The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived level of burnout among football coaches in Greece. The sample consisted of 132 male football coaches from Greece. The Maslach Burnout Inventory was used to measure burnout. Results indicated that Greek football coaches of this sample were experienced low level of burnout. Findings also revealed no statistically significant age differences on the burnout subscales.

Key Words: Burnout, football, coaches, Greece.
INTRODUCTION

The last decade’s interest in the phenomenon of burnout received increasing attention and our knowledge of burnout has increased considerably. Although there have been a lot of studies to approach the concept of burnout, it seems that the most widely accepted definition is the one suggested by Maslach et al (22) that burnout is a tridimensional syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism (depersonalization), and reduced efficacy (reduced personal accomplishment). The exhaustion component refers to feelings of being overextended and depleted of one’s emotional and physical resources. The cynicism (or depersonalization) component refers to a negative, callous, or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job. The component of reduced efficacy or accomplishment refers to feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement and productivity at work.

Mainly, burnout has been associated with the helping professions, such as education, health, and social services (1, 8, 11, 16, 30). However, as Maslach and Schaufeli (21) pointed out, burnout is not necessarily restricted to the human service professions and might be found in other types of occupations. In the recent years, the concept of burnout has also begun to appear very frequently in the sports context (3, 4, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 26). As a result, a number of models of burnout have been developed by sport scientists, with most important (cited in Gould et al), the cognitive–affective stress model (29), the negative-training stress response model (28) and the unidimensional identity development and external control model (4).

Coaches at all levels have begun to discuss the dangers of burnout in their profession (25, 27). As Price and Weiss (25), pointed out, research on coach burnout has focused on gender differences, stress appraisal, role conflict and ambiguity and decision making styles. Particularly, in a study of male and female college coaches Caccese and Mayrberg (2) found that females reported significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion and significantly lower levels of personal accomplishment than male coaches. Dale and Weinberg (5) in a study of male and female college coaches found that male coaches scored significantly higher in depersonalization than female coaches. Koustelios et al (14) in a study of 103 football coaches from Greece found that single coaches experience a statistically significant higher level of depersonalization than their married colleagues. Also, they found that married coaches with no children experience significantly higher levels of depersonalization than their married colleagues with children. Pastore and Judd (25) in a study of male and female coaches of women’s teams at 2-year colleges found that female coaches scores significantly higher in emotional exhaustion than male coaches. They found also that the levels of emotional exhaustion seemed to decrease with age while depersonalization levels appeared to be highest among coach-
es who were in the 32-43 years. Hjalm et al (9) in a study of elite soccer coaches found that male soccer coaches who coaches' women were more susceptible to burnout than those coaching men. Finally, Kelley et al (10), in a study of stress and burnout among collegiate tennis coaches found that women had a higher tendency than the men to find coaching issues stressful. As it is obvious men and women have been found to report differences in their level of burnout. The evidence concerning the pattern and the complexity of the gender-burnout relationship is ambiguous (24). As Maslach et al (22) pointed out these inconsistent findings could be related to gender stereotypes, but they may also reflect the confounding of sex with occupation (e.g., nurses are more likely to be female, football coaches are more likely to be male).

As Maslach et al (22) pointed out, “of all the demographic variables that have been studied, age is the one that has been most consistently related to burnout” (p. 409). Results regarding age indicate that burnout tends to be higher among younger people. These findings, according to Maslach et al (22) “should be viewed in caution because of the problem of survival bias-i.e., those who burn out early in their careers are likely to quit their jobs, leaving behind the survivors who consequently exhibit lower levels of burnout” (p. 410). Age also, has been shown to be a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion, with younger teachers tending to score higher than the older teachers (20). Similar were the findings of Danylchuk (6) and Maslach (19).

Studies regarding the effect of years of work experience on burnout found no significant differences on the burnout dimensions (6, 23). It seems though, in the study of Pastore and Judd (23) that emotional exhaustion levels seemed to decrease with age and years of coaching experience, whereas their personal accomplishment levels increased slightly.

