

The Relationship between Burnout and Coping Styles Among Female Students of the Department of Physical Activities and Sports Sciences at Setif-2 University

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Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between burnout and coping styles among female physical education students at Setif 2 University, a population exposed to significant academic and physical stressors. Using a descriptive correlational design, data were collected from 30 first-year students. Burnout was assessed using Maslach's Burnout Inventory, and coping styles were measured through a structured questionnaire. Statistical analysis, including Pearson's correlation coefficient, revealed no significant associations between burnout and problem-solving or effective coping styles. In contrast, a significant positive correlation was found between burnout and emotional coping strategies. These findings emphasize the vital function of emotional coping in burnout and suggest the need for targeted interventions to enhance adaptive coping among female sports students.

KEY WORDS : BURNOUT COPING STYLES ; FEMALE

الملخص: الملخص: تهدف هذه الى دراسة العلاقة بين الإرهاق النفسي وأساليب التكيف لدى طالبات التربية البدنية في جامعة سطيف 2، باستخدام المنهج الوصفي على عينة من 30 طالبة في السنة الأولى، وتوصلت نتائج الدراسة، الى عدم وجود ارتباطات ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الإرهاق النفسي وحل المشكلات أو أساليب التكيف الفعّالة. في المقابل، وُجد ارتباط إيجابي ذو دلالة إحصائية بين الإرهاق النفسي واستراتيجيات التكيف العاطفي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاحتراق النفسي؛ استراتيجيات التكيف؛ الطالبات

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1-Introduction:

Higher education plays a pivotal role in shaping the professional and personal lives of female students, representing a critical final stage of their educational journey. As such, students are often motivated to assimilate extensive knowledge and skills for future application. Yet, they frequently face a multitude of stressors and hurdles in both their personal and academic goals. These challenges manifest as adverse experiences that significantly affect students' psychological well-being.

Female students were explicitly chosen for this study due to their unique psychological and social characteristics, which may influence how they respond to academic stress and cope with burnout. Previous research indicates that females often face additional challenges compared to males, such as balancing academic responsibilities with social expectations, leading to heightened psychological distress (Grey, 2002; Gungor et al., 2021). Moreover, studies have shown that female students tend to experience higher rates of anxiety and academic-related depression, justifying focused investigation on this group (Lei et al., 2016; Kaparounaki et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the Department of Physical Activities and Sports Sciences curriculum is notably demanding, involving intense physical and cognitive efforts. The integration of rigorous theoretical coursework alongside practical training, coupled with heavy examination schedules, creates a high-pressure environment for students. Such academic load has been linked to increased psychological strain and difficulties, as documented in prior studies on sport science students (Muliani et al., 2020; Fogaca, 2021).

Psychological exhaustion in this context is characterized by two main components: psychological fatigue and a sense of detachment from reality (Mary Sandra Carlotto, 2017). These conditions foster maladaptive behaviors and thought patterns, leading to psychological breakdowns, depression, and anxiety. Consequently, these factors contribute to students' psychological exhaustion and diminish their academic efficacy (Hurd et al., 2015).

As such, burnout has emerged as a prevalent and escalating issue among students, with incidences ranging from 18% to 82% (Prins et al., 2007). The widespread nature of psychological burnout can be attributed to various psychosocial factors, positioning it as a covert menace that poses indirect and direct risks to students' well-

being.

Reviewing the extant literature on burnout, it becomes evident that this affliction impacts individuals universally. The concept of "burnout" was initially coined in the mid-1970s by Maslach (1981), who characterized it as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion commonly experienced by workers in various sectors, leading to significant emotional depletion (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Subsequent decades of research have elucidated that burnout encompasses both mental and physical fatigue, exacerbated by extended exposure to work-related stressors (Guseva Canu et al., 2021).

The ramifications of burnout are profound, encompassing emotional and physical exhaustion, diminished motivation, a sense of inefficacy, and a pervasive negative outlook towards both work and life (Manoochehri, 2018). These effects detrimentally influence students' academic performance by inducing physiological issues and mental health disorders (Trigueros et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2022).

The absence of effective intervention and coping strategies can lead to severe repercussions for students. Coping mechanisms are essential for mitigating stress and anxiety, playing a pivotal role in the formation and evolution of students' personalities. Successful stress management necessitates an accurate assessment of the controllability of stressors and the selection of suitable coping strategies (Coiro et al., 2017).

Prior research has demonstrated that negative stress management adversely affects mental health, whereas positive strategies enhance psychological well-being (Gurvich et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2021). These strategies typically involve emotion-focused coping, seeking emotional support, and venting as methods to manage stress (Graves et al., 2021).

