



# The Effect of Social Support on Athlete Burnout

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**Abstract:** Using MBI-GS, SCL-90 and SSRS, 160 excellent athletes in this city were investigated, to explore the status quo of athlete burnout and its influencing factors. The results show that: 1) Excellent athletes' emotional exhaustion and negative neglect are not serious, but the low sense of achievement is more serious. 2) Interpersonal sensitivity and obsessive-compulsive symptoms were the predictors of emotional exhaustion, while support utilization and objective support were the predictors of low sense of achievement. 3) There is a link between occupational burnout and social support. Therefore, it is necessary to help athletes establish an effective social support system, strengthen self-recognition and promote the healthy development of the body and mind.

**Keywords:** Social Support; Athlete; Burnout

## 1. Introduction

Occupational burnout is also called "job burnout", "psychological fatigue" and so on. In 1974, Freudenberger, an American psychologist in New York, guided it into the field of psychology. He used the word "burnout" to describe the negative symptoms felt by individuals at work. Such as long-term physical fatigue, emotional exhaustion, poor attitude towards service objects and reduced sense of achievement and so on.

Since the concept of social support was proposed in the 1970s, many scholars have defined and studied it theoretically from different perspectives. However, the definition of social support can be divided into two categories based on various theoretical definitions and cognitive perspectives: one is practical, objective or visible support, which mainly includes material assistance and direct services; The other type is experienced, subjective or emotional support, which is an emotional experience in which individuals can feel supported and respected in our society. According to relevant studies, when an individual is in a state of intense stress, he always wants to turn to others for comfort and support. This study mainly takes athletes as the research object, and carries out empirical discussion on the relationship between their burnout status and social support, so as to provide certain theoretical basis for finding appropriate intervention methods in the future.

## 2. Research object and method

### 2.1 Research object

In this paper, a number of professional athletes such as diving, gymnastics, swimming, fencing and tennis in this city were selected as the objects of this study. A total of 160 questionnaires were issued, and 12 invalid questionnaires were removed, with an effective recovery rate of 92.5%. Among them, 78 are male athletes and 70 are female athletes. There are 14 second-level athletes, 72 first-level athletes and 62 masters. 24 of them have been trained for 1-5 years, 90 for 6-10 years, and 34 for more than 10 years.

## 2.2 Research tool

### 2.2.1 MBI-GS

It is applied to the revised Maslach MBI-GS, which has a total of 15 items, mainly including three dimensions of emotional exhaustion, negative neglect and low sense of achievement<sup>[1]</sup>. Likert7 (gradation scale) is adopted, with 0 representing “never” and 6 representing “every day”. The higher the score is, the stronger the job burnout is. Li showed that the adjusted MBI-GS structure was completely consistent with the original MBI-GS structure, indicating that MBI-GS has good construct validity in China<sup>[2]</sup>.

### 2.2.2 SSRS

The SSRS was compiled by Xiao<sup>[3]</sup>, which mainly contains subjective and objective support, support utilization degree and other dimensions, with a total of 10 items. According to incomplete statistics, in 1986, the scale was widely used in more than 20 studies in China, with good validity and reliability.

## 2.3 Data analysis and statistics

All data was processed by SPSS20.0 statistical software, including T-test, analysis of variance and stepwise multiple regression analysis.

## 3. Research results

### 3.1 Status quo of Athlete burnout

#### 3.1.1 Factors analysis of athlete burnout

MBI-GS uses a score of 7 points, with 3 as the median. Athletes with less than 3 points are not serious in burnout, those with 3-5 points are serious in burnout, and those with more than 5 points are very serious in burnout. As can be seen from **Table 1** below, from the three factors of athletes' burnout, low sense of achievement ( $3.35 > 3$ ) was the most prominent, followed by emotional exhaustion ( $2.11 < 3$ ), followed by negative neglect ( $1.61 < 3$ ). In terms of emotional exhaustion, 75.7% of the athletes were not serious, 20.2% were relatively serious and 4.1% were very serious. In terms of negative neglect, 81.1% of the athletes were not serious, 17.5% were serious and 1.4% were very serious. In terms of low sense of achievement, 35.1% of the athletes were not serious, 51.4% were serious, and 13.5% were very serious. In general, among these three factors, the problem of low sense of achievement is more prominent, and athletes are more serious or very serious in this aspect, accounting for 64.9% of the total.

