

Effects of Overtraining in Female Collegiate Athletes

Authors : Morgan Dombroski, Alexis Hartman

Abstract : Purpose: The present study aimed to explore factors related to overtraining within a female collegiate sample by analyzing the aftereffects of overtraining on athletes' physical and emotional well-being. Methods: 51 female collegiate athletes participated in a de-identified survey to assess factors related to overtraining. All survey questions were derived from the Recovery-Stress Questionnaire. Descriptive and bivariate correlations were conducted to test for significant factors related to the athletes' physical and emotional well-being relating to sports engagement. Results: Descriptive statistics indicated: 80.4% of athletes reported feeling tired from sport-related work, 72.5% reported parts of their body were aching, 47.1% reported feeling emotionally drained, and 37.3% reported feeling burnt out by sport. These findings were consistent with bivariate correlations, which yielded statistically significant findings between physical fatigue and emotional distress. Discussion: In a general sense, athletes increase their training to maximize their performance. The current study aimed to analyze how this training process can result in overtraining of female collegiate athletes, which in turn may negatively impact their physical and emotional functioning. Overtraining syndrome can occur as a maladaptive response to excessive exercise and inappropriate rest caused by systemic inflammation, which negatively affects the central nervous system. The physical manifestations of overtraining can then lead to depressed mood, fatigue, and neurohormonal changes in athletes. To remain competitive and high performing in sports, athletes partaking in excessive training can result in overtraining syndrome, athlete burnout, and compulsive exercise. Additionally, overtrained athletes were defined by displaying high levels of perfectionism, maladaptive coping, and training distress. The current study supported these findings, which yielded a strong correlation between physical and emotional functioning in the context of overtraining in sports. All in all, the environment revolving around sports and the intensity of training can be extremely stressful for athletes. There is a need to monitor athletes' subjective responses to training, which will allow for early identification of at-risk athletes giving clinicians various opportunities to reduce the negative consequences of overtraining. By better understanding symptoms of emotional and physical fatigue, collegiate sports can become more aware of overtraining symptoms to prevent further detriment to female athletes' overall well-being.

Keywords : burnout, emotionally drained, overtraining, performance, well-being

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