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Increasing Mental Health Awareness Among Collegiate Student Athletes

Josh Kollman

A Capstone project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies

Increasing Mental Health Awareness Among Collegiate Student Athletes

Introduction

Collegiate student-athletes often lack awareness of how their mental health can be affected during the season and off-season. Consequently, their performance can decline and their daily activities and relationships may be affected. In order to address the lack of awareness, I have created a 1 hour lesson through a powerpoint presentation for the men's basketball team at California State University, Monterey Bay.

Need Statement

The mental health of student-athletes is just as important as their physical health. The life of a student-athlete, during or away from their sport, can cause anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and stress. Injuries that limit play and practice can play a huge role on mental health too. This essay will discuss how to manage depression and anxiety, cope with physical injuries, and maintain stress levels.

During the playing season, many athletes start to feel anxious. According to Li (2017), athletes who felt anxious during the preseason put themselves at risk for injuries during the season. They may overwork themselves in order to prove to coaches and teammates that they can play at a high level. Athletes have such high expectations that they are required to meet. If these expectations are not met, they risk the possibility of not playing and sitting the bench. Anxiety from competition can affect outside factors such as social life and academics and these outside factors can affect performance in the sport.

According to Putukian (2016), succeeding on the field/court and in the classroom has become more difficult as the expectations of student-athletes increase. An injury

takes these stressors to an even higher level and makes mental health issues worsen. Athletes have access to get the help that is needed for their body to recover, but there is a need for resources and programs to help their mental health. The healing process of an injury can directly impact mental health because you're being taken out of the sport. The sport is the identity of college athletes and it can feel like it's being stripped away for a period of time. In some cases, injuries can completely take away an athlete's career.

Given the number of stressors that may come about, many athletes may push themselves to the point where they are burned out. One of the main aspects of burnout is long-term psychological stress (Garinger, 2018). This can make it extremely difficult to balance life responsibilities. For example, athletes are required to travel to play games during the season while they're expected to stay on top of their academics. They also have to balance their relationships with friends, family, coaches, and teammates. For some athletes, they are not close to home and might see friendships fade away due to their focus on school and sports.

Collegiate athletes are regularly pressured, put pressure on themselves, and have to juggle the demands and school performance. Managing anxiety, coping with mental health issues that injuries bring, and maintaining stress levels are key to having a successful and healthy career.

Theory

The theory that connects to this project is Albert Bandura's theory. His social learning theory, "considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behavior" (McLeod, 2016). Bandura includes mediational

processes, which are ways that humans can take their learning and observations and apply it to themselves. The mediational processes include attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. In order to show a behavior, it has to catch your attention enough to remember it. Reproduction of an observed behavior requires the willingness to do so. With this project, participants will learn about techniques for managing their mental health with the goal of retaining the information to identify and possibly reproduce the techniques themselves.

Consideration of Diversity

My participants are all male basketball athletes from CSUMB in the possible age range of 19 to 23. My focus is on the men's basketball team. In order to participate, the player must have at least one full collegiate basketball season completed.. My project content could be used for any collegiate sport, both male and female teams. My project would not look the same with younger participants due to the fact that they are not experiencing any possible mental health issues from college. Sports seasons may also differ in length and time.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the project participants will be able to:

1. Identify one way to manage anxiety and depression
2. Identify one way to reduce stress levels
3. Identify one way to cope with an injury

Method

I created about a one hour PowerPoint presentation on mental health effects and coping mechanisms regarding college athletes for two men's basketball players at

California State University, Monterey Bay. See Appendix A for the presentation. I started by asking most of the players on the team if they would be willing to participate in my project. As scheduled conflicts occurred often, I decided to set a date and time and welcomed any players who were available. The two available players and I gathered together on a Zoom call for my presentation. Each player knew the topic of my project before entering the Zoom call. I described to them what the Capstone project is before I gave the lecture. I split the presentation into three segments that lasted roughly 20 minutes. In the first segment, I discussed some common reasons for anxiety among college athletes and the impact it can have on their performance and daily life. This was followed up by a group discussion where we were all able to share an experience. This took up roughly 5-7 minutes of the segment and helped the players think about their mental health. I gave them four different techniques for managing anxiety during the season. They filled out a google form that asked about their prior experiences with anxiety and if they could identify one new coping technique. See Appendix B for details. The second segment was very similar to the first. I discussed the common stressor in college athletes and the impact it has on their performance and daily life. We discussed times that we felt stressed out during the season and ways that we tried to cope with this. Discussion took about roughly 5-7 minutes. I gave them three different techniques for helping reduce stress during the season with hopes that they would be able to identify one new way they learned through another Google form. See Appendix C for details. For the third segment, I taught them about the mental health effects of injuries and the struggles that injured players go through. I started our group discussion by sharing my own experience of a major injury and how it impacted my mental health. I

gave them time to share their own experiences. I proceeded to show them a video of a college wrestler at Michigan who suffered a major injury and explains the impacts it had on his mental health (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQD50SUle7k&t=3s>). I gave them four different techniques for coping with the mental health effects that injuries can bring. I created an online Kahoot Quiz to see if the players understood the techniques and were able to identify them for possible use. See Appendix D for the Kahoot Quiz questions. I thanked the two players for participating in my project and hope I raised awareness about their mental health.

