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ATHLETIC BURNOUT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL COPING SKILLS OF TRACK AND FIELD ATHLETES IN NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

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Abstract

This study examined the level of athletic burnout and the extent of psychological coping skills of track and field athletes in Negros Occidental, Philippines, and tested the relationship between the two constructs. A descriptive-correlational design was used with 225 track and field athletes aged 13 to 18 years, selected through stratified random sampling from 18 cities and municipalities in the province. Athletic burnout was measured using the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ; Raedeke & Smith, 2001), and psychological coping skills were measured using the Athletic Coping Skills Inventory-28 (ACSI-28; Smith et al., 1995). Results showed an overall low level of athletic burnout (M = 2.81), with a reduced sense of accomplishment (M = 3.19, moderate) scoring higher than physical/emotional exhaustion (M = 2.72) and sport devaluation (M = 2.53). Psychological coping skills were generally at a moderate extent (M = 2.12), with coachability, concentration, and freedom from worry receiving the lowest subscale ratings. Athletic burnout differed significantly by sex, sporting event, and level of competition, but not by length of involvement. Psychological coping skills differed significantly by sex and sporting event—particularly confidence/achievement motivation and goal-setting/mental preparation—but not by length of involvement or level of competition. Correlational analysis revealed that coachability, concentration, and freedom from worry were significantly and positively associated with all three burnout dimensions, while coping with adversity and confidence/achievement motivation showed no significant relationship with burnout. These findings suggest that burnout among adolescent track and field athletes is tied to specific coping dimensions rather than to overall coping capacity, and they point to a need for coach-athlete communication strategies and mental skills programs that address anxiety management and receptiveness to feedback alongside physical training.

Keywords: *athletic burnout, psychological coping skills, track and field athletes, Athlete Burnout Questionnaire, Athletic Coping Skills Inventory, Negros Occidental*

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Introduction

Athletes—individuals who exercise to improve their performance through organized sport—experience many well-documented advantages from participation, including improved physical health, stronger social networks, and heightened well-being (Araújo & Scharhag, 2016; Hulteen et al., 2017). Athletics, commonly referred to as track and field, has a particularly long history of transcending barriers of politics, race, religion, and gender because of its accessibility and capacity to unite nations and civilizations through iconic competitors (Sonkeng et al., 2020). Sport participation, however, is not uniformly beneficial: it can also generate stress that, left unmanaged, develops into burnout (Marangoni et al., 2023).

Sport nevertheless provides a relatively controlled environment in which athletes can learn adaptive coping skills, since it exposes them to a range of challenges and disappointments at comparatively low stakes, allowing them to discover firsthand which coping mechanisms work for them (Kroshus, 2017). Conversely, poor coping skills are believed to precede burnout over time; burnout develops as an athlete's internal resources are gradually outstripped by the demands placed on them by their sport (Eklund & DeFreese, 2015). Existing studies offer initial insight into this relationship, but further investigation is needed to determine how psychological coping skills interact with the risk of burnout, specifically among track and field athletes, whose sport is individual, high-pressure, and metrics-driven, and who may quit altogether if they cannot manage its demands. This study, therefore, assessed whether psychological coping skills are associated with athletic burnout among track and field athletes in Negros Occidental, with the broader aim of contributing to strategies that help young athletes avoid or reduce burnout and sustain long-term participation in their sport.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Mental Toughness Theory. Mental toughness is a personality trait or character attribute reflecting an individual's capacity to function at their best under pressure, involving determination, persistence, and decision-making sustained by a strong outlook (Dovetail, 2023). It helps athletes establish and continue working toward goals; given athletes' elevated risk of mental health problems, mental toughness has been associated with adaptive mental health functioning, including reduced stress and depression and improved sleep quality (Cowden et al., 2019), and may protect athletes from indicators of burnout in sport (Madigan & Nicholls, 2017).

Cai et al. (2025) found that mental toughness plays a dimension-specific mediating role between sport psychological skills and the motivational-cognitive facets of burnout—namely, reduced sense of accomplishment and sport devaluation. This suggests that sport psychology skills exert their protective influence in part by strengthening mental toughness, which in turn helps athletes sustain commitment and a positive self-evaluation under difficulty. Notably, the same study found no mediating role for emotional and physical exhaustion, suggesting that this burnout dimension is rooted more in physiological depletion than in cognitive or motivational processes, and therefore requires intervention strategies beyond mental skills training alone.

