

BURNOUT AMONG FEMALE FOOTBALL PLAYERS IN MANIPUR: AN EXAMINATION OF PLAYING LEVEL, AGE, AND LOCALITY

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Abstract

Burnout is a significant psychological concern among competitive athletes, impacting their motivation, performance, and well-being. This study examines burnout levels among female football players in Manipur, with a specific focus on differences based on playing level (state vs. national), age group (older vs. younger), and locality (urban vs. rural). Using the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ), data were collected from 200 female football players through a structured survey. The results indicate moderate-to-high levels of burnout, particularly in the dimensions of Physical and Emotional Exhaustion and Sport Devaluation. However, no significant differences in burnout were found across playing level, age, or locality, suggesting that burnout is a prevalent issue across all groups. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to support female athletes' mental well-being, including workload management, psychological skills training, and motivational support. Future research should explore additional psychological and environmental factors contributing to burnout in female football players.

Key Words: Athlete Burnout, Female Football Players, Psychological Well-being, Sport Participation, Competitive Stress

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Athlete burnout is a critical issue in competitive sports, affecting both physical and psychological well-being (Gustafsson, Kenttä, & Hassmén, 2011). Defined as a response to chronic stress in sport, burnout manifests in three core dimensions: physical and emotional exhaustion, reduced sense of accomplishment, and sport devaluation (Raedeke & Smith, 2001). Female athletes, in particular, may experience unique stressors, including performance pressure, gender expectations, and balancing academics or careers with sports commitments (Smith et al., 2019).

The Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ), developed by Raedeke and Smith (2001), has been widely used to assess burnout among athletes. Prior research suggests that burnout levels may vary based on factors such as playing level, age, and geographical location

(Goodger et al., 2007). However, studies focusing specifically on female football players remain limited. Given the growing participation of women in football and the intense demands of the sport, it is imperative to examine burnout trends among female athletes to develop targeted interventions and support mechanisms.

This study aims to assess burnout levels among female football players in Manipur, using the ABQ as a measurement tool. Additionally, it explores whether burnout levels differ based on playing level (state vs. national), age groups (younger vs. older), and locality (urban vs. rural). The findings will contribute to the broader understanding of athlete well-being and inform strategies for reducing burnout risk among female footballers.

1.2 Research Questions

1. Is the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ) a reliable tool for assessing burnout among female football players?
2. What are the overall burnout levels of female football players?
3. Are there significant differences in burnout levels among female football players based on their playing level?
4. Are there significant differences in burnout levels among female football players based on their age groups?
5. Are there significant differences in burnout levels among female football players based on their locality?

1.3 Objectives

1. To evaluate the reliability (internal consistency) of the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ) in assessing burnout among female football players.
2. To analyze the overall burnout levels of female football players.
3. To examine differences in burnout levels among female football players based on playing level.
4. To examine differences in burnout levels among female football players based on age.
5. To examine differences in burnout levels among female football players based on locality.

1.4 Null Hypotheses

H₀₁: There are no significant differences in burnout levels among female football players across different playing levels.

H₀₂: There are no significant differences in burnout levels among female football players across different age groups.

H₀₃: There are no significant differences in burnout levels among female football players based on their locality.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Participants

A total of 200 female football players were selected using random sampling techniques from various football clubs and academies affiliated with the All Manipur Football Association (AMFA). All participants provided informed consent to take part in the survey. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 24 years, with a mean age of 21.32 years (SD = 2.35).

2.2 Tool

Burnout levels among athletes were assessed using the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ; Raedeke & Smith, 2001). This 15-item self-report measure evaluates three subscales:

1. **Physical and Emotional Exhaustion** (e.g., “I feel overly tired from my sport participation”)
2. **Reduced Accomplishment** (e.g., “I am not performing up to my ability in sport”)
3. **Sport Devaluation** (e.g., “I don’t care as much about my sport performance as I used to”)

Each subscale consists of five items. Participants responded using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) “Almost Never” to (5) “Almost Always.” The ABQ has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, including validity, factor structure, and internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha \geq 0.85$; Raedeke & Smith, 2001, 2009).

2.3 Main Variable

- Burnout

2.4 Demographic Variables

The study collected the following demographic variables:

- Playing Level (State and National)
- Age (Older and Younger)
- Locality (Rural and Urban)

2.5 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted between November and December 2024. Surveys were distributed to participants at their respective football clubs, and responses were collected on-site to ensure completeness.