Results

The first learning outcome was to identify one new way to manage anxiety during the season. To measure this learning outcome, I used the participants answers from the google form. Both of my participants were able to successfully identify one new way they learned for managing anxiety from the presentation that was given to them. See Table 1 for details. Therefore, this learning outcome was met. The second learning outcome was to identify one new way to reduce stress during the season. I measured this learning outcome through a google form. Both participants were able to successfully identify one new way to reduce stress from the presentation that was given to them. See Table 2 for details. Therefore, this learning outcome was met. The third learning outcome was to identify one way to cope with an injury. I measured this learning outcome through a Kahoot Quiz that I hosted online for the participants. Both participants answered all questions regarding each coping technique correctly. They also identified more than one way to cope with an injury that they may use for themselves. See Figure 1 and Table 3 for details.

Discussion

The project turned out to be successful as a whole with a few partially successful components. Unfortunately, I was only able to gather two players from the basketball team, but this was enough to execute my project. The results showed that the participants understood and were able to identify new techniques for managing their mental health. The results were consistent with Albert Bandura's social learning theory, as the presentation and lesson brought attention to the participants who were able to remember and identify the behaviors of managing mental health. They also were able to identify which techniques they would like to possibly use for themselves. In order to be more inclusive of diversity, reaching out to other sports teams at CSUMB would be a good way to have athletes from different sports as well as giving female athletes the option to participate. I would like to have been able to execute the project in person, but considering the circumstances of Covid-19, the zoom call was very efficient. I hope that this project raised awareness of the impact of mental health on college athletes and was informative by giving different techniques to cope with the impact.

References

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Table 1

Identifying techniques to manage anxiety

Techniques	Participant #1	Participant #2
Available resources		
Self-knowledge awareness		
Practice specific skills		
Progressive muscle relaxation	✓	✓

Table 2

Identifying techniques to reduce stress

Techniques	Participant #1	Participant #2
Meditation/relaxation		
Leisure time physical activity	✓	
Support interventions		✓

Table 3

Identifying techniques to cope with an injury. Responses from Kahoot Quiz

Techniques	Participant #1	Participant #2
Educational intervention	✓	
Goal setting	✓	✓
Support interventions		✓
Available resources for talking through process	✓	✓

Figure 1

Responses to true or false Kahoot Quiz questions

Question ▾	Type ▾	Correct/incorrect ▾
1 Accepting the process made it easier for the athlete to cope with his injury. (Video)	True or false	 100%
2 There is no need to reach out for support while being injured.	True or false	 100%
3 Setting goals throughout the healing process of an injury is a good way manage yo...	True or false	 100%
4 Becoming more aware of your injury and the process can positively affect your men...	True or false	 100%
5 Talking through your emotions during an injury can help reduce anxiety and stress.	True or false	 100%

Appendix A

Powerpoint Presentation on Managing Anxiety, Reducing Stress, and Coping with Injuries

Increasing Mental Health Awareness Among Collegiate Student-Athletes

CUUMB Men's Basketball Players

Josh Kollman

General Mental Health Issues Among Athletes

- Depression
- Anxiety (many types)
- Stress
- Eating/sleeping disorders
- Burnout
- Injuries



Main Focuses

- Managing anxiety throughout the season
 - Source of your anxiety
- Relieving stress during the season
 - Sport related as well as outside/life factors
- Coping with injuries
 - Injuries can be just as much mental as physical

Anxiety

- Many different sources of anxiety
- The sport and season itself
- Transitions



Let's Talk About It

Techniques to Manage Anxiety

- Seek help from available resources
- Increase self-knowledge awareness
- Practice specific skills (performance and emotions)
- Progressive muscle relaxation

Google Form

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1wFA1u2L581u-2W8930CuPv7z86x1uFD3C-P95581y2XCCmPw_5vCkvaDQ3vawfsm3wawem_uf

Stress

- Balancing academics
- Relationships
 - Friends
 - Family
 - Coaches/teammates
- Competition



Let's Talk About It

Appendix B

Google Form about Managing Anxiety



Managing Anxiety

Answer the following questions.

Have you experienced anxiety throughout the basketball season at CSUMB? *

Yes

No

What is one way that you've attempted to manage your anxiety? *

Short answer text

Appendix B continued

Did your management technique help? *

- Yes
- No
- A little

What is at least one new way that you will use to manage your anxiety during the season? *

Long answer text

Appendix C

Google Form about Reducing Stress



Reducing Stress

Answer the following questions.

On a scale from 1-10, how stressed do you feel during the off-season?

Short answer text

On a scale from 1-10, how stressed do you feel during the season?

Short answer text

Appendix C continued

What is at least one way that helps you reduce stress?