Review of Related Literature

Athlete burnout is a psychophysiological syndrome characterized by three traits: physical and emotional exhaustion, a reduced sense of accomplishment, and sport devaluation, producing negative psychophysiological and behavioral effects, including poor performance, diminished concentration, sport abandonment, and sleep disturbance (Gustafsson et al., 2017). Emotional exhaustion, the syndrome's primary component, has been linked inconsistently to athletic identity, suggesting that boundary conditions still need to be identified (Chang et al., 2018). In track and field specifically—an individual sport in which success depends on genetic predisposition,

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training, physical characteristics, technique, tactical awareness, motivation, and other psychological traits (Znazen et al., 2017)—athletes with an obsessive passion for their sport appear more likely to burn out as a result of training demands, competition outcomes, and self-imposed performance expectations; concern over failure and socially prescribed perfectionism are significant predictors of burnout among professional athletes, as are demands from teams, coaches, and family (Bicalho & Da Costa, 2018).

Athletes with higher emotional intelligence tend to show more realistic self-esteem, optimal anxiety levels, an internal locus of control, and more adaptive motivation; the less athletes understand their own emotions, the more likely they are to experience burnout and misread others' emotions (Popovych et al., 2022). Elite athletes with higher positive affect report lower burnout (Gustafsson et al., 2015), and mindfulness appears to buffer against burnout by shifting athletes' outlook and reducing experiential avoidance (Zhang et al., 2016). Coaches and other professionals working with competitive athletes, therefore, need a thorough understanding of the stressors that precede burnout in order to provide effective social support (Wang et al., 2015). Bicalho and Da Costa (2018) further concluded that intrinsic motivation, self-oriented perfectionism grounded in personal standards, and harmonious (rather than obsessive) passion all function as protective factors against burnout in elite athletes, whereas amotivation is strongly associated with burnout and athlete dropout.

Within track and field specifically, burnout appears to accumulate with years of participation as athletes are repeatedly judged on individual performance and experience cumulative physical and mental fatigue, including declines in speed, agility, and flexibility (Demir & Namlı, 2019). Young track and field athletes report higher well-being and less burnout when their talent-development environment is athlete-centered and supportive (Thomas et al., 2021), and collegiate track and field athletes report more positive sport experiences and lower burnout when coach communication is more supportive (Pacewicz & Smith, 2023). Individual-sport athletes also tend to report greater competitive anxiety than team-sport athletes, since outcomes rest on a single competitor rather than being shared across teammates (Rocha & Osorio, 2018).

Huang and Huang (2024) identified environmental, psychological, and physical causes of sport burnout among Taiwanese adolescent track and field athletes: physical exhaustion and injury from prolonged intense training; psychological strain from high pressure, monotonous training, and low self-esteem; and a lack of support from classmates, coaches, and family. The same study found that academic pressure and parental expectations were the leading reasons adolescent athletes did not pursue athletics-focused secondary education, with family priorities often weighing more heavily than the athlete's own preference. Related work on the competitive preparation cycle found that athletes with lower psychological qualifications were less likely to show burnout symptoms when their psychological well-being was otherwise high, with the notable exception of reduced sense of accomplishment under high family and pro-social pressure; athletes who struggled to adapt to prolonged stress exhibited burnout most strongly (Nagovitsyn et al., 2018).

Track and field throwers, who have a limited number of attempts per competition, face particularly difficult in-competition situations, meaning individual-based events may demand a distinct form of psychological preparation, coping, and grit (Criticos et al., 2020). Athletes generally use coping skills—behavioral and cognitive techniques for managing internal and external stressors—to handle the psychological stress created by high-performance standards, personal responsibility, competition pressure, and fear of failure (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, as cited in Nicholls et al., 2016). Nuetzel (2023) found significant differences in coping strategies by skill level and gender (more experienced and male athletes reported more effective coping) but no differences by injury history or event type. Developing coping mechanisms and mental toughness has been shown to improve athletes' capacity to perform under competitive demands (Beckford et al., 2016), and psychological resilience among track and field athletes has been linked to improved perceived self-efficacy, together forming an integrated psychological construct that supports training continuity and performance under pressure (Ahmed, 2026).

