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Psychological vulnerability, anxiety and personal well-being in athletes

Introduction and objectives:

Our preparation for dealing with challenges, either tasks of our daily lives or competing in sports events, may be related to some specific changes in a physiological or cognitive point of view or to broader changes in our well-being. In the context of mental health, the perception of our vulnerability, as well as the indicators of how we function psychologically (dependence, automatic negative thoughts, etc.) can have an impact on our anxiety, both somatic and cognitive, and on our general well-being. Thus, the aim of our study is to verify, in endurance athletes, whether the perception of vulnerability (in mental and psychological health) is related to anxiety and well-being.

Methodology: It is a transversal and correlational study in a non-probabilistic sample of 47 endurance athletes (Triathlon/Mountain Bike), 41 men and six women. On average, they are 25 years old, most of them have primary/secondary education, single, non-smokers and without chronic diseases. The instruments used were: Anxiety

Scale in Sport, Personal Welfare Index, Psychological Vulnerability Scale and a question on Perception of Vulnerability regarding mental health. The data were collected with the informed consent of the participants who filled out the instruments provided at the beginning of the competition season.

Results and Discussion: The results show that psychological vulnerability is positively correlated with somatic anxiety, cognitive (worries) and total anxiety as a trait. It is also negatively correlated with the personal welfare index. Mental health vulnerability perception is positively correlated with psychological vulnerability and with cognitive anxiety (focus disorder).

Conclusions: This study is a relevant contribution for mental health technicians, especially for nurses, since it adds information on the biopsychosocial variables associated with athletes' mental health, providing guidelines to create specific programs to promote Mental Health and to prevent morbidity.

KEYWORDS:

Health vulnerability; Anxiety; Quality of life; Athletes