

## Psychological Stress and its Relation to Burnout of Egyptian Fencing Coaches

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**Abstract:** The current study aimed at identifying psychological stress and the degree of burnout of Egyptian fencing coaches. The researcher used the descriptive approach (survey) on a sample of 80 Egyptian fencing coaches. The researcher used the reasons of psychological stress for coaches measurement and the symptoms of burnout of sports coaches measurement. The researcher used the following statistical treatments: means, standard deviation, (t) test, correlation coefficient, variance analysis, L.S.D. Results indicated that the order of psychological stresses reasons varied in fencing coaches as follows: reasons related to players or sports teams, character and attributes of the coach and finally media. Order of symptoms of burnout in fencing coaches varied (emotional exhaustion, lack of sports achievement and physical exhaustion). The more experienced coaches experience less psychological stresses compared to less experienced coaches. The more the years of experience in coaching are the less the appearance of the burnout symptoms.

**Key words:** Fencing coaches % Psychological stress % Burnout

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### INTRODUCTION

Psychological stresses are the result of fast civilized developments that form a burden on the individual's resistance and ability to endure. Civilization carries risks that threaten human soul and the increase of development increases the unbearable stresses that man can never cope with. The increase of stresses affects, in turn, on physiological, psychological, mental and health aspects. This leads to exhaustion and then psychological burnout. Different kinds of stresses (life, social, economical, family career, study and emotional) affect the individual negatively unless it is relieved. So, ways of managing these stresses, either consciously or unconsciously aim at achieving balance and relieving such stresses as a response that individuals seek to achieve a state of balance [1].

Stresses are viewed as unidentified physical response to a specific demand. So, it is the most important recent issues that affect our society greatly as a major subject in many fields like medicine, physiology, physics, general health, education and other fields of science [2, 3].

In identifying the career psychological stresses and defining career pressures, most researchers agree that it is the situation where the environmental demands exceed

the individual's abilities. The level of psychological stresses depends on the individual's degree of achieving success or failure in responding to these demands. It is identified as "the stressful situations where environmental demands exceed the individual's abilities" [4]. Al-Faramawy and Abo Srea [5] indicated that it is the state of imbalance resulting from the imbalance between career demands the ability of the individual to meet them as this leads the individual to feel unable to satisfy his/her needs.

Burnout is a common phenomenon in many carrier fields, along with physical education as the professional burden of this field of work is full of stresses that affect the professional performance and life style. This is reflected in many psychological stresses that affect this performance. Suffering is a result of the inability to adapt to environmental variables. Stress is a result of the conflict between carrier demands and the inability to fulfill them. This leads to a significant decrease in work volume and a feeling of inability to progress, followed by a severe feeling of stress that may reach a state of apathy with work demands, quick anger, despair and a decrease in necessary energy to work under pressure. Those who suffer from such symptoms are self-centered, unable to concentrate and, in many cases, unable to carry on their work [6, 7].

The sports coach represents the main factor in the training process as providing sports teams with proper coaches is one of the major problems facing athletes and administrators in sports clubs as well [8]. The successful coach - as a leader - is expected to give the team a future vision and knows how to articulate this vision into reality so that every athlete has the opportunity to achieve success [9].

Weinberger and Gould [10] indicated that a few individuals know the huge amount of work required from the sports coach before, during and after sports competitions as he/she works for long hours under stress. Petrie [11], Silva [12] and Cohen [13] agree that sports' coaching is a profession that is highly connected with stress as the coach's work is connected with many factors characterized by emotions like anxiety and tension, along with psychological and physiological stimulation and psychological and nervous stress. All these factors lead the coach to power and energy depletion, deprive him/her from enjoying his/her life and may lead to some physiological disorders.

Trendall [14] and Askar [15] agreed that one of the effects of severe stress is burnout, indicating the state of exhaustion or physical and emotional depletion due to severe continuous stresses. Burnout is represented in some of the negative effects like fatigue, exhaustion, helplessness, losing care for others, losing care for career, depression, sarcasm of others, doubts about the value of life and social relations and negative self-concept [16, 17]. Indicators of increased stress are sleep disorders, indigestion, breathing disorders, heart palpitation, worry about things without reasons, muscular tension, depression, quick anger for no reasons, wrong explanation of the others' behaviors and intentions, quick fatigue, succession of illness and having accidents [18]. Leach [19] and Frymier *et al.* [7] indicated that high or severe stress lead to the decrease of effectiveness, depletion of adaptive sources and disintegration that may last long, especially if the stress is too high or too sudden. It leads to post traumatic stress disorder that includes anxiety, excess tension and repeated fearful nightmares and in some cases depression, decrease of attention and weak memory, leading the individual to withdraw from social life [7, 19].