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Self-management behavior appears to mediate the relationship between athletes' vigor and their sport coping skills, with tension moderating this mediating effect (Kim et al., 2022). Coping strategies also appear to interact with help-seeking: athletes with better coping strategies and stronger coach support are more likely to seek professional psychological help, and women have been found to show less positive coping and less favorable attitudes toward seeking such help than men in some samples (Rossi, 2016, as cited in Bedir et al., 2018; Kroshus, 2017). Resilient and non-resilient athletes show distinct coping profiles: resilient athletes favor problem-focused coping and social support and show a positive association between resilience and task-oriented coping, whereas non-resilient athletes favor avoidance, and avoidant coping is associated with higher burnout while problem-focused coping is associated with higher self-oriented perfectionism (Nuetzel, 2023). Athletes typically manage failure—a persistent feature of competitive life—through positive self-talk, positive reframing, and the deliberate elimination of negative failure-related thoughts (Sehrawat, 2019), and positive psychological variables such as facilitative emotions and challenge-oriented appraisals are associated with problem-focused coping and higher coping efficacy, whereas strategies such as humor, denial, and emotional support show more complex and variable patterns (González-Díaz et al., 2025).

Statement of the Problem

This study assessed the level of athletic burnout and the extent of psychological coping skills of track and field athletes in Negros Occidental. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of (a) sex, (b) length of involvement, (c) sporting event/s, and (d) level of competition?
2. What is the level of athletic burnout of track and field athletes in terms of (a) physical/emotional exhaustion, (b) reduced sense of accomplishment, and (c) sport devaluation?
3. What is the extent of psychological coping skills of track and field athletes in terms of (a) coping with adversity, (b) coachability, (c) concentration, (d) confidence and achievement motivation, (e) goal setting and mental preparation, (f) peaking under pressure, and (g) freedom from worry?
4. Is there a significant difference in the level of athletic burnout of track and field athletes when grouped according to demographic profile?
5. Is there a significant difference in the level of psychological coping skills of track and field athletes when grouped according to demographic profile?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the level of athletic burnout and psychological coping skills of track and field athletes?
7. What intervention program can be recommended based on the results of the study?

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant difference in the level of athletic burnout of track and field athletes when grouped according to demographic profile.

H02: There is no significant difference in the level of psychological coping skills of track and field athletes when grouped according to demographic profile.

H03: There is no significant relationship between the level of athletic burnout and psychological coping skills of track and field athletes.

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Significance of the Study

Findings are intended to benefit sports organizations, coaches, and sports coordinators by identifying early indicators of burnout and the coping dimensions most in need of reinforcement, allowing them to design more supportive training environments and evidence-based mental training programs. Track and field athletes themselves—both current and developing—stand to benefit from a clearer understanding of burnout and coping, which can help them build resilience and sustain long-term engagement in their sport. Physical education instructors, future researchers, and other stakeholders involved in youth sport development may likewise draw on these findings to inform policy on training load, mental health support, and athlete well-being.

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Methods

Research Design

This study used a descriptive-correlational design, analyzing the relationships among two or more variables characterizing an ongoing phenomenon and describing the prevalence of statistically significant differences within the sample. As Manjunatha (2019) notes, descriptive research aims to describe the characteristics of a demographic segment rather than to explain why a phenomenon occurs. The descriptive component of this study profiled the respondents and identified the level of athletic burnout and the extent of psychological coping skills they reported. The correlational component tested the hypothesized relationships and differences—specifically, how sex and length of involvement (together with sporting event and level of competition) relate to athletic burnout and psychological coping skills, and how burnout and coping skills relate to one another.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted across Local Government Units (LGUs) in the Province of Negros Occidental, selected on the basis of their participation in the athletic events of the Special Program and Concern Division–Sports Office of the Negros Occidental Provincial Government. This locale was chosen in part because the researcher is affiliated with, and serves as a part-time official of, the Provincial Sports Office.

Respondents and Sampling

Respondents were track and field athletes in Negros Occidental aged 13 to 18 years, at the high school level, and registered in the Youth and Junior category of the Special Program and Concern Division–Sports Office. Of 515 qualified athletes, 225 were selected as the study sample using a stratified sampling technique, proportionate to each LGU's share of the qualified population. Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents by LGU.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Local Government Unit

Local Government Unit	Population	Sample Size	Percentage
Bacolod City	94	41	18%
Sagay City	32	14	6%
Escalante	6	3	1%
Kabankalan City	16	7	3%
San Enrique	65	28	13%
La Castellana	24	10	5%
Manapla	15	7	3%
Talisay City	22	10	4%
Pulupandan	8	3	2%

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Local Government Unit	Population	Sample Size	Percentage
Bago City	37	16	7%
Victorias City	23	10	4%
Murcia	47	21	9%
La Carlota City	53	23	10%
Silay City	50	22	10%
San Carlos City	1	0	0%
Hinigaran	4	2	1%
Cadiz City	15	7	3%
Hinobaan	3	1	1%
Total	515	225	100%

Instrumentation

A standardized questionnaire—one distributed so that every participant answers exactly the same items in the same format, with responses recorded and scored consistently—served as the data-gathering instrument, composed of three parts.