Coping strategies are diverse, requiring individuals to adopt an appropriate approach to alleviate stress and emotional tension. Effective coping can involve various activities, such as engaging in conversations with friends, leveraging family support, participating in sports, or practicing relaxation techniques (Gačić et al., 2021).

The primary objective of this study is to explore the correlation between burnout and various coping styles among female physical education and sports students. Given the dual physical and mental demands of their academic training, this investigation aims to shed

light on the complex patterns that govern the relationship between burnout and coping styles among female students of the Department of Physical Activities and Sports Sciences at Setif 2 University. The participants in this study were first-year undergraduates enrolled in the common core of the STAPS (Sciences and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities) program. During the academic year, students engaged in an average of 8 practical sports lessons per week—including disciplines such as athletics, gymnastics, team sports, and swimming—complemented by six theoretical lessons, covering physiology, anatomy, sports psychology, and motor learning. The study was conducted over two academic semesters (approximately 8 months).

4- The methodological procedures used in the study:

Study design and participants:

The study population comprised all first-year female undergraduate students enrolled in the Sciences and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities (STAPS) program at Setif-2 University during the academic year 2023-2024, totaling approximately 120 students. A sample of 30 students (25% of the population) was randomly selected using a simple random sampling technique from the university enrollment records. This sampling method ensured that each student had an equal chance of selection, providing a representative and well-rounded perspective of the target population regarding burnout and coping styles.

Pilot Study:

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research instruments and procedures, a pilot study was conducted prior to the main data collection phase. This preliminary study was carried out over a two-week period at local fitness centers affiliated with the university. A small group of 10 female students from the same academic year and program (STAPS - common core) participated voluntarily. The primary objectives of the pilot study were:

To assess the clarity, readability, and cultural relevance of the questionnaire items.

To evaluate the time required to complete the burnout and coping strategies scales.

To test the reliability of the instruments using Cronbach's alpha.

To identify any logistical issues in administering the surveys.

Feedback from participants was collected through short interviews immediately after completing the questionnaires. Based on their suggestions, minor modifications were made to the language of some items to improve clarity and comprehension. The internal consistency coefficients obtained during the pilot phase were acceptable ($\alpha > 0.70$), indicating good reliability. No major structural revisions to the instruments were deemed necessary.

Research Instruments:

Burnout Scale:

To measure how burned out the participants were, this study used the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Student Survey (MBI-SS), a well-known tool that has been adjusted from the original Maslach Burnout Inventory for students (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schaufeli et al., 2002). The MBI-SS consists of 22 items that measure three core dimensions of burnout:

Emotional Exhaustion (9 items): feelings of being emotionally drained by study demands.

Depersonalization (also referred to as cynicism) (4 items): an indifferent or distant attitude toward studies.

Reduced Personal Accomplishment (8 items): a decline in feelings of competence and success in academic performance.

Each item is rated on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (every day). The higher the score on emotional Exhaustion and depersonalization and the lower the score on personal accomplishment, the higher the level of burnout.

Coping Strategies Scale:

The Coping Strategies Scale is a specially designed questionnaire to measure psychological coping mechanisms. The scale consists of 40 items distributed across three dimensions, each offering three response

options. This structure aims to provide an accurate and detailed assessment of the coping strategies employed by participants. Each statement includes three response choices based on a Likert scale:

Table 1: Scoring Key for the Coping Strategies Scale

Does Not Apply	Applies Sometimes	Applies Completely
1	2	3

Consequently, the highest achievable score for each coping style is 24, attained when a participant consistently selects "Always Applies/Consistently Applies" for all items within a dimension. In contrast, the lowest possible score for each dimension is 8, which occurs when a participant uniformly chooses "Not Applicable/Does Not Apply" across all items.

Statistical Analysis:

Data were analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to describe variables. Pearson’s correlation coefficient was applied to assess relationships between burnout and coping styles. This method was chosen due to its suitability for continuous variables and linear relationships

4-2 Presentation and Analysis of Results: 3. Results and Discussions

Table 2. *Results of correlation analysis*

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	R	P
Burnout	46.97	14.08	0.02	0.89
Problem-Solving	19.33	2.45		

R: Pearson correlation analyze, *p<0,005

illustrates the relationship between burnout and problem-solving styles among female students in sports science. The data shows an

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average burnout score of 46.97 with a standard deviation of 14.08, and an average score for problem-solving style of 19.33 with a standard deviation of 2.45. The Pearson correlation coefficient, a minimal 0.02, suggests no significant relationship between the two variables at a significance level of 0.05, with a probability value of 0.89

No significant relationship was found between burnout and problem-solving styles among female student athletes.

