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Courtney Zarnick

Laura Harris

Janet Simon

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Assessment of Social Support Among High School Athletes

Courtney Zarnick; Laura Harris PhD, AT; Janet Simon PhD, AT

Division of Athletic Training, Ohio University

OBJECTIVE

In a sample of high school athletes (1) establish reliability of the 6-Item Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ6), and (2) describe the number of sources of social support and the associated levels of satisfaction with those sources by sex and academic rank.

DESIGN and SETTING

A prospective observational study was used to explore social support at two public high schools located in rural, Southeast Ohio.

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 41 healthy male and female high school athletes aged 14–19 who were members of a school-sponsored sports team during the Spring 2017 (n=22; 11 males, 11 females) season and Fall 2017 and Winter 2017–18 sports seasons (n=19, 18 males, 1 female) completed the SSQ6.

INTERVENTION

The SSQ6 was distributed prior to the participants' respective sport seasons. The SSQ6 produced two scores, the Social Support Questionnaire Number (SSQN) indicating the number of social support sources and the Social Support Questionnaire Satisfaction (SSQS) describing participants' satisfaction with the identified sources of support.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURE

The SSQN and the SSQS were analyzed using Cronbach's α to establish measures of internal consistency. An independent t-test ($p < 0.05$) examined SSQN and SSQS scores by sex, and ANOVA ($p < 0.05$) examined SSQN and SSQS scores by academic rank.

RESULTS

The reliability of the SSQ6 was established through measures of internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$ SSQN; $\alpha = 0.75$ SSQS). Individual item analysis indicated that internal consistency would not be improved considerably by deleting any one of the six items on the SSQ6 (Cronbach's α range = 0.87–0.91 SSQN; $\alpha = 0.48$ –0.56 SSQS). Differences between academic ranks failed to reach statistical significance ($p = 0.54$ SSQN; $p = 0.45$ SSQS). Female athletes reported statically significantly higher SSQ satisfaction scores ($p = 0.00$), but sex failed to impact the SSQN score ($p = 0.79$).

CONCLUSION

Previous studies have investigated social support in adults. Those studies have reported similar internal consistency (range = 0.69–0.98) and Cronbach's alpha (0.89) (Heitzmann et al and Sarason et al). Our findings suggest that the SSQ6 can be reliably used to assess the number of social support sources and the

satisfaction with those sources in an adolescent population. Furthermore, it was found that female athletes reported a higher satisfaction score than male athletes; however, academic rank failed to impact the SSQN and SSQS scores.

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