

INDICATORS OF BURNOUT IN COLLEGE ATHLETES: PROPORTION COMPARISONS BY SEX AND SPORT TYPE



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ABSTRACT:

PURPOSE: To describe the proportion of burnout levels in college athletes employing a psychological instrument and compare them by sport type and sex.

METHODS: 236 college athletes from a high performance program (122 from individual sports and 124 from team sports and; 76 women and 160 men) were evaluated. Trained psychologists applied the Sport Burnout Inventory-Reviewed (IBD-R, in Spanish) conformed by 19 items that evaluate 3 Burnout dimensions in athletes: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (D) and Reduced Personal Realization (RPR); finally, it brings to a Total Burnout Qualification, which let the evaluator know the burnout level in the evaluated subject. The results were classified in four categories: "Low Risk" (≤50), "Moderated Risk" (≥51<60), "High Risk" (≥61<70) and "With Burnout"(>70). The frequencies and proportion were counted and compared by sport type and sex.

RESULTS: Team Sports showed lower proportion of "Low Risk" to suffer Burnout in the RPR factor than individual sports (p=0.03). As well, a trend for higher proportion of "With Burnout" in EE was observed for individual than team sports (p=0.06). Conversely, a trend for higher proportion of "Moderated Risk" in RPR was observed for team than individual sports (p=0.06). On the other hand, statically significant differences were found in three factors between females and males. Males showed higher prevalence of "Low Risk" in EE compared to females (p=0.006), also females presented higher proportion of "Moderated Risk" to suffer Burnout in the EE indicator than males (p=0.02). In the D factor, males reported a higher proportion of "High Risk" to suffer Burnout than females (p=0.03).

CONCLUSIONS: The results showed that both individual sports and female athletes presented higher proportions of risk to suffer Burnout than team sports and male athletes, respectively. However, a deeper evaluation is suggested to confirm the data and make a Burnout profile in college athletes.

INTRODUCTION

Raedke & Smith (2001)¹ defined athlete's burnout as a psychological syndrome characterized by emotional and physical exhaustion, an impersonal attitude toward others, decreased athletic accomplishment, and sport self devaluation². College athletes are intensively under pressure between their academic, personal, and sport issues, which may pose them into a higher risk of burnout. Also, sex and type of sport may be important factors that may lead to higher proportion of college athletes with burnout. In this work, we made an approximation at their clinical status to have a first sight into the burnout incidence in Mexican college athletes. We also sought to determine if there are differences in the proportion of burnout and its related constituents depending to the sex and sport type.

METHODS

Subjects

We evaluated 236 college athletes (160 males, 76 females; 122 for individual sports and 124 for team sports).

Instrument

We used the "Sport Burnout Inventory-Reviewed" conformed by 19 items that evaluate three Burnout dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (D) and Reduced Personal Realization (RPR)²

Punctuation analysis

Results were classified in categories according the severity of the score: "low risk", "moderated risk", "high risk" and "with Burnout" following the criteria proposed by Garcés de los Fayos (2012)²

Statistical analysis

We converted the natural score into T score, following the proposal made by the author's inventory². Then, we compared the proportion of burnout indicators between sport type (team/individual sports) and sex (female/male athletes). The comparisons were made with a Z-test for independent samples, significant differences were considered for a p value <0.05, using the StatsCalc® software for Windows®.

RESULTS

Differences were observed between individual and team sports. Team sports showed lower proportion of "Low Risk" to suffer Burnout in the RPR factor than individual sports (p=0.03). Similarly, a trend for higher proportion of "With Burnout" in EE was observed for individual than team sports (p=0.06). Conversely, a trend for higher proportion of "Moderated Risk" in RPR was observed for team than individual sports (p=0.06)(Table 1).

Talking about the sex comparison (Table 2), females showed higher proportion of "Moderated Risk" to suffer Burnout in the EE indicator than males (p=0.02). In the D factor, males reported a higher proportion of "High Risk" to suffer Burnout than females (p=0.03).

Table 1. Proportion of college athletes with burnout and its indicators analyzed by type of sport.

		Team sno	rts (n 124)		Individual sports (n 122)				
	EE	D D	RPR	BURNOUT	EE	D	RPR	BURNOUT	
Low risk	53.2 (66)	43.6 (54)	54.8 (68) ^a	44.4 (55)	46.4 (52)	48.2 (54)	68.8 (77) ^a	47.3 (53)	
Moderate risk	33.9 (42)	34.7 (42)	31.5 (39) ^b	47.6 (59)	34.8 (39)	29.5 (33)	20.5 (23) ^b	44.6 (50)	
High risk	11.3 (14)	13.7 (17)	8.9 (11)	7.3 (9)	12.5 (14)	14.3 (16)	8.9 (10)	8.0 (9)	
With Burnout	1.6 (2) ^b	8.1 (10)	4.8 (6)	0.8 (1)	6.3 (7) ^b	8.0 (9)	1.8 (2)	0.0 (0)	

Data are expressed as percentage (frequency)

Emotional Exhaustion (EE); Depersonalization (D); Reduced Personal Realization (RPR)

Table 2. Proportion of college athletes with burnout and its indicators analyzed by sex.

		Female	s (n 76)		Males (n 160)				
	EE	D	RPR	BURNOUT	EE	D	RPR	BURNOUT	
Low risk	36.8 (28) ^a	48.7 (37)	65.8 (50)	44.7 (34)	56.3 (90) ^a	44.4 (71)	59.4 (95)	46.3 (74)	
Moderate risk	44.7 (34) ^a	32.9 (25)	27.6 (21)	47.4 (36)	29.4 (47) ^a	31.9 (51)	25.6 (41)	45.6 (73)	
High risk	11.8 (9)	6.6 (5) ^a	5.3 (4)	7.9 (6)	11.9 (19)	17.5 (28) ^a	10.6 (17)	7.5 (12)	
With Burnout	6.6 (5)	11.8 (9)	1.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	2.5 (4)	6.3 (10)	4.4 (7)	0.6 (1)	

Data are expressed as percentage (frequency)

Emotional Exhaustion (EE); Depersonalization (D); Reduced Personal Realization (RPR)

CONCLUSIONS

Most of the Mexican college athletes assessed in this study did not show significant indicators of Burnout syndrome. Their qualifications make us able to determine that the population evaluated is healthy about this theme. However, type of sport and sex may be important risk factors for presenting Burnout in some of its indicators.

However, the Burnout "is a social problem based on forms of social organization that limit the development of identity during youth and prevent young athletes from having meaningful control over their lives"⁴; we actually can observe that there are some interesting differences that invite us to study deeply into the syndrome in our population, since we live in a society that gives increasing importance to athletic programs in Universities and Olympic organization. It seems important to keep on the research of this issue in Mexican athletic population, understanding the importance of Burnout in global public health.

REFERENCES

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²Cox, R. (2009). Sport Psychology (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill Companies.

³De Francisco, C., Garcés, E.J. & Arce, C. (2013). Burnout in athletes: Prevalence of the syndrome through two measures. Cuadernos de Psicología del Deporte, 14, 1, 29-38.

^a Significant differences by sport type (p<0.05)

Trend for differences by sport type (p<0.1)

^a Significant differences by sex (p<0.05)

⁴Coakley, J. (1992). Burnout among adolescent athletes: A personal failure or social problem. Sociology of Sport Journal, 9, 271-285.