

## Burnout, Anxiety and Mindfulness in Athletes



### Psychology

**KEYWORDS :** Burnout, anxiety, mindfulness, male and female athletes

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### ABSTRACT

*The objectives of the present study were to find the gender differences in burnout, anxiety and mindfulness in athletes and the correlations between them. One hundred and fifty athletes were selected by convenient sampling method from the Physical Education Departments of three colleges in and around Coimbatore. The sample consisted of 75 male and 75 female athletes in the age group of 18 to 25 years. The entire sample was assessed using Case Study Schedule, Burnout Questionnaire, Manifest Anxiety Inventory and Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale. The results revealed that there was no gender difference in burnout, anxiety and mindfulness in the selected athletes. It was also revealed that for male and female athletes, there was significant positive correlation between burnout and anxiety; negative correlation between burnout and mindfulness; and negative correlation between anxiety and mindfulness.*

### Introduction

Sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels (Council of Europe, 2014). Athletics is related to activities, such as sports, exercises, and games that require physical skill and stamina (Dictionary of the English Language, 2011). Athletic differences in men and women have much to do with innate characteristics determined by genetics determined by genetics and hormones. These include height, weight, muscle mass, body fat and aerobic capacity. As a group, women do not run, jump or swim as fast as men. Women are also prone to certain types of athletic injuries than men (Lee, 2011).

The major factors that influence athletic performance are personality, confidence, ability to cope with anxiety, motivation and training (Hobson, 2009; DeVenio, 1997; Hardy, Jones and Gould, 1996; Orlick and Partington, 1988; Giles, 2001). Impediments to athletic performance are fear of failing, fear of being humiliated, fear of competition and feelings of intimidation, inappropriate aggression, lack of confidence, lack of concentration, lack of assertiveness, burnout and anxiety. Burnout and anxiety were subjected to study in the present research.

Burnout is considered a response by an athlete to chronic stress in which he or she ceases to participate in a previously enjoyable activity, withdrawing from the sport because they perceive it is not possible to meet the physical and psychological demands of the sport. Burnout is considered by experts to be part of a spectrum of conditions that includes over reaching and over training syndrome (Bozra and Zdrehus, 2013).

Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure (American Psychological Association, 2015). Anxiety is generally regarded as having a set of component parts that include cognitive functioning, physiological, emotional, and behavioural facets (McCanny, 2011).

Along with other techniques, improving mindfulness seems to be helping in managing anxiety and avoiding burnout in careers that are stressful. Mindfulness can be defined as, "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgemental" (Jon KabatZinn, 2008). Today, a sport psychologist's role is more accepted as a part of the regular coaching staff for teams and for teams and for the individual athletes. The roles of sports psychologists are numerous, but they primarily teach athletes mental game skills to improve their performance and learning (Gill, 2013).

### Method

#### Sample

From Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidhyalaya Maruthi College of Physical Education, Periyanyakpanpalayam, Coimbatore, Bharathiar University, Maruthamalai Road, Coimbatore and Avinashilingam Institute for Homescience and Higher Education for Women, T.V.S, Coimbatore, 150 athletes (75 male and 75 female) were selected as the sample of the study. They were in the age range of 18 to 25 years. The study employed convenient sampling technique.

#### Tools

- Adult Consent Form was used to obtain consent from the athletes to participate in the study.
- Case Study Schedule was used to collect the demographic data of the sample.
- Burnout Questionnaire (Post, 1981). It consisted of 28 items with 6 point rating scale.
- Manifest Anxiety Inventory (Hemalatha Natesan and Nandini Menon, 2001). This inventory consisted of 40 statements with "Yes" or "No" options. The reliability and validity values are .89 and .93 respectively.
- Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (Brown and Ryan, 2003). This scale consisted of 15 items with 6 point rating scale. The reliability and validity values are .89 and -.93 respectively.