Part I gathered the respondents' profiles: sex, length of involvement, sporting event/s, and level of competition. Part II was the 15-item Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ; Raedeke, 1997; Raedeke & Smith, 2001), which measures athlete burnout along three subscales—physical/emotional exhaustion (items 2, 4, 8, 10, 12), reduced sense of accomplishment (items 1, 5, 7, 13, 14), and sport devaluation (items 3, 6, 9, 11, 15)—using the stem "How often do you feel this way?" and a 5-point scale (1 = Almost Never to 5 = Almost Always). Two items (1 and 14) are reverse-scored, such that lower scores indicate a reduced sense of accomplishment.

Part III was the 28-item Athletic Coping Skills Inventory (ACSI-28; Smith et al., 1994, 1995), which measures psychological coping skills across seven subscales on a 4-point scale (0 = Almost Never to 3 = Almost Always), with reverse-scored items marked by an asterisk: coping with adversity (5, 17, 21, 24), coachability (3*, 10*, 15, 27), concentration (4, 11, 16, 25), confidence and achievement motivation (2, 9, 14, 26), goal setting and mental preparation (1, 8, 13, 20), peaking under pressure (6, 18, 22, 28), and freedom from worry (7*, 12*, 19*, 23*). Higher scores indicate greater psychological coping strength.

Validity and Reliability

The ABQ is a widely used standard for assessing sport-specific burnout, and its three-factor structure has demonstrated convergent validity in confirmatory factor analyses (Raedeke & Smith, 2001); its subscales have strong contextual face validity for track and field, an individual, high-volume training sport in which performance

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is rigorously quantified. The ACSI-28 has likewise shown good construct and predictive validity across its seven subscales in competitive sport settings, and is particularly applicable to track and field because it captures both situational acute stress (e.g., a false start or pre-competition anxiety) and individual mental preparation.

Both instruments have historically shown good internal consistency, with the ABQ's three subscales consistently exceeding a Cronbach's alpha of .70 (Raedeke & Smith, 2001) and the ACSI-28 showing a historical overall alpha of .86 (Smith et al., 1995). Internal consistency was recalculated for the present sample to confirm that both instruments performed reliably in this study's context.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher secured the necessary approvals from her advisory and panel committee, the Graduate School Dean, Department and Campus Heads, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs of Central Philippines State University, and obtained written permission from the head of the Special Program and Concerns Division–Sports Section of the Province of Negros Occidental to survey the selected 225 athletes. Ethical procedures were followed throughout, and respondents self-administered the questionnaire. Confidentiality of respondents' identities and responses was maintained at all times, and completed instruments were processed using appropriate statistical software.

Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe the respondents' demographic profile. Mean and standard deviation were used to describe the level of athletic burnout and the extent of psychological coping skills, interpreted using the scales below.

Table 2. Interpretation Scale for Athletic Burnout (ABQ)

Mean	Range	Interpretation
5	4.20–5.00	Very High
4	3.40–4.19	High
3	2.60–3.39	Moderate
2	1.80–2.79	Low
1	1.00–1.79	Very Low

Table 3. Interpretation Scale for Psychological Coping Skills (ACSI-28)

Mean	Range	Interpretation
3	2.50–3.00	High Extent
2	1.50–2.49	Moderate Extent

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Mean	Range	Interpretation
1	0.50–1.49	Low Extent
0	0.00–0.49	Not at All

T-test and ANOVA were used to test for significant differences in athletic burnout and psychological coping skills across demographic groups (hypotheses 1 and 2), and Pearson's r was used to test the relationship between athletic burnout and psychological coping skills (hypothesis 3).

