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XULAnexUS

Volume 10 | Issue 1

Article 5

12-1-2012

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Recommended Citation

Scott, LaShante' Q. (2012) "Self-Esteem and Confidence in Athletes Who Experiences and/or Witnessed an Athletic Injury," *XULAnexUS*: Vol. 10 : Iss. 1 , Article 5.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.xula.edu/xulanexus/vol10/iss1/5>

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Volume 10, Issue 1, December 2012. Research Manuscript. 16-20.
<<http://xulanexus.xula.edu/textpattern/index.php?id=162>>



LaShante' Scott is a Psychology major and Education minor from Destrehan, LA. Upon graduation in 2014, Scott plans to attend Georgia State University's graduate program for clinical psychology. Scott's research interests include athletes, self-esteem and confidence. She is also interested in relationships and sex drives. This past summer Scott was a member of Dr. Elizabeth Yost Hammer's research team that worked on revisions of an introductory Psychology textbook.

Self-Esteem and Confidence in Athletes Who Experienced and/or Witnessed an Athletic Injury

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Abstract

The author compared collegiate athletes that experienced and witnessed an athletic injury to those who did not to see whether there was a significant difference in the perceived levels of self-esteem and confidence. Participants were 65 college athletes. The author surveyed athletes using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Trait Sport-Confidence Inventory. There was no significance between injury-experienced and injury-non experienced athletes' self-esteem and confidence. However, there was a relationship between self-esteem and confidence regardless of injury experience. Due to the fact that all participants witnessed an injury, this variable-could not be analyzed.

Key Terms:

- Self-Esteem
- Confidence
- Athletic injury

The NFL's Philadelphia Eagles will suffer without their famous quarter-back Michael Vick. He left from the fourth quarter of a 2011 regular season game against the Giants with a broken hand. What will the Eagles do? What will Philadelphia do? What will Vick do? Every day, athletes just like Michael Vick have athletic injuries. Sports injury is very common today, as demonstrated by 3.5 million children or teens who participate in sports in the United States who get injured each year (Children's 2011). Anterior cruciate ligament and concussion injuries are the most common in America. Both injuries result in different emotional states than before the injuries took place. Specifically, concussions change the levels of depression and anxiety and the predicted emotional states after these injuries (Mainwaring, Hutchison, Bisschop, Comper, & Richards, 2010).

Athletes' parents who are concerned about their child's well being often look into reports on injuries before allowing their children to participate or continue in sports. Athletic injury relates to self-esteem. Dealing with being hurt and having to recover affects the way one may feel about his or herself. Rehabilitation can be tough if an athlete is stressed about recovering from the injury (Malinauskas, 2010). Rehabilitation may even bring about depression and that can lead to low self-esteem. According to Brewer (1993), athletic identity (how a player feels about his or self) positively related to depression. The stronger the feelings a player has towards his or her self, the lower depression he or she will have. Data shows that athletes experience anxiety and may be at a higher risk of depression than non-athletes (Armstrong & Oomen-Early, 2009).

Being injured can influence one to lose interest in the sport or reduce a player's self-confidence. When returning back to sports athletes tend to have a low confidence than before their injury because of their fears of re-injury and that relates to negative feelings (Tripp et al., 2011).

Anytime athletes view an injury as a type of hazard they begin to have negative feelings towards recovery (Gayman & Crossman, 2003). That in turn can lower one's confidence, which can lead to quitting the sport and having fear of being active again.

Even athletes who have never been injured can be affected by the thought of being injured, just because they witnessed a traumatic event. Witnessing an athletic injury may scar a person for life. One may begin to stress about that event as if they were the player injured. Failing to cope with one's stress can result to a decline in performance (Nicholls & Polman, 2007). In other words, worrying about being unable to cope with any event may lead to poor athletic performance (Anshel, 1996).

Athletes who have not experienced an injury are aware that injuries can happen to anyone at any time. Soon many of them might ease up during sports season and lose sight of their talent or become afraid to play. There are other extreme outcomes such as athletic careers coming to an end (Brewer, 1993). Even players who simply witness an injury could benefit from a compliance test to make sure they are mentally ready to return to play. There is a high percentage of adolescents that are not fully cleared to return to play after having an injury (Yard & Comstock, 2009).

Although there are no studies on athlete injury with the relationship of self-esteem and self-confidence combined, there are many done with each variable individually. Armstrong and Oomen-Early (2009) found that self-esteem differs with college athletes and non-college athletes. Further, the lower one's self-esteem is the more likely an athlete is to become injured (Verhagen, Stralen, & Mechelen, 2010). Tripp et al. (2011) examined the fear of re-injury in athletes and compared it with their self-confidence. The

present study attempts to tie these variables together.