### Procedure

The Research Proposal submitted by the researcher was subjected to perusal by the Institutional Ethical Committee and approval was granted (Approval No. AUW/IHEC-14-15/XMT-73) to conduct the study. A good rapport was built with the athletes and instructions were given regarding the questionnaires. The athletes expressed their consent to participate in the study by signing in the Adult Consent Form. Following that they completed the Burnout Questionnaire, Manifest Anxiety Inventory and Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale.

### Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Showing the Level of Burnout of Athletes**

N=150

Burnout	Male		Female	
	n	Percentage (%)	n	Percentage(%)
(Very low) 28-37	1	1	1	1
(Low) 38-50	7	9	6	8
(Moderate) 51-70	40	53	44	59
(High) 71-90	25	33	22	29
(Very high) 90-140	2	3	2	3

Percentage are rounded off

Table 1 shows the level of burnout of the sample. Burnout is considered a response by an athlete to chronic stress in which he or she ceases to participate in a previously enjoyable activity, withdrawing from the sport because they perceive it is not possible to meet the physical and psychological demands of the sport (Stratus, 2014). Majority (89% of male and 71%) of the participants had moderate to high level of burnout.

**Table 2: Showing the Level of Anxiety of Athletes**

N=150

Anxiety	Male		Female	
	n	Percentage (%)	N	Percentage (%)
(Very low) 0	4	5	13	17
(Low) 1-8	32	43	23	31
(Moderate) 9-16	28	37	30	40
(High) 17-24	10	13	7	9
(Veryhigh) 25-40	1	1	2	3

Percentage are rounded off

Table 2 shows the level of anxiety of the sample. Majority (86%) of male athletes have low to moderate level of burnout. Majority (88%) of female athletes have very low to moderate level of anxiety. The athletes reported that they experienced increased anxiety before attending the matches and tournaments which can be referred as a performance anxiety, which is more or less like a test anxiety. They also reported that when they practiced less, before any tournament, they experienced high level of anxiety. The study stated below shows the impact of anxiety on athletes.

A study examined on, "Impact of Identity on Anxiety in Athletes", by Masten, Faganel and Tusak (2006) involved 410 athletes (67.4% male and 30% female). The Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) and STAI-X1 and STAI-X2 were applied. It was found that there was a similar interconnection between athletic identity and both types of anxiety. Those athletes with a higher negative affectivity and world-class athletes have a higher level of both trait and state anxiety than the other categories of athletes. Male athletes had a lower state and trait anxiety. An increase of self-identity decreased the level of trait anxiety.

**Table 3: Showing the Level of Mindfulness of Athletes**

Mindfulness	Male		Female	
	n	Percentage (%)	n	Percentage (%)
(Very low) 1-18	0	0	0	0
(Low) 19-36	3	4	3	4
(Moderate) 37-54	25	33	16	21
(High) 55-72	33	44	44	59
(Very high) 73-90	14	19	12	16

N=150

Percentage are rounded off

Kaufman, Glass, and Arnkoff (2009) examined, "The Evaluation of Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement (MSPE): A New Approach to Promote Flow in Athletes". The study assessed how Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement (MSPE), a new 4-week program, affected flow states, performance, and psychological characteristics of 11 archers and 21 golfers from the community. Participants completed trait measures of anxiety, perfectionism, thought disruption, confidence, mindfulness, and flow. They additionally provided data on their performances and state levels of mindfulness and flow. Analyses revealed that some significant changes in dimensions of the trait variables occurred during the training. Levels of state flow attained by the athletes also increased between the first and final sessions. The findings suggested that MSPE is a promising intervention to enhance flow, mindfulness, and aspects of sport confidence.

It is interesting to see that most of (96%) the athletes have mod-

erate to high level of mindfulness. High level of mindfulness can help the athletes to perform more efficiently in the tracks and fields. Mindfulness meditation is one of the most popular techniques which is been widely used to help the athletes to reduce their stress levels and to improve their concentration levels. Athletes can try to maintain their mindfulness by practising mindfulness meditation.

