



Grant Information Summary:

Occupational Stress, Burnout, Engagement, and Health Complaints in the Athletic Training Profession: Results from a Nationwide Random Sample of Certified Athletic Trainers

Practical Significance Statement

Females and those working in the college/university settings are more likely to be burned out than males and those working in the clinical/industrial or secondary school/youth settings. Intervention efforts should focus on these sub-groups of certified athletic trainers (ATCs) to prevent burnout.

Study Background

Stress and burnout have been studied for at least two decades in the athletic training profession. From this research, it is clear that occupational stress is associated with burnout symptoms, job dissatisfaction, and health complaints. However, important shortcomings in the literature are present that generally include a lack of random sampling procedures, inadequate focus on gender and years of experience within the profession. Moreover, no studies have assessed the logical opposite of burnout – occupa-

tional engagement. Perhaps even more importantly, no studies have used a phase model of burnout which provides a more fine-grained analysis of this syndrome.

Objective

The objective of this investigation was to assess the health and well-being of full time certified ATCs. Data are presented from a nationwide random sample of ATCs who completed measures of work-related psychological stress, the inde-

pendent constructs of occupational burnout and engagement, somatic health complaints, and associations between these variables. This study also evaluated differences between males and females, those with more versus less post-certification experience, and individuals who work in different occupational settings (e.g., secondary school/youth, university/college, clinical/industrial) on the various measures.

Design And Setting

A stratified, proportionate random sample of full-time ATCs completed a battery of previously validated surveys.

Subjects

A sampling frame of 3,998 ATCs was provided by the membership office of the National Athletic Trainers' Association. These individuals were sent recruitment invitations, where this process resulted in a 24% response rate. The sample consisted of 934 ATCs (age = 33.84 ± 8.29) who worked in college/university (N = 293), secondary school/youth (N = 276), and clinical/industrial settings (N = 365) with an average of 90 clients.

Measurements

The specific measures assessed were: demographic measures, Maslach Burnout Inventory, Occupational Engagement Scale, and the somatization scale of the Symptom Checklist (SCL-90).

Results

The mean scores on the MBI for depersonalization were 6.21 ± 5.11 , for the emotional exhaustion subscale the mean was 16.34 ± 0.24 and for the personal accomplishment subscale the mean was 36.45 ± 7.14 . Collectively, these scores were within below one standard deviation of the normative data for burnout as were the participants mean levels of somatic health complaints ($0 = 0.41 \pm 0.41$). Scores for occupational engagement were also higher than norms for vigor ($0 = 4.62 \pm .94$), absorption ($0 = 3.80 \pm 1.11$), and dedication ($0 = 4.73 \pm 1.06$). Female ATCs

and those working within college/university settings scored significantly higher on burnout ($P < .05$), while men and those in clinical/industrial settings scored higher on engagement ($P < .05$). Females also reported significantly more somatic health complaints than males ($P < .05$). Using the phase model as an analytic-heuristic revealed that 21.5% of the sample was in the advanced stages of burnout. Finally, somatic health complaints was positively and significantly associated with emotional exhaustion ($r = .44$), depersonalization ($r = .27$), work-related stress ($r = .33$), and negatively related to personal accomplishment ($r = -.16$) and vigor ($r = -.21$).

Conclusions

While the average burnout and engagement scores were low, a substantial portion of ATCs were classified as being burned out. Females and those working in college/university settings were more likely to experience the signs and symptoms of burnout while men and ATCs working in clinical/industrial settings scored significantly higher on measures of occupational engagement.

Principal Investigator:



Peter R. Giacobbi, PhD

Dr. Peter 'Pete' Giacobbi, Jr. is an Assistant Professor of Health Promotion Sciences in the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health at the University of Arizona. Pete earned his Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the State University of New York, College at Oswego, his Master of Science in Physical Education, Health, and Sport Studies at Miami University of Ohio, and his Doctor of Philosophy in Education from the University of Tennessee. His research focuses on "adaptational processes" linked to coping with stress and burnout within occupational and physical activity settings and mental imagery and exercise behavior. A productive researcher, he has 28 peer-reviewed publications in 10 different scholarly journals.

Publication & Presentation List

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