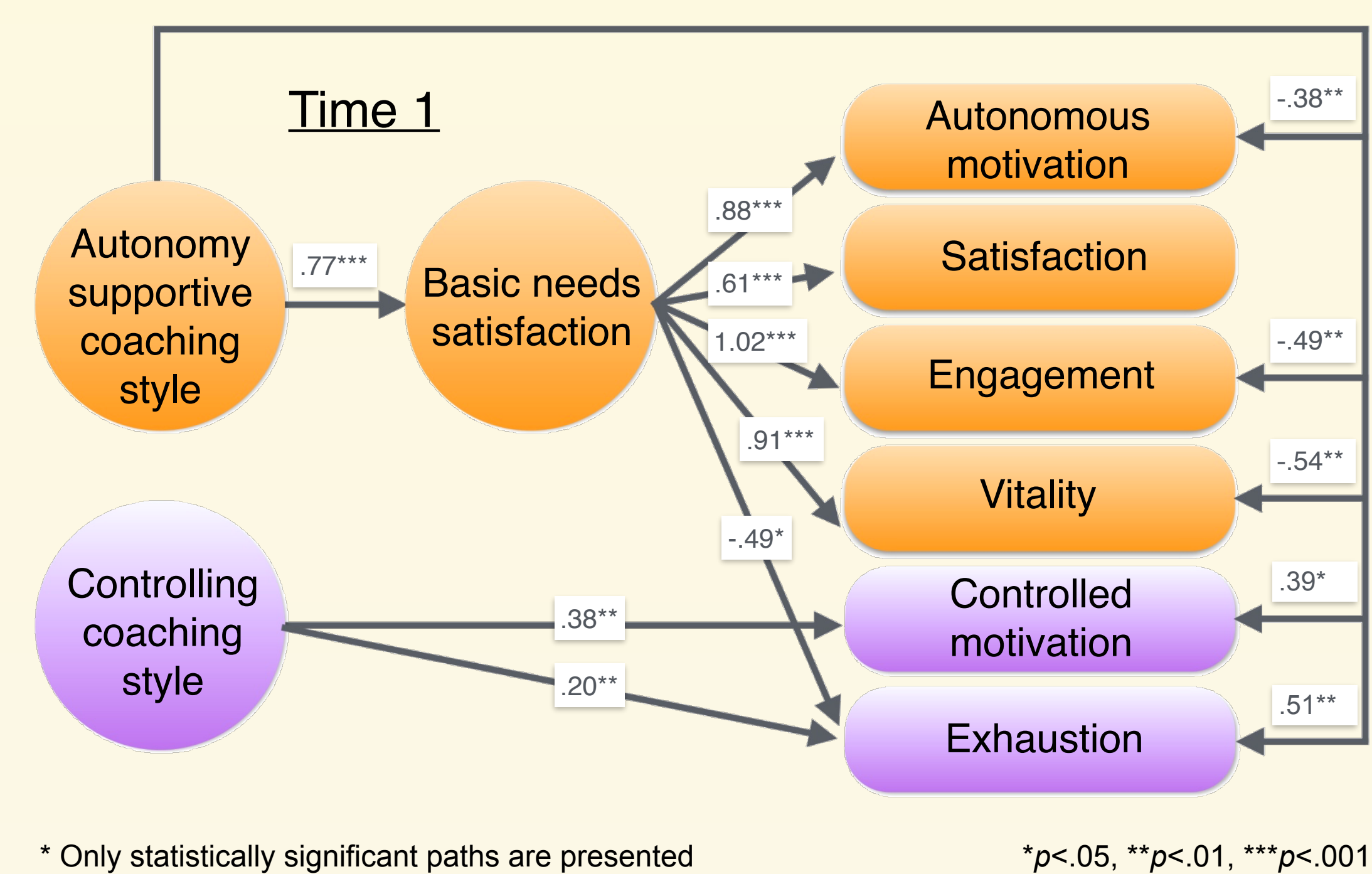
- Professional female basketball players(N=96) from 9 teams completed questionnaires which evaluate the coaches coaching style (autonomy supportive/controlling), basic needs satisfaction level, autonomous motivation level, controlled motivation level, satisfaction, vitality, engagement, and exhaustion. The questionnaires were distributed on two occasions (longitudinal study), in the beginning and towards the end of the season (22% dropout rate), in order to examine whether there is an effect over time of the coaching style on the research outcomes in order to establish causal aspects on the relationships between the research variables.