**Table 4: Showing the Significant Difference in Burnout between Male and Female Athletes**

Burnout	Sum of squares	DF	Mean squares	F	P
Between	6.934	1	6.934	0.044	0.834
Within	23,372.967	148	157.925		
Total	23,375.900	149			

Table 4 shows the gender comparison in burnout in athletes, obtained using the ANOVA. The P value of 0.834 indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in male and female burnout of the present study. This could be due to the fact that both men and women receive same level of opportunities and importance in sports in the recent years and the ability to withstand the problems that occurs in the tracks and fields are more or less same in both male and female athletes. Burnout is a state of emotional exhaustion of an individual, which is more psychological in nature. Though men are considered to be physically stronger than women, it may not guarantee a condition where men experience burnout and women do not experience burnout. Several other reasons like family back ground, the way they are brought up by their parents and other environmental factors can also contribute for the similarities in the level of burnout in athletes.

**Table 5: Showing Significant Difference in Anxiety between Male and Female Athletes**

Anxiety	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	P
Between	29.704	1	29.704	0.614	0.435
Within	7,165.220	148	48.414		
Total	7,194.924	149			

Table 5 shows the gender comparison of anxiety in athletes, obtained using the ANOVA. The P value of 0.435 indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in male and female anxiety in the present study. Anxiety is common in both male and female athletes. One of the common reasons for being anxious and not performing well in a sport and being excited and performing well in front of an audience explain the social facilitation theory. When athletes are well practised, the presence of the audience improves performance; when athletes are not confident and lack practice, the presence of audience makes them anxious resulting in poor performance. Social facilitation can be defined as an improvement in performance produced by the mere presence of others. It seems that, the extent of social facilitation or inhibition depends upon the nature of the interaction between the task and the performer. In some cases the presence of co-actors/audience improved the quality of performance but in others it is impaired the quality (Dashiehl, 1935). The table reveals that there is no gender difference in experiencing anxiety.

**Table 6: Showing Significant Difference in Mindfulness between Male and Female Athletes**

Mindfulness	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F	P
Between	257.415	1	257.415	1.771	0.185
Within	21,514.649	148	145.369		
Total	21,772.064	149			

Table 6 shows the gender comparison in mindfulness in athletes, obtained using the ANOVA. The P value of 0.185 indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in male and female mindfulness of the present study. The reasons for most of the athletes being mindful could be due to fact that they are more focused towards their work and they are attending state level, national level and international level of tournaments. This brings them more attention and dedication towards their work.

**Table 7: Showing the Correlation between Burnout, Anxiety and Mindfulness in Male Athletes**

		Burnout	Anxiety	Mindfulness
Burnout	Pearson Correlation	1	.472(**)	-.532(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
	N	75	75	75
Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.472(**)	1	-.518(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
	N	75	75	75
Mindfulness	Pearson Correlation	-.532(**)	-.518(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
	N	75	75	75

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 indicates that there is a negative correlation between mindfulness and burnout; negative correlation between anxiety and mindfulness; positive correlation between burnout and anxiety in male athletes.

**Table 8: Showing the Correlation between Burnout, Anxiety and Mindfulness in Female Athletes**

		Burnout	Anxiety	Mindfulness
Burnout	Pearson correlation	1	.451(**)	-.275(*)
	sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.017
	N	75	75	75
Anxiety	Pearson correlation	.451(**)	1	-.261(*)
	sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.024
	N	75	75	75
Mindfulness	Pearson correlation	-.275(*)	-.261(*)	1
	sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.024	.
	N	75	75	75

\*\* correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 8 indicates that there is a negative correlation between mindfulness and burnout; negative correlation between anxiety and mindfulness; positive correlation between burnout and anxiety in female athletes.

## Conclusion

The results of the study indicated that there are no statistically significant differences in male and female burnout, anxiety and mindfulness. In male and female athletes, there is a positive correlation between burnout and anxiety; negative correlation between burnout and mindfulness and anxiety and mindfulness. Further indepth research in this area and evolving intervention packages to deal with burnout and anxiety are recommended.

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