Scope and Limitations

This study was limited to 225 track and field athletes aged 13–18 from 18 cities and municipalities in Negros Occidental who were registered in the Youth and Junior competition category; findings may not generalize to older, non-competitive, or non-Filipino track and field populations. Burnout and coping skills were assessed through standardized self-report instruments at a single time point, which does not capture how these constructs may change over an athletic season or career, and the correlational design does not permit causal inference between coping skills and burnout.

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Results and Discussion

Profile of the Respondents

Table 4 presents the distribution of respondents by sex, length of involvement, sporting event, and highest level of competition. Most respondents were male (59.1%) and had between one and three years of involvement in the sport (53.3%); most competed in running/hurdling events (68.4%) and had reached the Division Meet (33.3%) or Provincial Meet (32.9%) level of competition.

Table 4. Profile of the Track and Field Athletes (N = 225)

Profile	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Male	133	59.1
Female	92	40.9
Length of Involvement		
Less than 1 year	37	16.4
1 to 3 years	120	53.3
More than 3 to 6 years	40	17.8
More than 6 to 9 years	13	5.8
More than 9 years	15	6.7
Sporting Event/s		
Running/Hurdling	154	68.4
Throwing	36	16.0
Jumping	35	15.6
Highest Level of Competition		
Division Meet	75	33.3
Area Meet	34	15.1
Provincial Meet	74	32.9
Regional Meet/WVRAA	22	9.8

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Profile	Frequency	Percent
Palarong Pambansa	20	8.9
Total	225	100

Level of Athletic Burnout

As shown in Table 5, reduced sense of accomplishment was the highest-scoring burnout dimension (M = 3.19, moderate), indicating that athletes frequently doubt themselves or feel they are falling short of their personal performance standards. Physical/emotional exhaustion (M = 2.72) and sport devaluation (M = 2.53) were both interpreted as low, suggesting that severe physical fatigue and negative attitudes toward training or competition were less prevalent. Overall, athletic burnout was low (M = 2.81, SD = 0.77).

Table 5. Level of Athletic Burnout

Burnout Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Physical/Emotional Exhaustion	2.72	0.96	Low
Reduced Sense of Accomplishment	3.19	0.71	Moderate
Sport Devaluation	2.53	0.93	Low
Overall	2.81	0.77	Low

These results suggest that helping athletes set small, manageable goals and celebrate incremental progress—rather than focusing solely on medals or times—may address their comparatively stronger sense that they are not achieving enough, while continued protection of rest and recovery time can keep physical exhaustion and motivational loss from becoming larger problems. This pattern is consistent with Thomas et al. (2021), who found that young track and field athletes reported higher well-being and less burnout when their talent-development environment was athlete-centered and supportive, and with Pacewicz and Smith (2023), who found that more supportive coach communication was associated with more positive sport experiences and lower burnout among collegiate track and field athletes.

Extent of Psychological Coping Skills

Table 6 shows that all coping subscales were interpreted at a moderate extent, with an overall mean of 2.12. Goal-setting and mental preparation (2.28), confidence and achievement motivation (2.26), coping with adversity (2.23), and peaking under pressure (2.13) were comparatively higher, while freedom from worry (1.96), concentration (2.00), and coachability (1.98) were the lowest-scoring subscales.

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Table 6. Extent of Psychological Coping Skills

Coping Subscale	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Coping with Adversity	2.23	0.59	Moderate Extent
Coachability	1.98	0.61	Moderate Extent
Concentration	2.00	0.57	Moderate Extent
Confidence and Achievement Motivation	2.26	0.52	Moderate Extent
Goal Setting and Mental Preparation	2.28	0.58	Moderate Extent
Peaking Under Pressure	2.13	0.62	Moderate Extent
Freedom from Worry	1.96	0.58	Moderate Extent
Overall	2.12	0.43	Moderate Extent

These results indicate that athletes struggle most with performance anxiety, coping with competitive stressors, and fully absorbing feedback under pressure, even though they are reasonably motivated and capable of setting goals. Since freedom from worry and coachability received the lowest scores, coaches and sport staff may benefit from interventions centered on anxiety management, cognitive reframing, and receptive communication, which could help translate athletes' physical preparation into more consistent performance under pressure. This is consistent with evidence that track and field athletes show a generally high level of psychological resilience—the capacity to withstand setbacks, remain emotionally stable during competition, and adapt constructively to psychological and competitive pressure—which has been linked to improved perceived self-efficacy in this population (Ahmed, 2026).

