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Rates of Burnout Among Collegiate Athletic Trainers During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of COVID-19 related tasks on the rates of burnout in athletic trainers practicing in the collegiate setting.

DESIGN AND SETTING

Descriptive survey distributed via email direct link/QR code. Dependent variable: rate of burnout experienced by athletic trainers. Independent variables: gender, length of career, role type, increased job responsibilities.

PARTICIPANTS

Surveys distributed, return rate 44%(N=41). 51.2%(n=21) male, 48.8%(n=20) female. Separated by role, 85.4%(n=35) full-time, 9.8%(n=4) split position, 2.4%(n=1) graduate assistants, 2.4%(n=1) "Other", listing "Professor" as their role. Regarding length of time in the profession, 85.4%(n=35) veteran, 14.6%(n=6) novice.

INTERVENTION

14 question survey instrument. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were calculated for every applicable item. Inferential statistics, including Chi Square, Kruskal-Wallis, and Pearson's Product Moment, were used to determine statistical significance, alpha level set to $p = 0.05$ *a priori*. Data was analyzed using SPSS Version 28.0.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES

Copenhagen Burnout Inventory was used to analyze attitudes of burnout experienced by athletic trainers during COVID-19. Three areas of burnout were assessed including

personal burnout, work-related burnout, and client-related burnout. The study collected demographic information, as well as information on work tasks performed, impact of COVID-19 on work tasks, and increases in workload because of COVID-19. The study utilized a Likert Scale.

RESULTS

There was no statistically significant difference ($c^2_1 = .02$, $p = .88$) between male 51.2%(n=21)/female 20%(n=48.8) athletic trainers in the magnitude of burnout experienced during the pandemic. A statistically significant difference ($c^2_2 = 20.51$, $p < .001$) was revealed between novice 14.6%(n=6)/veteran 85.4%(n=35) athletic trainers in the magnitude of burnout experienced during the pandemic. There was no statistically significant difference ($c^2_3 = 5.23$, $p = .16$) found between full-time 85.4%(n=35)/split-position 9.8%(n=4) athletic trainers in the magnitude of burnout experienced during the pandemic. A significant positive relationship (Pearson $r = 0.37$; $p < 0.018$) was revealed between greater changes in job responsibilities($M=2.39, SD=0.86$) and increased workload($M=1.61, SD=0.49$) since the onset of the pandemic.

CONCLUSIONS

The results suggest that length of career and changes in job responsibilities were significant factors in the influence of burnout experienced by athletic trainers practicing during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is imperative to recognize these risk factors to avoid experiencing burnout and risking attrition from the athletic training profession.

KEY WORDS: Athletic Trainers, COVID-19, Collegiate, Burnout, Role Strain, Work-Life Balance

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