

*Chapter V*

*SUMMARY,*

*CONCLUSION AND*

*RECOMMENDATIONS*

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### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### SUMMARY

The amount of pressure on an athlete to perform consistently at their best is an issue that could force the athlete to train harder and harder without considering their health and well being. This might result in pushing many athletes towards burnout. This could be a serious lapse on the part of that athlete, because training too hard too fast without proper recovery can cause serious damage to their life and career. This type of improper recovery program along with high pressure caused on the athlete to win or the pressure of high expectations would further the damage caused on the athlete. Lack of adequate recovery could result in an athlete not being able to train at the required intensity. However, only few studies have analyzed the training stress and the possible reasons that could cause burnout in athletes. This study aims to test, if excessive training stress could cause an athlete to burnout. The researcher intends to prevent training stress and burnout so that the athlete can perform better and longer.

The present study used a mixed method research; in which Convergent parallel design was used. In the first stage quantitative and qualitative data were collected separately but simultaneously, after which the data was analyzed, then the results of both the data were mixed and the final data was interpreted so as to provide a better understanding of the problem (Creswell, 2009). Equal priority was given to both quantitative and qualitative methods.

In the quantitative methods descriptive (Survey) research was used. The sample of the study consisted of 500 athletes who were training currently; it included 18 International Athletes, 36 Inter- University Athletes, 217 National Athletes and 229 State Level Athletes. The sample includes both males and females from different training centers in Kerala state viz. SAI (Sports Authority of India) hostels, College hostels, School hostels and Centralized sports hostels under Kerala State Sports Council, and 58<sup>th</sup>

State School champions. The subject's age ranged between 15- 30 years. Multistage sampling technique was used as the method to collect data. The tools selected for this quantitative method was RESTQ (Recovery Stress Questionnaire) for athletes and a demographic information sheet. The RESTQ for athletes consisted of 76 items plus an introductory item (warm up) which was not included in the scoring. It included seven general stress scales, three sports specific stress scales, five recovery scales and four recovery area scales. With the help of these 19 sub scales the RESTQ assessed the 'stress full' and 'rest full' events and their consequences during the past 3 days/ nights of the subjects. The demographic information sheet consisted of the athlete's age, gender, training age, event, level of performance, current competition, training hours, injury and education. The data was analyzed using SPSS Version 20. The collected data was analyzed with descriptive statistics, one way ANOVA and 't' test. Descriptive statistics was computed to describe the nature of the data, one way ANOVA was used to identify the differences between variables and Tukey HSD post hock test was used to confirm the differences if any and finally 't' test was used to measure the gender differences with respect to athletes training stress and recovery. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients obtained was .77; the level of significance was fixed at 0 .05 level.

In the qualitative method, a basic qualitative / interpretative method was used. Semi structured interview was conducted with five burnt out athletes between the age of 15- 30 years and five athletic coaches from different parts of Kerala state. Purposive sampling was applied to identify the participants. The goal was to gain information about cause and consequences of burnout among athletes who were no longer active (burnt out) and to understand the views of athletic coaches on cause of athlete's burnout. Data was collected through face to face interviews and telephonic interviews (Gustafsson et al., 2008). The collected data was analyzed using content analysis. It included several steps; (Creswell, 2009) the first step was the verbatim transcription of the interviews after which the researcher began the coding process, and then the codes were classified into subcategories, then to categories. From the desired categories the researcher developed a larger theme, to interpret the result.

Quantitative result concluded that athletes who were training currently would have excess training stress than recovery. The higher training stress factors were disturbed breaks, injury, emotional exhaustion and conflicts. Lower recovery factors were being in shape, somatic relaxation, self efficacy and self regulation. Demographic variables like education also had impact on training stress. Training age, level of performance and current competition also showed significant difference on recovery of athletes. Based on the results of the interview it was concluded that causes of burnout were these 10 common factors namely Conflicts, Injury, Somatic Complaints, Sleep Quality, Self Regulation, Unscientific Method, Overtraining, Starting of New Relationship, Reaching Maximum Performance at School Age Itself and Less Talent. It indicated that training stress would have direct influence on burnout because common training stress factors and cause of burnout were almost the same. The present result suggests that athletes who had higher training stress could have been pushed to burnout from the field.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

On the basis of the results of this study the following conclusions were drawn

1. Athletes who are training currently had excessive training stress than recovery.
2. Higher training stress for athletes was 'disturbed breaks', 'injury', 'emotional exhaustion' and 'conflicts'.
3. Lower recovery factors were 'being in shape', 'somatic relaxation', 'self efficacy' and 'self regulation'.
4. Significant difference was found between demographic variables like 'education' and 'training stress'.
5. No significant differences were found between other demographic variables (age, gender, training age, event, level of performance, current competition, training hours and injury) and training stress.
6. Significant differences were found between demographic variables like 'training age', 'level of performance', 'current competition' and 'recovery of athletes'.