Through the literature review for studied dealing with psychological stresses on workers in the sports field [14, 17, 20-26] it is clear that these studies did not deal with identifying the reasons of stress in fencing coaches and its relation to the symptoms and indicators of

burnout, leading the researcher to do this research, in a try to find out scientific solutions suitable for coping with career stress facing fencing coaches in fulfilling their training duties.

The current research aims at identifying the reasons of stress in Egyptian fencing coaches and its relation to the symptoms and indicators of burnout through identifying: 1- Reasons of increased stress in Egyptian fencing coaches. 2- Symptoms and indicators of burnout in Egyptian fencing coaches. 3- Differences between more experienced and less experienced Egyptian fencing coaches on the stress and burnout measures. 4- The relations between stress and symptoms and indicators of burnout in Egyptian fencing coaches.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Sample and Community:** The researcher used the descriptive approach (survey), research community included fencing coaches registered in the Egyptian Fencing Federation 2009 - 2010 (118 coaches). The researcher chose a random sample of 80 coaches in sports clubs and youth centers (50 coaches with less than 10 years of experience and 30 coaches with more than 10 years of experience). Another 20 coaches were chosen randomly as a sample of the pilot study.

### Tools and Equipment of Collecting Data

**Psychological Stresses Inventory for Sports Coaches:** It is prepared by Martens [27] and the Arabic version was prepared by Allawy [28] to identify the reasons that increase psychological pressures on sports coaches. It includes 30 items distributed on 5 axes. The coach is asked to respond to each item according to his/her own personal opinion and his/her belief in its importance in increasing psychological pressures on sports coaches on a five-grade scale as 5 is the highest importance degree and 1 is the least.

**Psychological Burnout Inventory for Sports Coaches:** It is prepared by Weinberg and Gould [10] and the Arabic version was prepared by Allawy [28] to identify the simultaneous symptoms that lead to burnout in sports coaches. It includes 30 items distributed on 5 axes. The coach is asked to respond to each item according to the five-grade scale (very high - high - moderate - low - very low) as 5 is the highest importance degree and 1 is the least and the records can be added to identify the severity of symptoms.

Table 1: Correlation coefficient between each statement and the total score of the axis and the total score of the inventory for the Psychological Stresses Inventory of the Sports Coach (n=20)

Correlation Coefficient with total score of the axis	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the inventory	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the axis	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the inventory	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the axis	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the inventory	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the axis	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the inventory	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the axis	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the inventory
0.694	0.786	0.790	0.781	0.722	0.751	0.768	0.723	0.699	0.714
0.781	0.745	0.783	0.735	0.781	0.691	0.771	0.645	0.671	0.728
0.705	0.738	0.785	0.716	0.708	0.654	0.687	0.666	0.705	0.747
0.789	0.691	0.777	0.774	0.699	0.707	0.698	0.697	0.725	0.689
0.694	0.697	0.752	0.761	0.777	0.698	0.705	0.701	0.719	0.734
0.785	0.701	0.715	0.759	0.751	0.777	0.681	0.769	0.700	0.715
1 <sup>st</sup> axis	0.725	2 <sup>nd</sup> axis	0.742	3 <sup>rd</sup> axis	0.713	4 <sup>th</sup> axis	0.707	5 <sup>th</sup> axis	0.718

C table values on p # 0.05 = 0.444

Table 2: Correlation coefficient between each statement and the total score of the axis and the total score of the inventory for the Psychological burnout Inventory of the Sports Coach (n=20)

Correlation Coefficient with total score of the axis	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the inventory	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the axis	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the inventory	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the axis	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the inventory	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the axis	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the inventory	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the axis	Correlation Coefficient with total score of the inventory
0.759	0.731	0.645	0.685	0.702	0.718	0.694	0.705	0.715	0.742
0.716	0.725	0.700	0.651	0.687	0.705	0.754	0.711	0.707	0.710
0.709	0.719	0.685	0.657	0.701	0.724	0.770	0.679	0.700	0.697
0.724	0.713	0.661	0.699	0.733	0.751	0.689	0.651	0.678	0.685
0.701	0.689	0.754	0.705	0.758	0.769	0.642	0.702	0.723	0.666
0.697	0.687	0.713	0.724	0.690	0.725	0.650	0.700	0.694	0.675
1 <sup>st</sup> axis	0.757	2 <sup>nd</sup> axis	0.731	3 <sup>rd</sup> axis	0.755	4 <sup>th</sup> axis	0.748	5 <sup>th</sup> axis	0.709

