

Social-Professional Factors and Predominance of Burnout Syndrome in Tunisian Male Soccer Players

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Abstract: *The objective of this study was to evaluate the effects of certain social-professional factors on the burnout syndrome development among 132 Tunisian male soccer players (24.34 ± 5.55 years, 70.42 ± 7.9 kg and 1.76 ± 0.06 cm) belonging to the Tunisian Soccer League First Division. Our results have shown that Tunisian male soccer players are affected by burnout syndrome and the factors 'Player team integration', 'Player coach relationship', 'Player age', 'Player material conditions', 'Player seniority' significantly promote its trigger. These factors appear to be slightly different from those reported in other study carried out in United Kingdom on professional soccer players of the first division which specified that 'Player age', 'Player education level', 'Player physical condition', 'Player marital status', 'Player position' and 'Player seniority' are the main factors triggering burnout. The manifestation of the burnout in our study seems to be particularly the result of its three components' development, such as the emotional exhaustion, the dehumanization and the reduced personal accomplishment.*

Keywords: *Burnout; Social-professional factors; soccer players.*

I. Introduction

Nowadays, different pressures experienced by the elite athletes during their practice are such that they have a physical, mental and emotional total commitment. Increasing pressure from coaches, executives, families, financial and media lead the elite athlete to a greater risk of experiencing, higher states of psychological fatigue, a progressive disgust, loss interest and motivation for sport etc., which may be finalized by a brutal and negative abandonment of the practice (Miller *et al.*, 1990; Hentati *et al.*, 2014).

Burnout is a clinical and psychopathological suffering increasingly evoked in our society. It is originally described as a reduction of resources, mental and physical progressively leading to professional and personal problems (Freudenberger *et al.*, 1974). In addition, personal expectations and needs of individuals influence their occupational performances and daily lives. Burnout syndrome, which appears as the indicator of emotional, mental and physical weariness in individuals, has continued to be an important topic since it was revealed in the 1970's (Laes and Laes, 2001; Pines and Nunes, 2003). The expression of burnout was firstly used by a psychiatrist, Freudenberger. In the following years, it was also used by Maslach (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). He defined burnout as the failure, and exhaustion of the person as a result of over-demand on energy, power and resources (Freudenberger, 1974). It is suggested that burnout is not a phenomenon restricted to certain types of jobs and burnout levels can be determined for all groups of jobs (Pines *et al.*, 1981; Pines and Aronson, 1988). Early research on burnout focused on people with different professions (Maslach, 1982). But Pines (1993) expanded the concept of burnout and suggested that there is a risk of burnout in any situation where there is high for achievement motivation.

The burnout syndrome currently refers to a three-dimensional syndrome composed by an emotional exhaustion sense, a form of relational divestment-disengagement or depersonalization and finally a reduction sense of accomplishment or in the self-efficacy (Maslach and Schaufeli, 1993). Emotional exhaustion is characterized by a feeling of lack of energy and inability to provide assistance to others. The divestment resulted in a negative attitude towards others and detached progressing to a reification of the other. The third dimension of burnout reflects a decrease in the sense of accomplishment, the self-realization or the sense of personal and professional effectiveness. The individual will be a particularly negative and demeaning view of most of its achievements. This loss of confidence is associated with depression (Ahola *et al.*, 2005). The model of the general adaptation syndrome describes three phases following exposure to stressors, namely, i.e the alarm, resistance and exhaustion. This model postulates a causal chain in which the experience of stress contributes to the burnout etiology. Generally refers to burnout after exposure to professional stress during periods ranging from one to five years (Canouï, 2001).