Table 3. Results of correlation analysis

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	R	P
Burnout	46.97	14.08	-0.04	0.80
Effective Coping	19.77	2.43		

R: Pearson correlation analize, *p<0,005

This analysis was designed to examine the relationship between burnout and effective coping styles among female sports students. As depicted in Table (4), the mean burnout score stands at 46.97 with a standard deviation (SD) of 14.08, while the average score for effective coping styles is recorded at 19.77 with an SD of 2.43. The Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.04 points to an absence of a significant linear relationship between burnout and effective coping styles among the students, marked by a significance level of 0.05 and a probability value of 0.80.

No significant relationship was found between burnout and effective coping styles among female sports students

Table 4. Results of correlation analysis

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	R	P
Burnout	46.97	14.08	0.51**	0.004
Problem-Solving	16.87	3.92		

R: Pearson correlation analize, *p<0,005

This analysis explores the relationship between burnout and effective coping among female sports students. According to data presented in Table (4), the average burnout score is 46.97, with a

standard deviation of 14.08. The average score for effective coping is 16.87, with a standard deviation of 3.92. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.51** suggests a statistically significant positive correlation between burnout and emotional coping among the students, with a probability value of 0.01

There is a relationship between burnout and Emotional Coping among female sports students.

Discussions

This study aimed to explore the relationship between burnout and coping styles among female students of the Physical Activities and Sports Sciences Department at Setif 2 University. Specifically, it examined the association of burnout with three coping dimensions: problem-solving, effective coping, and emotional coping styles. Using Pearson's correlation coefficient, the study analyzed data collected from 30 female students to determine how burnout levels relate to their preferred coping mechanisms.

The results indicated no significant correlations between burnout and either problem-solving or effective coping styles. Conversely, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between burnout and emotional coping styles

Table 2: The researchers propose that an absence of problem-solving capabilities might contribute to higher levels of burnout, while proficiency in these skills could potentially mitigate it. However, the data indicates that lack of proficiency in problem-solving does not significantly influence burnout levels among the students. This observation is interpreted from two distinct perspectives:

This study explored the relationship between burnout and coping styles among female physical education and sports sciences students at Setif-2 University. Contrary to prior research, our results did not reveal a significant relationship between burnout and problem-solving coping strategies. One possible explanation for this finding lies in gender-specific cognitive and cultural factors. According to Gray (2002), women tend to respond to stress by focusing on emotional processing rather than directly solving problems. Additionally, cultural contexts in Islamic societies may limit women's opportunities to develop and practice problem-solving skills, as social restrictions reduce their exposure to diverse problem-solving scenarios (Kim, 2019).

Despite numerous studies highlighting a generally negative correlation between burnout and the ability to cope with stress among female students, recent findings continue to illuminate this complex interplay. Research indicates that higher levels of emotional rumination and less problem-focused thinking are associated with increased exhaustion (Mullen et al., 2020). Additionally, some studies have identified a positive correlation between the employment of negative coping strategies and the prevalence of burnout syndrome among students, suggesting that those utilizing such strategies may be more susceptible to exhaustion (Vosečková et al., 2022).

These factors may contribute to a lower engagement in problem-solving strategies among female students, thereby explaining the lack of a significant association with burnout. Moreover, previous studies have indicated that burnout correlates negatively with effective coping mechanisms (Tomaszek & Muchacka-Cymerman, 2022); however, the current study’s findings suggest that other variables, such as social support and counseling, could moderate this relationship (Abu-Kaf & Braun-Lewensohn, 2015; Gayathri et al., 2022).

Students who possess robust coping mechanisms are better equipped to handle various stressors (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2016). Psychological resilience, an essential factor in this context, plays a critical role. For instance, studies have demonstrated that mindfulness can reduce the mediating effect of depressive symptoms on perceived stress and negative thoughts, thus serving as a valuable tool in managing psychological exhaustion (Anastasiades et al., 2017).

Additionally, engaging in various types of sports activities and mindfulness meditation has been shown to effectively manage different types of psychological exhaustion (Moeller et al., 2020; Sullivan et al., 2017). Participation in recreational activities also plays a crucial role, as it contributes to reducing or managing psychological pressures among female students (Gomez et al., 2021).

Table 3: Although these findings might initially appear surprising given prior research that has suggested a negative correlation between burnout and effective coping strategies, such as the investigations conducted by Tomaszek & Muchacka-Cymerman (2022), they nevertheless prompt further exploration into the intricate dynamics at

play. Ivančević et al. (2022) propose that elevated burnout levels are often linked with avoidance strategies, which could potentially exacerbate the condition among students. Our study suggests that these students may employ a variety of coping strategies, meriting additional inquiry in future research endeavors.