C table values on p # 0.05 = 0.444

Table 3: Stability coefficients of the used tests and measurements (n=20)

Measurement	Axes	Correlation coefficient
Psychological Stresses Inventory of the Sports Coach	Factors related to players or team	0.621
	Factors related to coach's traits and character	0.619
	Factors related to administration	0.607
	Factors related to media	0.719
	Factors related to audience	0.715
Psychological burnout Inventory of the Sports Coach	Mental exhaustion	0.630
	Physical exhaustion	0.670
	Emotional exhaustion	0.656
	Personal change to the worst	0.649
	Lack of sports achievement	0.706

C table values on p # 0.05 = 0.444

The researcher performed the pilot study from 4-10-2009 to 15-10-2009 on 20 fencing coaches from the original community of research and outside the main sample to identify stability and validity of measurements.

**Scientific Coefficients (Validity-Stability) of the Used Tests and Measurements:** To check the validity of the used tests and measurements, the researcher used the internal consistency by finding out the correlation coefficient between each statement and the total score of the axis and the total score of the inventory (Tables 1 and 2).

From Table 1, it is clear that there is a statistically significant correlation between the statements of each axis and the specified axis. Besides, there is a statistically

significant correlation between each axis and the total score of the inventory. This indicates that the measurement measures what it is meant to measure.

From Table 2, it is clear that there is a statistically significant correlation between the statements of each axis and the specified axis. Besides, there is a statistically significant correlation between each axis and the total score of the inventory. This indicates that the measurement measures what it is meant to measure.

To find out the stability of the used tests and measurements, the researcher used the cut-half-procedure as Person correlation coefficient was calculated between singles statements and pair statements for each axis of both inventories as shown in Table 3.

From Table 3, it is clear that there is a statistically significant correlation on 0.05 between singles statements and pair statements for each axis of both inventories, indicating that both inventories have a high degree of stability.

**Main Study:** The researcher applied the psychological pressures and burnout measurements on the sample (80 coaches) from 18-10-2009 to 15-11-2009 and after giving their responds on the items, forms were collected and corrected according to each coach's responds. Data were then statistically treated.

**Statistical Treatments:** The researcher used the SPSS 15.0, statistical program for data processing.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From Table 4, it is clear that there are statistically significant differences among the dimensions of psychological pressures measurement. The researcher calculates variance significance between means using L.S.D. test.

From Table 5, it is clear that there are statistically significant differences between the causes related to athletes or teams and other causes in favor of causes related to athletes or teams. There are statistically significant differences between causes related to the coach's character and other causes in favor of causes related to the coach's character. There are statistically significant differences between causes related to media and other causes in favor of causes related to media. There are statistically significant differences between causes related to fans and other causes in favor of causes related to fans. There are statistically significant differences between causes related to administration and other causes in favor of causes related to administration.

From Table 6, it is clear that there are statistically significant differences among the dimensions of burnout measurement. The researcher calculates variance significance between means using L.S.D. test.

From Table 7, it is clear that there are statistically significant differences between emotional exhaustion and other dimensions in favor of emotional exhaustion. There are statistically significant differences between lack of sports achievements and other dimensions in favor of lack

Table 4: Variance analysis among the dimensions of psychological pressures measurement

Source	Square sum	Freedom degree	Squares mean	V value
Intra-groups	73.20	4	18.30	7.75 *
Inter-groups	58.95	25	2.36	

V table value on p # 0.05 = 2.78

Table 5: Variance significance between means using L.S.D. test for psychological pressures

Dimensions	Means	Difference between means					L.S.D. Value
		1	2	3	4	5	
Causes related to athletes or teams	27.50	----	2.5	4.5	6.7	9.3	1.63
Causes related to the coach's character	25.00		----	2.00	4.2	6.8	
Causes related to media	23.00			----	2.2	4.8	
Causes related to fans	20.80				----	2.6	
Causes related to administration	18.20					----	

Table 6: Variance analysis among the dimensions of burnout measurement

Source	Square sum	Freedom degree	Squares mean	V value
Intra-groups	70.61	4	17.65	8.61 *
Inter-groups	51.22	25	2.05	