Soccer is the most popular game in the world. FIFA lists 270 million practitioners, account 301,000 clubs, and 38,287,000 licensees of which 113,000 professional players. Soccer has the status of number one sport in most countries. Soccer has the status of number one sport in most countries. Some continents such as Africa, South America and Europe are even almost entirely dominated by this discipline. Soccer is a collective sport between two teams of eleven players on a field in a stadium. The objective of each course is to put a spherical ball into the goal without using arms, and do it more often than the other team (Guttman, 1993; Dunning, 1999). However, the mood of the players in this discipline, like all other professions, is often affected by social-professional factors such as age, education level, physical conditions, marital status, soccer seniority and soccer player position that can considerably influence the performance (Gumusdag *et al.*, 2013).

The objective of this study was to evaluate the effects of certain socio-professional factors on the development of burnout syndrome in Tunisian male soccer players.

II. Materials and methods

Soccer players

This study was conducted on 132 Tunisian male soccer players (24.34 ± 5.55 years, 70.42 ± 7.9 kg and 1.76 ± 0.06 cm) belonging to the Tunisian Soccer League First Division. Participation in this study was voluntary, anonymous and confidential.

Burnout dimensions assessment

We have evaluated the burnout in the Tunisian male soccer players by referring to the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) questionnaire developed by Maslach (1996). This test evaluates the burnout through its three components such as emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DEP) and the reduced personal accomplishment (RPA). The questionnaire consists of 22 items. Subscales of burnout respond to the feelings of emotional exhaustion, dehumanization and reduce personal accomplishment. Indeed, each burnout dimension is the result of the addition of scores in a series of data items (Maslach *et al.*, 1996). Each item is assessed according to the scale of Likert scale graduated from 0 to 6 (Likert, 1932). Thus, social-professional factors as 'Player team integration', 'Player coach relationship', 'Player age', 'Player marital status', 'Player material conditions', 'Player seniority' and 'Player position' were considered in our study.

Maslach questionnaire validation

Before the start of the actual study, a preliminary test was carried out on sixty soccer players fairly choose from the three afore mentioned teams; this to test the psychometric quality of the Maslach questionnaire used to ensure that it is understandable and is also adapted to the Tunisian soccer players' context. Thus, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed (Kaiser, 1958).

Data analysis

The data were analysed by the SAS (Statistical Analysis System) to estimate the contribution part of regressors such as 'Player team integration', 'Player coach relationship', 'Player age', 'Player marital status', 'Player material conditions', 'Player seniority' and 'Player position' in the explanation of burnout syndrome of the soccer players through its three components, i.e. emotional exhaustion, the dehumanization of the relationship and the reduced personal accomplishment. We specify that the variables to explain that the burnout components are quantitative. However, the explanatory variables are qualitative, i.e. dichotomous or categorical. To do this, we conducted a regression analysis by the ANOVA procedure of the SAS library (SAS Institute, 1984). This method can explain the part of the contribution of regressors in explaining of the burnout variance. However, it does not specify the sign and magnitude of the influence of independent variables.

III. Results

The psychometric test has been validated with sixty soccer players of the Tunisian Soccer League First Division. The internal consistencies, Cronbach's alpha, were 0.69, 0.74 and 0.71 respectively for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment.

The regression analyses for the three components of burnout syndrome in Tunisian male soccer players such as the EE, the DEP and the RPA are shown in table 1. They indicate that the three models are significant at the same probability level ($Pr \leq 0.001$). R^2 , which inform on the contribution parts of the predictors in explaining the variance of each of the three burnout components are respectively in the range of 0.67, 0.63 and 0.66.

Table 1 specifies the contribution part, expressed as a variance, of each source-social-professional in the explanation of each burnout dimension in Tunisian soccer players and the respective significance levels. The contribution parts of the social-professional factors in the prediction of burnout dimensions are variable. Thus, the factors such as 'Player team integration', 'Player coach relationship', 'Player age', 'Player material conditions' and 'Player seniority' best explain the three dimensions and therefore the burnout problems of Tunisian male soccer players.

Table 1. Variances and probability levels, according to the source of variation, involved in the prediction of the emotional exhaustion, deshumanization and reduced personal accomplishment components of burnout syndrome in Tunisian male soccer players.