7. No significant differences were found between other demographic variables (age, gender, event, training hours, injury and education) and recovery.
8. Sports- specific stress like 'disturbed break', 'emotional exhaustion' and 'injury' were the most common factors leading to training stress.
9. Causes of burnout were described as 'conflicts', 'injury', 'somatic complaints', 'sleep quality', 'self regulation', 'unscientific method', 'overtraining', 'starting of new relationship', 'reaching maximum performance at school age itself' and 'less talent'.
10. Training stress had direct influence on burnout due to which the athletes who experienced excessive training stress could have been pushed to burnout from the field.

Optimal performance can only be achieved if the athletes are able to recover completely after the competition. Results of this study showed that disturbed breaks were the main problem because the body rehabilitates and re-energizes during the time of rest, following hard training. During the recovery period adaptation takes place and efficiency of the heart improves because capillaries become more efficient, the glycogen storage and mitochondrial enzyme system will increase and it results in helping the body to prepare for further load, inadequate recovery can create psychological and physiological consequences and this could reduce regeneration, hence the performance will tend to remain in a plateau.

Certain amount of the stress is actually useful for the athletes to focus more and to perform with more energy, but there should be an effective balance between training, competition and rest. This balance depends on the type of training stress, competition stress and rest, if any imbalance occurs in this cycle that is competing under the influence of non athletic stress such as stress from home, work place or from school; it is likely to carry over to the subsequent training and competition. This would cause a decreased performance.

Overall planning of the work load and the rest ratio is the responsibility of a coach. He has to rigorously watch out for the signs and symptoms of maladaptation in the beginning and during each training schedule, he also has to understand the external demands on the athletes such as exam or work. Athletes also have equal responsibility that they have to listen to the signs and symptoms of the body that may lead to overtraining and have to look after themselves physically and psychologically. Parents and friends also can help the athlete by observing the signs and symptoms of excessive stress in athletes and should communicate freely and openly to the athletes or a coach that the athletes may be having difficulties in adapting to the training. Some athletes are able to handle pressure better than others due to individual differences; therefore the coaches should treat and train their athletes accordingly. Therefore, sufficient recovery after any form of intensive training is very much essential to regain their performance and to prevent overtraining and burnout.

The burnout condition will not disappear by ignoring it, if such condition is ignored the result could end up with the withdrawal of the athlete from sports all together. Once the symptoms of burnout are identified, specific intervention can be employed; no single intervention can treat athletes burnout, and for each and every athlete separate treatment could be required. If burnout is caused because of parental influence, taking time off from the sports may not be a suitable option; if an athlete is struggling due to overtraining he may benefit from taking time off from the sports for a temporary period of time. Such appropriate intervention programs could save the talented athletes from burnout.

In this competitive world there will be some unsuccessful situations too, therefore one must learn to take that kind of situation as a great learning experience. One must recognize the warning signs of excessive stress and try to understand one's limits, learn to control frustrations, take a break if the athlete feels overly tired, maintain proper nutrition, practice self care and adopt healthy sleeping habits; changing sports is another option, and they could gain further subject knowledge to create a balanced schedule.

Many of the athletes who could represent India in the International competitions have lost their careers much earlier because of the excessive training stress factors. Thus, it is very important to prevent athletes from excessive training stress so as to avoid burnout. Being aware of the causes of burnout, signs to look-for and ways to deal with can help the athlete avoid over training and can perform in a better manner and for longer time.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the light of the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made.

1. Awareness program can be conducted for the coaches so that they would be able to identify the athletes with symptoms of excessive training stress before they burnout.
2. Field studies which examine the possible intervention strategies to avoid burnout can be conducted.
3. Recovery programs can be conducted for athletes and coaches to learn more recovery techniques.
4. Effective recovery programs need to be added to the training schedules.
5. Educate the athletes to manage their athletic and non athletic stress and the skill to adjust to the situations so as to prevent burn out.
6. Educate the athlete to deal with the results of the competition which may be either good or bad.
7. Allow the athlete to take a decision individually, so as to improve their personal control and confidence.
8. Counseling of the burnt out athletes can be initiated so that they can be rehabilitated appropriately.
9. Such studies can be conducted in other sports where intensive training programs are being conducted.
10. The results could be used by all the stakeholders to bring about reforms in their training program and projects.