V table value on p # 0.05 = 2.78

Table 7: Variance significance between means using L.S.D. test for burnout

Dimensions	Means	Difference between means					L.S.D. Value
		1	2	3	4	5	
Emotional exhaustion	25.80	----	1.80	3.70	5.80	8.30	1.47
Lack of sports achievement	24.00		----	1.90	2.00	6.50	
Mental exhaustion	22.10			----	2.10	4.60	
Physical exhaustion	20.00				----	2.50	
Personal change to the worst	17.50					----	

Table 8: Variance significance between more experienced and less experienced fencing coaches on psychological pressures measurement

	More experienced (n=30)		Less experienced (n=50)		(t) values
	M1	Sd1	M2	SD2	
Related to athletes or teams	21.50	2.19	26.90	2.61	2.21 *
Related to coach's character	23.00	2.33	27.50	2.94	2.94 *
Related to administration	18.50	2.01	23.40	2.58	3.03 *
Related to media	19.60	2.17	25.00	2.80	3.19 *
Related to fans	16.00	2.22	23.80	2.37	2.86 *

(t) table values on p # 0.05 = 2.131 \* significant on 0.05

Table 9: Variance significance between more experienced and less experienced fencing coaches on burnout measurement

	More experienced (n=30)		Less experienced (n=30)		(t) values
	M1	Sd1	M2	SD2	
Mental exhaustion	14.00	1.95	21.32	2.29	3.97 *
Physical exhaustion	14.20	1.87	20.00	2.37	3.85 *
Emotional exhaustion	18.50	2.03	23.00	2.60	2.78 *
Personal change to the worst	20.00	2.11	24.10	2.45	3.15 *
Lack of sports achievement	20.90	2.39	26.68	2.68	3.17 *

(t) table values on p # 0.05 = 2.131 \* significant on 0.05

Table 10: Correlation coefficients between psychological pressures dimensions and symptoms of burnout in fencing coaches

Causes	More experienced (n=30)	Less experienced (n=30)
Related to athletes or teams	-0.712	0.627
Related to coach's character	-0.697	0.685
Related to administration	-0.658	0.617
Related to media	-0.701	0.631
Related to fans	-0.698	0.655

of sports achievement. There are statistically significant differences between mental exhaustion and other dimensions in favor of mental exhaustion. There are statistically significant differences between physical exhaustion and other dimensions in favor of physical exhaustion. There are statistically significant differences between personal change to the worst and other dimensions in favor of personal change to the worst.

From Table 8, it is clear that there are statistically significant differences on 0.05 between more experienced and less experienced coaches on the psychological

pressures measurement in favor of less experienced coaches.

From Table 9, it is clear that there are statistically significant differences on 0.05 between more experienced and less experienced coaches on the burnout measurement in favor of less experienced coaches.

From Table 10, there is a statistically significant negative correlation on 0.05 between the dimensions of psychological pressures and burnout symptoms for more experienced coaches while the same correlation was positive for less experienced coaches.

## **DISCUSSION**

Table 4 showed statistical significant differences on 0.05 between the psychological pressures measurements for coaches. While Table 5 showed statistically significant differences between the causes related to athletes or teams and other causes in favor of causes related to athletes or teams. There are statistically significant differences between causes related to the coach's character and other causes in favor of causes related to the coach's character. There are statistically significant differences between causes related to media and other causes in favor of causes related to media. There are statistically significant differences between causes related to fans and other causes in favor of causes related to fans. There are statistically significant differences between causes related to administration and other causes in favor of causes related to administration.

These results are in agreement with findings of previous studies [14, 17, 20-26] as these studies indicated the same causes of psychological pressures - or at least some of them - even if not at the same order. The most acute causes were related to athletes and sports teams followed by the coach's character. Rateb [29] indicated that the coach faces many pressures related to athletes as he suffers from the lack of appreciation to what he/she is doing, besides the conflicts among athletes and his/her failure in motivating athletes towards their goal.

The researcher thinks that causes of psychological pressures are due to certain repeated problems concerning athletes like injuries, social, financial and technical problems. All this left to the coach to solve. The administration interference in the coach's work leaves him/her psychologically unstable as he / she faces blames in cases of lose and he / she is ignored by the media as it is not interested in fencing or its results. This affects the coach negatively. So, the first hypothesis is achieved.