In the present study I explore the relationship among experiencing a sports injury, witnessing a sports injury, self-esteem, and self-confidence. I hypothesize that: (1) student athletes who experienced an athletic injury will have lower self-esteem than those who did not experience an athletic injury; (2) student athletes who experienced an athletic injury will have lower self-confidence than those who did not experience an athletic injury; (3) student athletes who witnessed an athletic injury will have lower self-esteem than those who did not witness an athletic injury; and (4) student athletes who witnessed an athletic injury will have lower self-confidence than those who did not witness an athletic injury.

Methods

Participants

Participants in this study were a volunteer sample of full-time, undergraduate athletes at Xavier University of Louisiana. A total of 65 (25 male and 40 female) athletes from all Xavier sports (12 volleyball, 12 boys basketball, 17 girls basketball, 15 tennis, and 9 track/cross country) participated. Classification ranged from freshmen to seniors. After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board, I collected the data on the college campus in the gymnasium before or after athletes' scheduled practice times.

Materials

To measure the variable of experiencing athletic injury I used three experimenter-generated questions. A sample item is, "Did you experience an athletic injury in high school?" Responses were either yes or no.

Witnessing an athletic injury was measured using three experimenter-generated questions. A sample item is, "Did you witness an athletic injury in college?" Responses were either yes or no.

Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self Esteem Inventory (Rosenberg, 1965). This is a 10-item survey using a likert-type scale with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree. A sample item is, "I feel good about myself." Scores can range from 10 to 50. Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem.

Confidence was measured using the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory (Morrow, 2005). This inventory has 27 questions using a likert-scale with 1 being not at all and 4 being very much so. A sample item is, "I have self-doubts." Only nine questions were scored because they are the only questions directly pertaining to confidence. The scores range from a low of nine and a high of 36. Higher scores indicate higher self-confidence.

Procedures

Participants came into a reserved room in the gymnasium as a team 15 minutes before or after a scheduled practice. They signed two consent forms, and they listened to the consent agreement read aloud. If any participant did not agree or did not want to fill out the survey they were told to sign the credit sheet for points, and they could be excused. I then distributed the surveys. Subjects were given about 15 minutes to complete the surveys which were collected anonymously. Subjects were then debriefed verbally and were also given a written debriefing form.

Results

I conducted a series of t-tests using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software to analyze the data. There was no statistically significant difference between self-esteem ($t=.298$, $p>.050$) and confidence ($t=.924$, $p>.050$) for athletes who experience injury and those who did not. That is, there was no difference in the average self-esteem and confidence scores for athletes who experience injury and those who

did not. T-tests were also used to compare self-esteem and confidence for those witnessing an injury and those who did not. However, given that all athletes reported witnessing an injury, these analyses were not possible. Pearson's Product Moment Correlations Test demonstrated that there were statistically significant correlations between self-esteem and confidence ($r=.363, p<.050$). This means that as self-esteem scores increased so did confidence.

Discussion

In the present study I explored the relationship among experiencing a sports injury, witnessing a sports injury, self-esteem, and self-confidence. The following hypotheses were tested: (1) student athletes who experienced an athletic injury will have lower self-esteem than those who did not experience an athletic injury; (2) student athletes who experienced an athletic injury will have lower self-confidence than those who did not experience an athletic injury; (3) student athletes who witnessed an athletic injury will have lower self-esteem than those who did not witness an athletic injury; and (4) student athletes who witnessed an athletic injury will have lower self-confidence than those who did not witness an athletic injury. The present results do not provide evidence that supports my hypotheses. In particular, an examination of the self-esteem and self-confidence surveys indicated there was no significance between the variables with regard to injury. Because my hypothesis was not supported, it could be that athletes' self-esteem and confidence do not change if injured or if witnessing an injury for Xavier student athletes.

There were many limitations in this study. First, the times the players took the actual survey could have been scheduled differently. The players may have had their mind directed on other things such as practice, games, or a shower. Many athletes took the survey after practice and their attitudes towards the survey may have altered the results.

Secondly, it is highly unlikely that a college athlete has played sports all their life and never witnessed an athletic injury because in those nine years there had to have been some type of injury. Without participants who had not witnessed and had not experienced an injury it was impossible to complete that t-test and compare results.

Future research is needed to test this hypothesis in an effective way. I advise future researchers to not only use current athletes, but former athletes as well in order to expand the participant pool. There might be a better chance of finding participants who had not witnessed and had not experienced an injury. I also encourage researchers to add more variables such as specific sport, GPA, major, and religion because even if related, those variables may have some effect. Specifying the sport, comparing the GPA, separating by major, and stating the religion can rule out many confounding variables. By continuing to study this topic we will learn more about the athletes' psychological state of mind have and be able to help them cope better.

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Acknowledgements

Throughout the process of completing research and writing this paper Dr. Elizabeth Y. Hammer has assisted me in multiple ways. She has been encouraging me to do my best work since the beginning. If it had not been for her contributions and support, I do not believe I would have been ready to publish. My gratitude goes to Dr. E. Y. Hammer.



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