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Perceived Stress, Energy, and Mood State During High and Low Stress Academic Weeks in Division III Female Athletes

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NACSM Abstract

Title: Perceived Stress, Energy, and Mood State During High and Low Stress Academic Weeks in Division III Female Athletes

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Category: Undergraduate

ABSTRACT

Student athletes experience the stress of athletics in addition to the everyday stress of college students, such as academics and relationships. Stress associated with athletics can be especially challenging when demands of the sport exceed the reward, thus it is important to monitor stress in college athletes. PURPOSE: To determine changes in stress, mood state, and energy level over the course of an athletic season during high and low academic stress weeks. METHODS: Perceived stress, mood state, and energy level were collected daily over the course of the season in soccer, basketball, and swimming Division III female athletes. The athletic and academic calendars of the institution were used to determine weeks of potential high stress (midterm and final exam weeks) and low stress (early semester). For each team, high and low stress academic weeks were identified within the athletic season. One-way ANOVAs were used to determine differences between three weeks (two high stress weeks and one low stress week) for basketball and swimming. Independent samples t tests were used to determine the differences between high and low stress weeks for soccer. RESULTS: A significant difference existed between high and low stress weeks for perceived stress ($t(12) = 0.29, p < 0.01$) in soccer athletes. No significant differences were found between high and low stress weeks for energy level ($t(12) = 1.01, p = 0.33$) and mood state ($t(12) = 0.91, p = 0.38$). Significant differences existed across weeks for stress ($F(2, 18) = 16.01; p < 0.01$) in basketball athletes. Finals week stress was significantly greater than midterms ($p = 0.003$) and the low stress week ($p < 0.001$). No significant differences were found between weeks for mood state ($F(2, 18) = 3.54; p = 0.05$) and energy level ($F(2, 18) = 1.00; p = 0.39$). No significant difference across weeks for stress ($F(2, 18) = 0.42; p = 0.67$), mood state ($F(2, 18) = 0.69; p = 0.51$), or energy level ($F(2, 18) = 0.33; p = 0.72$) were found for swimming athletes. CONCLUSION: Soccer and basketball athletes reported significantly higher stress during periods of high academic stress, such as midterms and/or finals, than low stress weeks at the beginning of the academic semester. Perceived mood state and energy level were not as affected by high stress academic weeks for soccer, basketball, or swim athletes. These perceived measures are potentially not as influenced by periods of high academic stress.

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