Differences in Athletic Burnout by Profile

Table 7 presents the differences in athletic burnout when respondents were grouped by sex, length of involvement, sporting event, and level of competition. By sex, physical/emotional exhaustion ($t = 2.143$, $p = .033$) and sport devaluation ($t = 2.497$, $p = .013$) differed significantly, while reduced sense of accomplishment did not ($t = 1.193$, $p = .051$, at the conventional .05 threshold, though only marginally above it). By length of involvement, no burnout dimension differed significantly ($p > .05$ in all cases), indicating that athletic burnout was broadly comparable regardless of tenure in the sport. By sporting event, sport devaluation differed significantly ($F = 3.183$, $p = .043$) while physical/emotional exhaustion and reduced sense of accomplishment did not. By level of competition, physical/emotional exhaustion differed significantly ($F = 3.238$, $p = .013$), while reduced sense of accomplishment and sport devaluation did not.

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Table 7. Differences in Athletic Burnout of Track and Field Athletes by Profile (*p < .05)

Profile	Statistic	Physical/Emotional Exhaustion	Reduced Sense of Accomplishment	Sport Devaluation
Sex	t-value	2.143	1.193	2.497
	p-value	0.033*	0.051	0.013*
Length of Involvement	F-value	1.911	1.000	0.724
	p-value	0.110	0.408	0.577
Sporting Event/s	F-value	1.792	0.715	3.183
	p-value	0.169	0.490	0.043*
Level of Competition	F-value	3.238	1.089	2.011
	p-value	0.013*	0.363	0.094

This pattern is consistent with Grebner et al. (2024), who found that athletic performance level contributes to burnout, since high-performing athletes face stressors specific to their sport—rigorous training, competition demands, injury, performance setbacks, and career pressures—that differ from those faced by less competitive peers.

Differences in Psychological Coping Skills by Profile

Table 8 presents the differences in psychological coping skills by profile. By sex, confidence and achievement motivation ($t = 2.276$, $p = .024$) and goal-setting and mental preparation ($t = 2.038$, $p = .043$) differed significantly, while coping with adversity, coachability, concentration, peaking under pressure, and freedom from worry did not (all $p > .05$). This is consistent with Saladas and Gayatao (2020), who likewise found significant sex differences in sport psychological skills, though not across all coping dimensions. By length of involvement, no coping subscale differed significantly, consistent with Gabrys and Wontorczyk (2023), who found comparable coping profiles across age groups. By sporting event, confidence and achievement motivation ($F = 6.400$, $p = .002$) and goal-setting and mental preparation ($F = 3.041$, $p = .050$) differed significantly, consistent with the different physical, technical, and psychological demands of each event noted by Cevada et al. (2025); By level of competition, no coping subscale differed significantly, consistent with Gabrys and Wontorczyk (2023).

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Table 8. Differences in Psychological Coping Skills of Track and Field Athletes by Profile (*p < .05)

Profile	Stat.	Coping w/ Adversity	Coachability	Concentration	Confidence & Achievement	Goal Setting & Mental Prep	Peaking Under Pressure	Freedom from Worry
Sex	t	0.485	-0.386	0.070	2.276	2.038	1.097	0.401
	p	.628	.700	.944	.024*	.043*	.274	.689
Length of Involvement	F	1.074	1.206	0.687	0.335	0.789	1.119	1.943
	p	.370	.309	.602	.854	.533	.349	.104
Sporting Event/s	F	0.568	1.666	1.272	6.400	3.041	1.135	1.558
	p	.567	.191	.282	.002*	.050*	.323	.213
Level of Competition	F	1.394	0.928	0.259	1.741	1.158	0.752	0.584
	p	.237	.449	.904	.142	.330	.558	.675

Relationship Between Athletic Burnout and Psychological Coping Skills

Table 9 presents the correlations between the three burnout dimensions and the seven coping subscales. Physical/emotional exhaustion was significantly and positively correlated with coachability ($r = .329$, $p < .001$), concentration ($r = .244$, $p < .001$), goal-setting and mental preparation ($r = .178$, $p = .007$), peaking under pressure ($r = .147$, $p = .027$), and freedom from worry ($r = .323$, $p < .001$), with the strongest of these correlations found for coachability and freedom from worry; it was not significantly correlated with coping with adversity ($r = .029$, $p = .661$) or confidence and achievement motivation ($r = .071$, $p = .290$).

