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Burnout and Years of Sports Competition: Is There a Correlation?

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Athlete burnout is a phenomenon that has been studied in previous research and is a concern in terms of athlete's health and well-being (Capel, Sisley, & Desertrain, 1987; Harris, 2005; Kelley, Eklund, & Ritter-Taylor, 1999; Kjormo & Halvari, 2006; Raedeke, Warren, & Granzky, 2000). Further, it is assumed by many sport coaches that the longer an athlete competes competitively in a sport, the greater chance for athlete burnout and the potential negative health consequences they could incur.

Purpose: The purpose of the current study was to determine the correlation between years of sport competition and an athlete's level of burnout on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) subscales of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA).

Method: The study was limited female athletes at a Division I institution in the Southeastern United States. Participants for this study were obtained via voluntary participation. The number of female athletes who completed the survey was 99. Athletes who participated were members of the women's basketball, cross country, golf, soccer, softball, track and field, and volleyball teams.

Results: The data was analyzed using Pearson correlations. Each burnout subscale was analyzed separately with years of sport competition. Results found no significant ($p < .05$) correlations between years of sport competition and EE ($p = .038$), DP ($p = .029$), or PA ($p = -.062$).

Conclusion: The current findings indicate that years of sport competition are not correlated with levels of burnout and female Division I collegiate athletes. Much prior research has also examined intensive training and effects on young athletes and concluded that there are concerns about intense training and psychological injury (Maffulli & Pintore, 1990). Therefore, based upon prior research and the results of the current study, future research should continue to study the effects of years of competition and burnout in order to truly understand its effects on athletes.



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Shelley's current position is at the University of South Alabama specializing in teaching graduate and undergraduate Health courses in areas such as Nutrition and Hunger. Since 2009 Dr. Holden has also worked with University of South Alabama athletes and the USA Volleyball Education program in nutrition, hydration, and athletic performance.

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