2.6 Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software (version 22). Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentages, were calculated to summarize the data. Inferential statistics, including ANOVA and t-tests, were performed to examine group differences. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

3. Results

3.1 Internal Consistency of Athlete Burnout Questionnaire

Table 1: Cronbach’s Alpha Values of Athlete Burnout Questionnaire

Subscales	Cronbach's Alpha
Reduced Sense of Accomplishment (RA)	.778
Emotional/Physical Exhaustion (E)	.712
Devaluation (D)	.715
Whole scale	.808

The internal consistency of the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ) was assessed using Cronbach's alpha for its three subscales and the overall scale. The **Reduced Sense of Accomplishment (RA)** subscale demonstrated good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of **.778**, while the **Emotional/Physical Exhaustion (E)** subscale showed acceptable reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of **.712**. The **Devaluation (D)** subscale also exhibited acceptable reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of **.715**. The overall scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of **.808**. These results indicate that the ABQ is a reliable instrument for assessing burnout among female football players.

3.2 Burnout Levels among Women Football Players

Table 2: Item Statistics

Items	Mean	SD	N
I'm accomplishing many worthwhile things in [sport]	2.31	0.46	200
I feel so tired from my training that I have trouble finding energy to do other things	3.23	1.38	200
The effort I spend in [sport] would be better spent doing other things	1.48	0.78	200
I feel overly tired from my [sport] participation	1.96	1.06	200
I am not achieving much in [sport]	2.41	1.10	200
I don't care as much about my [sport] performance as I used to	3.19	0.52	200
I am not performing up to my ability in [sport]	1.89	0.91	200
I feel "wiped out" from [sport]	1.98	0.94	200
I'm not into [sport] like I used to be	2.48	0.61	200
I feel physically worn out from [sport]	2.59	1.63	200
I feel less concerned about being in [sport] than I used to	1.64	1.15	200
I am exhausted by the mental and physical demands of [sport]	1.61	1.16	200
It seems that no matter what I do, I don't perform as well as in I should	1.37	0.78	200
I feel successful at [sport]	1.92	0.97	200
I have negative feeling toward [sport]	1.86	0.93	200

The analysis of burnout among women football players revealed varying levels of burnout across the three dimensions measured by the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ): **Physical and Emotional Exhaustion, Reduced Sense of Accomplishment, and Sport Devaluation.**

1. **Physical and Emotional Exhaustion:** Players reported moderate to high levels of exhaustion, with items such as *“I feel so tired from my training that I have trouble finding energy to do other things”* (M = 3.23, SD = 1.38) indicating frequent experiences of fatigue and low energy due to training demands. Similarly, the item *“I feel physically worn out from [sport]”* (M = 2.59, SD = 1.63) reflects the physical toll of participation in football. These results suggest that the physical and emotional demands of the sport are significant contributors to burnout.
2. **Reduced Sense of Accomplishment:** Responses reflected a moderate sense of underachievement, as seen in items such as *“I’m accomplishing many worthwhile things in [sport]”* (M = 2.31, SD = 0.46) and *“I am not performing up to my ability in [sport]”* (M = 1.89, SD = 0.91). While some players acknowledged a sense of success, others expressed concerns about falling short of their performance potential.
3. **Sport Devaluation:** Evidence of sport devaluation was also observed, with items such as *“I don’t care as much about my [sport] performance as I used to”* (M = 3.19, SD = 0.52) indicating a decline in the importance placed on sport performance. This dimension highlights an attitudinal shift, where some players may no longer find their participation in football as meaningful or fulfilling as before.

Overall, the findings suggest that burnout is present among women football players, with the **Physical and Emotional Exhaustion** and **Sport Devaluation** dimensions showing the highest levels. The variability in responses across items also indicates that burnout experiences may differ among players depending on individual or contextual factors, such as playing level, age, or locality. These results underline the importance of addressing physical and emotional well-being to mitigate burnout and sustain long-term participation in football.

3.3 Burnout Differences by Age

Table 3: Burnout differences by age

Subscale	Age	N	M	SD	SEM	t	p-value
RA	Older	69	11.51	0.27	2.21	.601	.549
	Younger	131	11.31	0.20	2.29		
E	Older	69	12.01	0.42	3.49	-.303	.762
	Younger	131	12.18	0.32	3.62		
D	Older	69	8.23	0.39	3.25	-.507	.612
	Younger	131	8.49	0.30	3.48		
Whole scale	Older	69	31.75	0.87	7.23	-.190	.849
	Younger	131	31.97	0.68	7.83		

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine differences in burnout levels between older and younger female football players across the three subscales of the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ)—**Reduced Sense of Accomplishment (RA)**,