**Table 1.** Analysis of factors of athletes' occupational burnout

Name of factor	Average	Standard deviation	<3 score (%)	3-5 score (%)	>5 score (%)
Emotional exhaustion	2.11	1.39	75.7	20.2	4.1
Positive burnout	1.61	1.41	81.1	17.5	1.4
Low achievability	3.35	1.59	35.1	51.4	13.5

#### 3.1.2 The difference of training years in athletes' burnout

Athletes with different training years have no significant difference in the factor of low sense of achievement, but there are extremely significant differences in the two factors of emotional exhaustion and negative neglect. Through multiple comparative analysis, it is found that in terms of emotional exhaustion factor, athletes who have been training for about 1–5 years, athletes who have been training for 6–10 years and athletes who have been training for more than 10 years all have significant differences, and the degree of emotional exhaustion of the former is much lower than the latter two. Similarly, in terms of the factor of passivity, there were significant differences between athletes who had been training for 1–5 years, athletes who had been training for 6–10 years, and athletes who had been training for more than 10 years.

**Table 2.** The difference of training years in athletes' burnout

Name of factor	1–5 years (n = 24)	6–10 years (n = 90)	Over 10 years (n = 34)	F-value
Emotional exhaustion	1.28 ± 0.60	2.16 ± 1.37	2.55 ± 1.60	6.48**
Positive burnout	0.79 ± 0.73	1.73 ± 1.38	1.90 ± 1.63	5.39**
Low achievability	3.60 ± 1.66	3.41 ± 1.65	3.03 ± 1.35	1.05

### 3.2 Correlation analysis of social support and burnout in athletes

According to the correlation analysis (Table 3 for details), objective support, total score of support and utilization of support are negatively correlated with the dimensions of deindividuation, emotional exhaustion and low achievement in burnout, while subjective support and the latter two dimensions of burnout showed significant negative correlation.

**Table 3.** The correlation matrix between social support and occupational burnout

Name of factor	Objective support	Subjective support	Utilization of support	Total score
Emotional exhaustion	-0.172*	-0.134	-0.215**	-0.220**
Positive burnout	-0.263**	-0.243*	-0.169*	-0.294**
Low achievability	-0.286**	-0.316**	-0.253**	-0.402**

## 4. Discussion

Social support is mainly to create the objective and subjective influence of social relations on individuals on the Internet, or from family, colleagues, partners and other aspects, giving individuals material or spiritual support and encouragement system. According to relevant research results, there is a significant negative correlation between athletes' burnout and social support, which indicates that social support can play a certain buffer role in the occurrence of athletes' burnout. Relevant research results show that the average annual training of Chinese athletes is more than 320 days. In the preparation stage or during the season, when they compete for a long time or have closed training sessions, they stay away from home for a long time, and their family roles are often assumed or played by relatives and friends. Such a long time of emotional investment, high intensity of work and tension make their training pressure increased, and easy to produce burnout. If you can get the understanding and support of your family members, burnout can naturally be alleviated. At the same time, athletes should establish reasonable training goals, the better the organizational structure and working environment, the stronger the individual's independent decision-making, the lower the degree of burnout.

This study shows that, on the whole, athletes are not serious in the emotional exhaustion and negative neglect of job burnout, and most athletes score less than 3 in these two dimensions. However, they scored relatively high in the dimension of low sense of achievement. Only 35.1% of the athletes had low sense of achievement, while 64.9% of the athletes were in a relatively serious or very serious state. T test and variance analysis showed that athletes of different genders, ages, sports levels and training years had no significant difference in the problem of low sense of achievement. This further illustrates the low sense of achievement of the problem in athletes exist in general.

## 5. Conclusion

It is suggested that firstly, athletes should be helped to expand their social surface and establish an effective social support system, so that athletes can get more understanding, care and support from their families, coaches, teammates and friends, among which the support of coaches is particularly important. Secondly, athletes should be helped to establish more reasonable achievement goals, especially for second-level athletes. Task-oriented goals should be set more than self-oriented goals, so that they can get more successful experience and improve their sense of self-worth.

## References

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