

Title: Development of School and Sport Burnout in Adolescent Student-Athletes: A Longitudinal Mixed-Methods Study

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Year: 2018

Keywords: School and sport burnout, adolescent student-athletes

Sports: Individual and team sports

Journal: Journal of Research on Adolescence

Main theme: School and Sport burnout

Secondary themes: Dual career athletes, upper secondary school, adolescent athletes

Aims: The aim of this study was to examine the development of school and sport burnout over the first year of upper secondary school in student-athletes.

Method: This study is based on data collected as part of an ongoing longitudinal mixed-methods study examining the risk and resilience factors underpinning the development of a dual career pathway among talented young athletes in Finland. The sample consisted of 391 athletes, aged 15-16 years from six upper secondary sport schools, who first completed the multi-section questionnaire at the beginning of their freshman year and then completed it again 6 month later at the end of the school year. Participants were from team and individual sports, with all participants reporting that they had competed at least at a regional level for an average of 7 years. 60% of athletes expected to compete at either the Olympic Games or the relevant World Championships in the future. The qualitative sample consisted of 17 elite junior athletes who competed at international level.

Results: The questionnaire based data were analysed with growth mixture modelling and four burnout profiles were identified among student-athletes. The groups were labelled as (1) *Well-functioning*, (2) *Non-risk*, (3) *Developed burnout*, and (4) *Burnout risk*. The largest profile was the *non-risk* group (42.1%), in which participants showed a below average level

of sport burnout symptoms, as well as no change in the symptoms across the school year. The level of school burnout in this group was also below average and did not change over time. The second largest group (32.5%) was the *burnout risk* group. In this group, the adolescents showed a relatively high level of symptoms of sport burnout, although they experienced a significant decrease in their symptoms over time. They also showed relatively high level of school burnout symptoms which did not change over time. From the four burnout profiles, these two profiles (non-risk and burnout risk) were typical of the interviewed subsample of elite athletes. The developed burnout profile was shown by 12.8% of the student-athletes; and the well-functioning profile was shown by 12.2% of student-athletes. Within the interview data set, there were nine adolescent athletes with a burnout risk profile and seven with a non-risk profile. Results revealed that the at-risk athletes' accounts were dominated by themes related to demands, which consisted of school-related stress, inadequate recovery, disempowering coaching, and a limited social life outside of sport and school. The adolescents in the non-risk group mainly reported aspects associated with resources, including intrinsic motivation for sport, social support, and adaptability.

The results indicate that burnout becomes more generalised over time, rather than being context-specific. Elite athletes who are at risk of burnout might suffer particularly from school burnout symptoms, which then spill over into the sport context. The findings of this study may be used by upper secondary sport schools as preliminary insights into the demands and resources faced by elite student athletes. It could be beneficial to think about how best to offer student-athletes ongoing social support at school in order to enhance their wellbeing. Courses that teach student-athletes stress and time management skills are recommended and it may prove beneficial to conduct seasonal screenings for student-athletes for sport and school burnout.



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