Although the phenomenon of burnout has been the object of much discussion worldwide, research regarding these issues of burnout in sport is limited in Greece. The purpose of the present study was to examine: a) the level of burnout experienced by football coaches in Greece, and b) age differences on burnout among football coaches.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

**Sample**

The subjects were 132 male football coaches from Greece. The coaches ranged in age from 20 - 49 years (M = 31.7 years, SD = 6.5 years). Total number of coaching experience ranged from 1 to 20 years (M = 5.0 years, SD = 4.3). All of them were coaches at a non-professional club level.
Instrument

Burnout was measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (20). The Maslach Burnout Inventory contains three subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The nine items in the emotional exhaustion subscale describe feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work. The five items in depersonalization subscale describe an unfeeling and impersonal response towards athletes. The subscale of personal accomplishment contains eight items that describe feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people. For emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, high mean scores correspond to higher degrees of experienced burnout. In contrast to other two subscales, lower mean scores on personal accomplishment correspond to higher degree of burnout. Each respondent was requested to indicate the frequency of the feeling represented by each item on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (every day).

Procedure and Statistical Methods

The method chosen was that of self-completed questionnaires. Researcher informed all subjects that their participation was completely voluntary and the individual responses would be held in confidence.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if age significant differences existed in the level of burnout among football coaches. Means and standard deviations were computed for the variables of the study.

Reliability

By using the Cronbach-a coefficients it was found that the reliability coefficients for the MBI subscales in the present study were reported to be .67 for the Emotional Exhaustion (EE) subscale, .66 for Depersonalization (DP) subscale, and .69 for Personal Accomplishment (PA) subscale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the level of burnout experienced by football coaches, and age differences on burnout among football coaches in Greece. Means and standards deviations for each for the three subscales (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) are presented in Table 1.
Table 1. Burnout among football coaches based on their age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-29 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional exhaustion</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depersonalization</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal accomplishment</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The coaches of the present study reported low levels of burnout in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions and high level in the personal accomplishment dimension. The scores on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment, respectively, revealed that burnout of Greek football coaches was lower than that for all the occupational groups presented by Maslach and Jackson (20) (i.e., 20.9, 8.7, and 34.5). Probably the main reason of the relatively low level of burnout among Greek football coaches is that coaching was not their main occupation. Also, the level of their teams was at non-professional level.

The results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated there were no statistically significant differences between groups in their burnout levels based on the subject’s age. The findings of the present study indicated that coaches’ emotional exhaustion levels appeared to be highest among coaches who were in the 30-39 years age group. Depersonalization and personal accomplishment levels seemed to decrease slightly among 30-39 years age group and increase among 40-49 years age group. As it is well known, burnout is a cumulative, long term result of stress over time. The findings are in consistent with the findings of Caccese & Mayerberg (2), which showed that the pattern of means across age levels does not clearly suggest a linear increase in burnout as a function of time.

CONCLUSION

Coaching is a very demanding and stressful profession. As Caccese & Mayerberg (2) pointed out, “a coach is often required to fulfill several different roles including those of disciplinarian, psychologist, father/mother figure, and public relations expert” (p. 279). Similarly, Hjalm et al (9) pointed out, that common coaching duties, such as travel planning, public relations, fund raising, and managing relationships with their coaching staff further add to the multitude of factors potentially being perceived as stressful.
Research on burnout in the area of sports in Greece is very limited. Only recently has become an area of research. Findings of the present study show that Greek football coaches experienced relatively low levels of burnout. Further research on burnout and coaching is necessary in order to identify the factors that may cause this syndrome. Longitudinal studies would provide useful information about the development of and successive phases of burnout among coaches.

REFERENCES


Address for correspondence:
Koustelios Athanasios
University of Thessaly, Karies
42100, Trikala
Greece
E-mail: akoustel@pe.uth.gr