• Statistical tests-

1. The relationships between the research variables using Pearson correlation and regression tests.
2. The mediation model was tested according to the guidelines suggested by Hayes (2013), The significance of the mediating effect was examined using the Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) and the bootstrapping test (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

Results

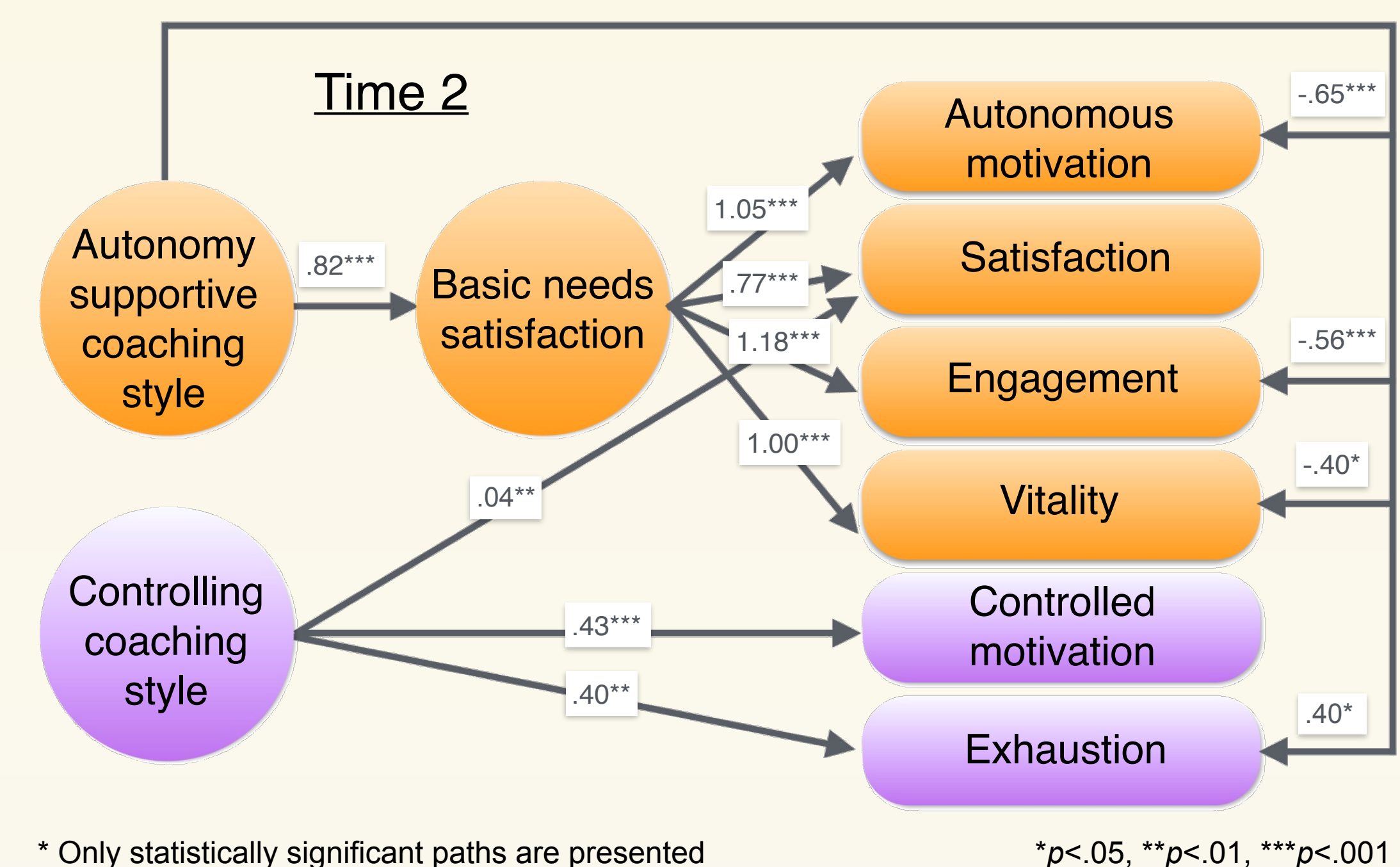
- The research findings partially supported the hypotheses(view figure 2 and 3). Autonomy supportive coaching style predicted positive outcomes, while controlling coaching style was related with controlled motivation.
- The mediation model was tested according to the guidelines suggested by Hayes (2013), Basic needs satisfaction mediated the relationship between autonomy supportive coaching style and autonomous motivation and improved functioning.
- No mediating effect was found for controlling style
- Another significant finding- autonomy supportive coaching style has a small negative correlation to controlling coaching style.



* Only statistically significant paths are presented

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Figure 2- basic needs satisfaction level as a mediator variable between autonomy supportive and controlling coaching style and outcomes of female basketball players at time 1: standardised path coefficients.



* Only statistically significant paths are presented

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Figure 3- basic needs satisfaction level as a mediator variable between autonomy supportive and controlling coaching style and outcomes of female basketball players at time 2: standardised path coefficients.

Discussion

- The findings of the study are consistent with past research that dealt with amateur or individual sports. The study was the first one to replicate these results in a professional team setting. More specifically since only a few studies examined the mediating role of basic needs satisfaction in the relationship between coaching style and athletes functioning and motivation. This study adds to the literature supporting the importance of basic need satisfaction and coaching style in sports.
- Another important finding is the relationship between the two coaching styles, a small negative correlation which indicates that the two styles are not opposites but can exist simultaneously. This is consistent with the literature in sports, in other areas such as parenting and education, the two styles were found to be opposites.

Conclusion

The current study's findings have significant implications:

1. it is one of the first studies that demonstrate a self determined theory based model in team sports.
2. the finding clearly demonstrate the advantages of autonomy-supportive coaching style versus controlling coaching style in aspects of motivation and functioning of professional female athletes.
3. since coaching style is something that can be shaped and molded, the finding open a hatch to the development and application of autonomy centered interventions among coaches.

References

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