Sources of variation	Means square	CPTV (%)	F	Pr ≥ F
Emotional exhaustion (EE) (Pr ≤ 0.001; R ² = 0.67)				
Regressors				
Player team integration	1564	11	19.65	0.0001
Player coach relationship	1987	14	21.54	0.0001
Player age	2722	19	24.26	0.0001
Player seniority	3421	24	32.11	0.0001
Player material condition	4561	32	46.31	0.0001
Residual	102	-	-	-
Depersonalization (DEP) (Pr ≤ 0.001; R ² = 0.63)				
Player team integration	1997	15	26.75	0.0001
Player coach relationship	2304	18	29.29	0.0001
Player age	2453	19	36.61	0.0001
Player seniority	2912	22	32.17	0.0001
Player material condition	3445	26	42.87	0.0001
Residual	167	-	-	-
Reduced Personal Accomplishment (RPA) (Pr ≤ 0.001; R ² = 0.66)				
Player team integration	1859	13	23.01	0.0001
Player coach relationship	2406	17	22.89	0.0001
Player age	2789	20	27.89	0.0001
Player seniority	3112	22	38.53	0.0001
Player material condition	3945	28	43.39	0.0001
Residual	98	-	-	-

CPVT: Contribution part to the total variance

IV. Discussion

Raedeke (2004) defines sports burnout as a chronicle response to stress. According to Hill *et al.* (2008), the scarcity of research on burnout in sports is one the great hindrances to the understanding of this phenomenon, which affects athletes and coaches in high performance tasks in the sports environment. Burnout syndrome is typically characterised by long-term psychological and emotional exhaustion that is accompanied by feelings of depersonalisation and a decreased capacity to manage work requirements (Maslach, 2011).

Our study evaluated the sport burnout levels in Tunisian male soccer players belonging to the Tunisian Soccer League First Division. It showed that the Tunisian soccer players are affected by the burnout syndrome with various levels according to the different social-professional factors such as ‘Player team integration’, ‘Player coach relationship’, ‘Player age’, ‘Player material conditions’ and ‘Player seniority’. These factors appear to be slightly different from those reported in other study carried out in United Kingdom on professional players of the first soccer division that which specified that ‘Player age’, ‘Player education level’, ‘Player physical condition’, ‘Player marital status’, ‘Player position’ and ‘Player seniority’ are the main factors triggering burnout (Tabei *et al.*, 2012). These differences could be attributed to the socio-economic phenomena countries (Hoffmann *et al.*, 2002).

The factors such as ‘Player team integration’, ‘Player coach relationship’, ‘Player age’, ‘Player material conditions’ and ‘Player seniority’ were in our study at the origin of the expression of the emotional exhaustion, the deshumanization and the reduced personal accomplishment in Tunisian soccer players which constitute the three dimensions of burnout syndrome. Genoud *et al.* (2009) reported that the stressors always act primarily on emotional exhaustion which in turn leads to the other components of burnout. This is how he sees himself exposed to burnout syndrome, a form of stress gathering, distance, detachment and coldness in interpersonal relationships, and an intense feeling of emotional resources depletion and a strong sense of acting and reacting (Santinello, 1990; Schaufeli and Enzmann, 1998).

In conclusion, our study showed that the Tunisian male soccer players of the Tunisian Soccer League First Division suffer from burnout syndrome and the predictors such as ‘Player coach relationship’, ‘Player age’, ‘Player material conditions’, ‘Player seniority’ are the major stressogenes factors. The research on burnout in the area of sports is very limited. Only recently has become an area of research. Findings of the present study show that Tunisian male soccer players experienced relatively different burnout levels. Further research on burnout and playing is necessary in order to identify the factors that may cause this syndrome. Longitudinal studies would provide useful information about the development of successive phases of burnout among athletes.

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