Emotional/Physical Exhaustion (E), and **Sport Devaluation (D)**—as well as the overall burnout scale. The results are as follows:

1. **Reduced Sense of Accomplishment (RA)**: Older players ($M = 11.51$, $SD = 2.21$) and younger players ($M = 11.31$, $SD = 2.29$) did not differ significantly in their scores, $t(198) = 0.601$, $p = .549$. This indicates that age did not have a statistically significant effect on players' feelings of accomplishment in sport.
2. **Emotional/Physical Exhaustion (E)**: The mean scores for emotional/physical exhaustion were similar for older players ($M = 12.01$, $SD = 3.49$) and younger players ($M = 12.18$, $SD = 3.62$), with no significant difference observed, $t(198) = -0.303$, $p = .762$.
3. **Sport Devaluation (D)**: Scores for sport devaluation were also not significantly different between older players ($M = 8.23$, $SD = 3.25$) and younger players ($M = 8.49$, $SD = 3.48$), $t(198) = -0.507$, $p = .612$.
4. **Overall Burnout (Whole Scale)**: The overall burnout scores for older players ($M = 31.75$, $SD = 7.23$) and younger players ($M = 31.97$, $SD = 7.83$) were not significantly different, $t(198) = -0.190$, $p = .849$.

The results indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in burnout levels between older and younger female football players across all subscales and the overall scale of the ABQ ($p > .05$ for all comparisons). This suggests that age is not a significant factor influencing burnout among the participants in this study.

3.4 Burnout Differences by Locality

Table 4: Burnout Differences by Locality

Locality		N	M	SD	SEM	t	p-value
RA	urban	85	11.44	2.22	0.24	.324	.746
	rural	115	11.33	2.29	0.21		
E	urban	85	11.99	3.52	0.38	-.448	.655
	rural	115	12.22	3.62	0.34		
D	urban	85	8.20	3.27	0.35	-.716	.475
	rural	115	8.55	3.49	0.33		
whole scale	urban	85	31.62	7.31	0.79	-.433	.666
	rural	115	32.10	7.85	0.73		

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine differences in burnout levels between urban and rural female football players across the three subscales of the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ)—**Reduced Sense of Accomplishment (RA)**, **Emotional/Physical Exhaustion (E)**, and **Sport Devaluation (D)**—as well as the overall burnout scale. The results are as follows:

1. **Reduced Sense of Accomplishment (RA)**: Urban players ($M = 11.44$, $SD = 2.22$) and rural players ($M = 11.33$, $SD = 2.29$) did not show a significant difference in their scores, $t(198) = 0.324$, $p = .746$. This indicates that locality (urban vs. rural) does not significantly influence players' sense of accomplishment in sport.

2. **Emotional/Physical Exhaustion (E):** The mean scores for emotional/physical exhaustion were similar for urban players ($M = 11.99$, $SD = 3.52$) and rural players ($M = 12.22$, $SD = 3.62$), with no significant difference observed, $t(198) = -0.448$, $p = .655$.
3. **Sport Devaluation (D):** There was no significant difference in sport devaluation scores between urban players ($M = 8.20$, $SD = 3.27$) and rural players ($M = 8.55$, $SD = 3.49$), $t(198) = -0.716$, $p = .475$.
4. **Overall Burnout (Whole Scale):** The overall burnout scores were also comparable between urban players ($M = 31.62$, $SD = 7.31$) and rural players ($M = 32.10$, $SD = 7.85$), with no significant difference, $t(198) = -0.433$, $p = .666$.

The results indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in burnout levels between urban and rural female football players across all subscales and the overall burnout scale ($p > .05$ for all comparisons). This suggests that locality does not play a significant role in influencing burnout among the participants in this study.

3.5 Burnout Differences by Playing Level

Table 5: Burnout Differences by Playing Level

Playing level		N	M	SD	SEM	t	p-value
RA	State level	143	11.43	2.27	0.19	.511	.610
	National level	57	11.25	2.23	0.30		
E	State level	143	12.19	3.56	0.30	.431	.667
	National level	57	11.95	3.61	0.48		
D	State level	143	8.45	3.39	0.28	.313	.754
	National level	57	8.28	3.43	0.45		
whole scale	State level	143	32.06	7.59	0.63	.493	.622
	National level	57	31.47	7.73	1.02		

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine differences in burnout levels between state-level and national-level female football players across the three subscales of the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ)—**Reduced Sense of Accomplishment (RA)**, **Emotional/Physical Exhaustion (E)**, and **Sport Devaluation (D)**—as well as the overall burnout scale. The results are summarized below:

1. **Reduced Sense of Accomplishment (RA):** There was no significant difference in reduced sense of accomplishment between state-level players ($M = 11.43$, $SD = 2.27$) and national-level players ($M = 11.25$, $SD = 2.23$), $t(198) = 0.511$, $p = .610$. This indicates that playing level (state vs. national) does not significantly affect players' sense of accomplishment in sport.
2. **Emotional/Physical Exhaustion (E):** The emotional/physical exhaustion scores for state-level players ($M = 12.19$, $SD = 3.56$) and national-level players ($M = 11.95$, $SD = 3.61$) did not differ significantly, $t(198) = 0.431$, $p = .667$. This suggests that playing level is not a significant factor in players' emotional or physical exhaustion.
3. **Sport Devaluation (D):** The scores for sport devaluation were similar between state-level players ($M = 8.45$, $SD = 3.39$) and national-level players ($M = 8.28$, $SD = 3.43$), with no significant difference, $t(198) = 0.313$, $p = .754$. This indicates that players'

attitudes toward the importance of their sport are not significantly influenced by playing level.

4. **Overall Burnout (Whole Scale):** The overall burnout scores for state-level players ($M = 32.06$, $SD = 7.59$) and national-level players ($M = 31.47$, $SD = 7.73$) did not significantly differ, $t(198) = 0.493$, $p = .622$.

The results indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in burnout levels between state-level and national-level female football players across all subscales and the overall burnout scale ($p > .05$ for all comparisons). These findings suggest that playing level does not significantly affect burnout among the participants in this study.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that burnout is present among female football players, particularly in the dimensions of **Physical and Emotional Exhaustion** and **Sport Devaluation**. These results align with prior research suggesting that competitive athletes often experience high levels of physical and psychological strain due to intensive training regimens and performance expectations (Gustafsson, Kenttä, & Hassmén, 2011).

4.1 Burnout Levels among Female Football Players

The study revealed that female football players reported moderate-to-high levels of exhaustion, consistent with previous studies highlighting the demanding nature of football and its impact on athletes' well-being (Cresswell & Eklund, 2006). Players who feel physically and emotionally drained are more likely to experience reduced motivation and lower commitment to their sport (Smith, 1986). Moreover, the presence of sport devaluation—where players expressed diminished interest in their sport—suggests that prolonged exposure to competitive stress may lead to negative attitudes toward participation, a finding supported by Lonsdale, Hodge, and Rose (2009).

4.2 Differences in Burnout Based on Age, Locality, and Playing Level

Contrary to expectations, no significant differences were found in burnout levels based on **age**, **locality**, or **playing level**. These results suggest that burnout may not be solely influenced by demographic factors but rather by individual psychological resilience, coping mechanisms, and social support (Raedeke & Smith, 2009). While some studies indicate that younger athletes may be more susceptible to burnout due to developmental stressors (Isoard-Gautheur, Guillet-Descas, & Duda, 2012), the present findings do not support this assumption. Additionally, the lack of significant differences between state-level and national-level players suggests that burnout risks are prevalent across competitive tiers, regardless of experience or exposure to elite competition.

4.3 Implications for Athlete Well-being

Given the substantial levels of burnout reported in this study, it is essential for coaches, sports psychologists, and athletic organizations to implement strategies to mitigate its impact.

Previous research emphasizes the importance of **psychological skills training**, **mental health support**, and **workload management** as effective interventions to reduce burnout among athletes (Moen, Myhre, & Stiles, 2018). Encouraging self-determined motivation and fostering a supportive training environment may help in sustaining long-term participation in football while minimizing psychological distress (Lemyre, Roberts, & Stray-Gundersen, 2007).

4.4 Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights, some limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design prevents causal conclusions about burnout development over time. Future research could employ **longitudinal studies** to assess how burnout progresses throughout an athlete's career. Second, qualitative research methods, such as interviews, could provide deeper insights into the personal experiences of burnout among female football players. Lastly, examining additional psychological factors – such as **coping strategies**, **social support**, and **motivation styles** – could further enhance our understanding of burnout mechanisms in female athletes.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the findings highlight the need for proactive approaches to prevent burnout among female football players. While physical and emotional exhaustion remain key concerns, the absence of differences across age, locality, and playing level suggests that burnout is a widespread issue requiring systemic interventions. By prioritizing athlete well-being and fostering a positive sports environment, stakeholders can contribute to the long-term success and mental health of female football players.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study. The research was conducted independently, and no external influences or competing interests affected the study design, data collection, analysis, or interpretation of the results.

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