Table 6 shows statistical significant differences on 0.05 on the burnout measurement for coaches. Table 7 shows statistically significant differences between emotional exhaustion and other dimensions in favor of emotional exhaustion. There are statistically significant differences between lack of sports achievements and other dimensions in favor of lack of sports achievement. There are statistically significant differences between mental exhaustion and other dimensions in favor of mental exhaustion. There are statistically significant differences between physical exhaustion and other dimensions in favor of physical exhaustion. There are statistical

significant differences between personal change to the worst and other dimensions in favor of personal change to the worst.

The researcher thinks that the emergence of burnout symptoms is due to frequently faced problematic situations faced by coaches during training and competition as the coach can not adapt to these situations leading him/her to feel physically strained and nervous. He/she deals with others negatively and the lack of concentration makes him/her unable to take correct decision leading him to what is called burnout and eventually quit coaching. This is in agreement with previous studies [14, 20-25] as they indicated that psychological pressures lead to burnout in coaches. This proves the second hypothesis.

Table 8 showed statistical differences on 0.05 between more experienced and less experienced coaches on the dimensions of psychological pressures measurement in favor of less experienced coaches. The researcher thinks that the past experiences of the coach in training and competition play a major role in relieving psychological pressures as the more experienced coach can isolate himself/herself from the crowds as a source of pressure or even from any source of pressure that represents a threat of a nervous pressure. The coach chooses the members of his/her staff, distributes authorities according to their abilities and so avoids many problems that can occur. This is in agreement with Zidan [30] as the previous experiences of the coach make him/her acts as a model for his/her trainees. This relieves the pressure of bad conduct and other misbehaviors that cause psychological pressures. This coach has the emotional stability in cases of winning or losing so that he/she can control his/her emotions to avoid anger and speaking unrespectable with referees.

Table 9 shows statistically significant differences on 0.05 between more experienced and less experienced coaches on the burnout measurement in favor of less experienced coaches. This result is due that almost all less experienced coaches are former players when went directly into the field of training without any preparation to qualify them. This put them under psychological pressure due to the lack of preparation and inability to cope with players, the team or even the administrative problems. This makes the coach feel insecure, unstable and very sensitive towards criticism leading the coach to feel unable to achieve any more or even elevate the players' performance level. All this leads to a state of anxiety and stress manifested in the form of burnout.

This is in agreement with Rateb [1] that less experienced coaches are more vulnerable to burnout compared to more experienced coaches who have the skills to cope with stress in training and competitions. This proves the third hypothesis.

Table 10 indicates a statistically significant negative relation on 0.05 between the dimensions of psychological pressures and burnout symptoms for more experienced coaches while the same correlation was positive for less experienced coaches.

This is due to the lack of experience as more experienced coaches have the ability to cope with stress and this decreases the opportunity to get burnout. This is in agreement with Rateb [29]. Coaching is a profession that has many sources of burnout. This requires that the coach must deal with all situations with a great deal of wisdom, whatever the situation is or who is involved in it. This can be acquired through experience and learning from trial and error. This proves the fourth hypothesis.

## CONCLUSION

The arrangement of psychological stress causes varied for fencing coaches and it was as follows:

- C Causes related to athletes and teams.
- C Causes related to the coach's character.
- C Causes related to media.
- C Causes related to fans.
- C Causes related to administration.

The arrangement of burnout causes varied for fencing coaches and it was as follows:

- C Emotional exhaustion.
- C Lack of sports achievement.
- C Mental exhaustion.
- C Physical exhaustion.
- C Personal change to the worst.

More experienced coaches are less vulnerable to stress compared to less experienced coaches.

More experienced coaches are less vulnerable to burnout compared to less experienced coaches.

There is a statistically significant relation between psychological pressures and burnout symptoms for fencing coaches.

**Recommendations:** The researcher recommends the following:

- C Coaches should have psychological care with suitable policies to face stress situations.
- C Making training courses for psychological care of the coach to make coaches know how to preserve their mental, psychological and physical health and how to cope with stress situations.
- C A psychological care portfolio for each coach should be made available to identify causes of stress and burnout and how to solve them.
- C The coach should be aware of causes of burnout and how to avoid them using relaxation technique.
- C Psychological tests should be done periodically for all fencing coaches to identify causes of stress during the training season.
- C Paying more attention to financial rewards like transportation fees, salaries and rewards to enhance the standards of living for coaches to decrease the causes of stress.

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