Reduced sense of accomplishment was significantly and positively correlated with coachability ($r = .310$, $p < .001$), concentration ($r = .167$, $p = .012$), and freedom from worry ($r = .212$, $p = .001$), with coachability showing the strongest association; it was not significantly correlated with coping with adversity, confidence and achievement motivation, goal-setting and mental preparation, or peaking under pressure (all $p > .05$). Sport devaluation followed a similar pattern, correlating significantly and positively with coachability ($r = .407$, $p < .001$), concentration ($r = .224$, $p = .001$), and freedom from worry ($r = .256$, $p < .001$), but not with coping with adversity, confidence and achievement motivation, goal-setting and mental preparation, or peaking under pressure.

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Table 9. Relationship Between Athletic Burnout and Psychological Coping Skills (*p < .05)

Burnout Dimension	Statistic	Coping w/ Adversity	Coachability	Concentration	Confidence & Achievement	Goal Setting & Mental Prep	Peaking Under Pressure	Freedom from Worry
Physical/Emotional Exhaustion	r	0.029	.329*	.244*	0.071	.178*	.147*	.323*
	p	.661	<.001	<.001	.290	.007	.027	<.001
Reduced Sense of Accomplishment	r	0.057	.310*	.167*	0.079	0.084	0.087	.212*
	p	.399	<.001	.012	.237	.209	.196	.001
Sport Devaluation	r	0.058	.407*	.224*	0.101	0.120	0.111	.256*
	p	.389	<.001	.001	.129	.072	.098	<.001

This is a counterintuitive pattern: rather than protecting against burnout, higher coachability, concentration, and freedom from worry were associated with higher burnout scores across all three dimensions. Silva et al. (2022) offer a plausible explanation, arguing that athletes in high-demand environments actively deploy psychological tools at higher frequency out of operational necessity; sustained effort to suppress anxiety and maintain high coachability draws on limited cognitive resources (consistent with Ego Depletion Theory), and this constant effort—without corresponding recovery—may itself produce cumulative fatigue.

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Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Track and field athletes in this study showed generally low athletic burnout, with low physical/emotional exhaustion and sport devaluation, but a moderately elevated reduced sense of accomplishment, suggesting that even without severe burnout, many athletes feel their efforts or performances fall short of their own expectations. Psychological coping skills were generally moderate: athletes possessed workable, if improvable, skills for handling adversity, responding to coaching, maintaining focus, building confidence, setting goals, mentally preparing, performing under pressure, and managing worry.

Burnout varied by sex (physical/emotional exhaustion and sport devaluation), sporting event (sport devaluation), and level of competition (physical/emotional exhaustion), but not by length of involvement. Coping skills varied by sex and sporting event—chiefly in confidence/achievement motivation and goal-setting/mental preparation—but not by length of involvement or level of competition. Coachability, concentration, and freedom from worry were consistently and positively associated with all three burnout dimensions, whereas coping with adversity and confidence/achievement motivation showed no significant relationship with burnout. Together, these findings indicate that burnout in this population is tied to specific coping dimensions rather than uniformly to overall coping capacity, and that a reduced sense of accomplishment—rather than exhaustion or devaluation—is the burnout dimension most in need of attention.

Recommendations

Track and field athletes should be supported in developing coping mechanisms specifically for managing stress, sustaining concentration, and reducing excessive worry, given the consistent association of these dimensions with reduced sense of accomplishment; athletes should be encouraged to monitor their own sense of accomplishment and seek support when they begin to feel less successful or motivated.

Coaches should deliver constructive criticism, encouragement, and recognition in ways that build confidence and motivation rather than making athletes feel inadequate, given that coachability showed the strongest association with reduced sense of accomplishment.

Athletic programs should incorporate regular mental-skills and burnout-prevention activities—goal-setting, stress management, relaxation techniques, and performance-reflection sessions—to help athletes manage psychological demands while preserving their sense of accomplishment.

Programs should provide additional monitoring and recovery support for athletes competing at higher levels, given the association between level of competition and physical/emotional exhaustion, including adequate sleep, training-load management, and psychological support.

Coaches and sport administrators should routinely assess all three burnout dimensions—physical/emotional exhaustion, reduced sense of accomplishment, and sport devaluation—to enable early detection and intervention.

Future studies should examine additional factors that may influence athletic burnout, such as training load, academic demands, injury history, motivation, and coach-athlete relationships, and should consider longitudinal designs to track how burnout and coping skills change over the course of an athletic season or career.

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