Long answer text

What is least one new way that you may use to help reduce your stress levels?

Long answer text

Appendix D

Kahoot Quiz Questions

1 Accepting the process made it easier for the athlete to cope with his injury. (Video)	True or false
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> True <input type="checkbox"/> False <input type="checkbox"/> No answer
2 There is no need to reach out for support while being injured.	True or false
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> True <input type="checkbox"/> False <input type="checkbox"/> No answer

Appendix D continued

3 **Setting goals throughout the healing process of an injury is a good way manage your mental heal...** True or false



True

False

No answer

4 **Becoming more aware of your injury and the process can positively affect your mental health.** True or false



True

False

No answer

5 **Talking through your emotions during an injury can help reduce anxiety and stress.** True or false



True

False

No answer

6 **Which technique(s) are you mostly likely to try if you become injured?** Quiz



Educational interventions

Goal setting

Support interventions

Talking through process/using available resources

Partially correct answers

No answer

Final Capstone Presentation

**Increasing Mental Health Awareness
Among Collegiate Student-Athletes**



Josh Kollman

Need

- Resources for college athletes
- Controlling anxiety - nerves, fear
- Knowledge of handling stress
- Effects of injuries on mental health



Theory

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory

- Observe, model, imitate
- Medialional processes
 - Attention
 - Retention
 - Reproduction
 - Motivation



Curriculum

- Men's Basketball Team at California State University, Monterey Bay
- 2 volunteer players on a Zoom call
- Powerpoint presentation with interactions
- 1 hour, 20 minute segments




Learning Outcomes

By the end of the curriculum, they will be able to:

1. Identify one new way to manage anxiety throughout the season
2. Identify one new way to reduce stress throughout the season
3. Identify one way to cope with an injury



Learning Outcome 1

Identify one new way to manage anxiety throughout the season

- Common reasons for anxiety in athletes
- Effects on their life and performance
- Group discussion
- Managing anxiety
- Google form



What is one way that you've attempted to manage your anxiety? *

Short answer text

Did your management technique help? *

Yes

No

A little

What is at least one new way that you will use to manage your anxiety during the season? *

Long answer text

Learning Outcome 1 Results

Ways to Manage Anxiety	Participant #1	Participant #2
Available resources		
Self-knowledge awareness		
Practice specific skills		
Progressive muscle relaxation	✔	✔

Learning Outcome 2

Identify one new way to reduce stress throughout the season

- Stressors that college athletes experience
- Impact of stress on life and performance
- Group discussion
- Reducing stress
- Google form



On a scale from 1-10, how stressed do you feel during the season?

Short answer text

What is at least one way that helps you reduce stress?

Long answer text

What is at least one new way that you may use to help reduce your stress levels?

Long answer text

Learning Outcome 2 Results

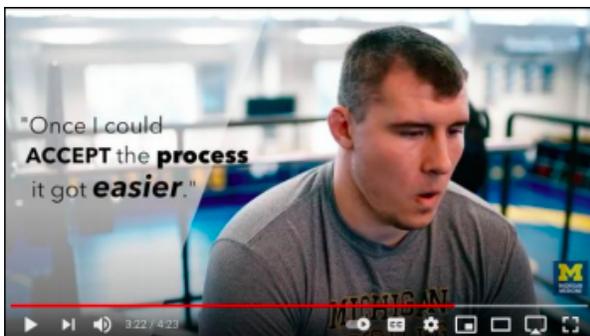
Ways to Reduce Stress	Participant #1	Participant #2
Meditation/relaxation		
Leisure time physical activity	✔	
Support interventions		✔

Learning Outcome 3



Identify one way to cope with an injury

- Relationship between injuries and mental health
- Share an experience
- Short video of injured college athlete
- Coping with the impact of injuries on mental health
- Kahoot Quiz



Accepting the process made it easier for the athlete to cope with his injury. (Video)

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ATHLETES CONNECTED

COPING WITH SEASON-ENDING INJURY

◆ True

▲ False

Setting goals throughout the healing process of an injury is a good way manage your mental health.

6



True False

Which technique(s) are you mostly likely to try if you become injured?

25



Select one or more answers.

Educational interventions Goal setting

Support interventions Talking through process/using available resources

Learning Outcome 3 Results

Question	Type	Correct/Incorrect
1. Accepting the process made it easier for the athlete to cope with his injury. (Video)	True or false	100%
2. There is no need to reach out for support while being injured.	True or false	100%
3. Setting goals throughout the healing process of an injury is a good way manage yo...	True or false	100%
4. Becoming more aware of your injury and the process can positively affect your men...	True or false	100%
5. Talking through your emotions during an injury can help reduce anxiety and stress.	True or false	100%

Learning Outcome 3 Results

Ways to Cope with Injuries	Participant #1	Participant #2
Educational interventions	✓	
Goal setting	✓	✓
Support interventions		✓
Available resources for talking through process	✓	✓

Discussion

- Successful project
- Learning outcomes were met
- Low attendance
- Reach out to more players and teams




Thank You! Questions?




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