Several factors could explain the lack of a significant relationship observed in the current study. Firstly, students actively engaged in sports might possess an inherent capacity to manage psychological stressors that typically lead to burnout through direct and problem-focused coping mechanisms, irrespective of their burnout levels. This idea aligns with findings from Rossi et al. (2023), which indicate that certain coping methods could inadvertently heighten psychological exhaustion.

Regarding effective coping styles, the absence of a significant correlation with burnout might be attributed to the protective role of sports participation, which is an integral part of the students' academic life. Regular engagement in physical activity has been associated with enhanced resilience and reduced susceptibility to burnout symptoms (Kim & McKenzie, 2014; Secades et al., 2016). Additionally, students' involvement in various extracurricular activities may provide emotional outlets that help alleviate psychological exhaustion (Dolenc, 2015).

On another note, the observed results could be accounted for by the students' continuous cognitive and behavioral efforts to identify and implement appropriate strategies for confronting psychological pressures at opportune moments (Ezeudu et al., 2020). Furthermore, student involvement in diverse activities, including participation in university scientific clubs and events, may facilitate emotional release and consequently mitigate burnout.

Despite the absence of a significant linear correlation between burnout and effective coping styles among female sports students in this study, the importance of exploring this relationship remains undiminished. The complexities involved necessitate a deeper understanding and further empirical studies, taking into account intermediary variables that could significantly influence the nature of this relationship.

Table 4: This significant correlation indicates that higher levels of burnout among female sports students are associated with an increased reliance on emotional coping styles. As burnout intensifies, these

students are more likely to employ emotional coping mechanisms. This pattern may be understood through the lens of cognitive appraisal of stress and challenges in sports, perceived as external threats to their capabilities, eliciting a negative emotional response such as stress, anxiety, and frustration.

This typically results in emotional reactions, including avoidance or withdrawal from stressful situations. This aligns with the Cognitive Appraisal and Coping Theory by Lazarus (1993), which posits that an individual's reaction to stress is contingent upon their cognitive evaluation of the stressful situation and the coping methods they utilize.

In contrast, a significant positive correlation was found between burnout and emotional coping strategies. This suggests that as burnout intensifies, students increasingly rely on emotional coping mechanisms, which may include avoidance, withdrawal, or venting. Lazarus's Cognitive Appraisal and Coping Theory (1993) explains that individuals' responses to stress depend on their appraisal of the stressor and their chosen coping strategies. High burnout levels might lead students to adopt emotional coping, potentially hindering effective stress management and exacerbating negative emotions (Kozhan et al., 2022; Rossi et al., 2023).

Furthermore, female students encounter various pressures, including academic demands and commitments to sports clubs, heightening their risk of burnout. Without effective management, these pressures can lead to severe health and psychological issues (Fogaca, 2021). Simões et al. (2023) report that 55.6% of students experience high stress levels, primarily driven by academic evaluations.

On another note, while emotional coping styles might reflect deficiencies in stress management strategies, leading to increased psychological strain and feelings of burnout, they can also be indicative of the students' attempts to adapt to psychological pressures. Engaging in sports activities as a form of recreation and emotional release has been noted to reduce burnout severity and enhance psychological resilience, which aids in managing burnout (Zhu et al., 2021). Furthermore, positive coping styles, as shown in studies like Shi et al. (2023), suggest that students with adaptive coping mechanisms can better handle stress and mitigate the risk of burnout.

These styles serve as protective factors, potentially lessening the adverse effects of stress-inducing factors on academic exhaustion.

Additionally, identifying key causes of burnout and proper planning can significantly alleviate or reduce burnout among female students, as evidenced by Shoua-Desmarais et al. (2020), which links coping strategies such as planning and re-appraisal with reduced burnout levels. This suggests that students who possess mature coping strategies are better equipped to handle stress effectively.

Research by Zhai et al. (2024) supports this, showing that outstanding physical education students who exhibit mature coping styles are more adept at seeking help, practicing patience, and employing mature coping strategies to solve their problems, such as problem-solving methods which contribute to a greater recovery from the causes of psychological exhaustion among students (Fernández-Barradas et al., 2024).

Despite previous studies addressing the relationship between burnout and coping styles, this study offers valuable scientific insights by focusing on female physical education and sports students within the context of dual sports and academic pressures. This group may exhibit unique psychological characteristics in their response to stress.

Conclusion The study findings reveal no statistically significant correlation between burnout and both problem-solving and effective coping styles. Conversely, a statistically significant correlation exists between burnout and emotional coping, suggesting that increased burnout levels are associated with increased use of emotional coping styles. The study recommends the development of strategies to enhance effective coping and calls for more future research to address intermediary variables affecting burnout

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