

STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY TERTIARY STUDENTS ENGAGED IN SPORTING ACTIVITIES AT WINTER



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Introduction

- Everyone experiences some form of stress in their life (Can, 2014).
- A student's academic success greatly influences their goals, motivation and interest in pursuing higher education (Harris & Wise, 2012). How an athlete performs in their sport strongly influences their emotional and mental well-being. This in turn plays a big role in how they approach tertiary education (Ferris, Fister & McDonald, 2004).
- Student-athletes have been identified by psychologists as a part of the population that face unique challenges in addition to the challenges non-athletes face. Some demands specific to athletes can include training, competition, travel, injury and performance (Harris & Wise, 2012).
- This research looked to answer two questions. "what do student-athletes perceive as stressful while balancing their academic responsibilities and sporting goals, and what are the most efficiently utilised coping strategies to manage these stressors?" We hypothesised that: 1) an approaching examination or assignment submission would add stress to and disrupt a student-athletes mindset for sports training and 2) an approaching game or sports/fitness competition would have a negative effect on a student-athletes academic performance.

Materials and methods

- This survey was carried out for the purpose of an exploratory study.
- This study used a quantitative, non-experimental approach in which a questionnaire was utilised to obtain relevant information with regards to the perceptions of the participants.
- The online questionnaire was developed through Qualtrics survey software system (<https://wintec.asia.qualtrics.com>).
- The questionnaire comprised of 20 questions related to the stresses experienced by student-athletes' while balancing academic responsibilities and sport training commitments simultaneously.
- The survey was distributed to 140 student-athletes via the Wintec student mailing system.
- 37 student-athletes (20 female and 17 male) completed the survey.
- Qualtrics survey software system was used to collect and analyse data.

Results

Question 1: What are the factors that contribute to game / training related stress and what coping mechanisms are relied upon to help manage this stress?

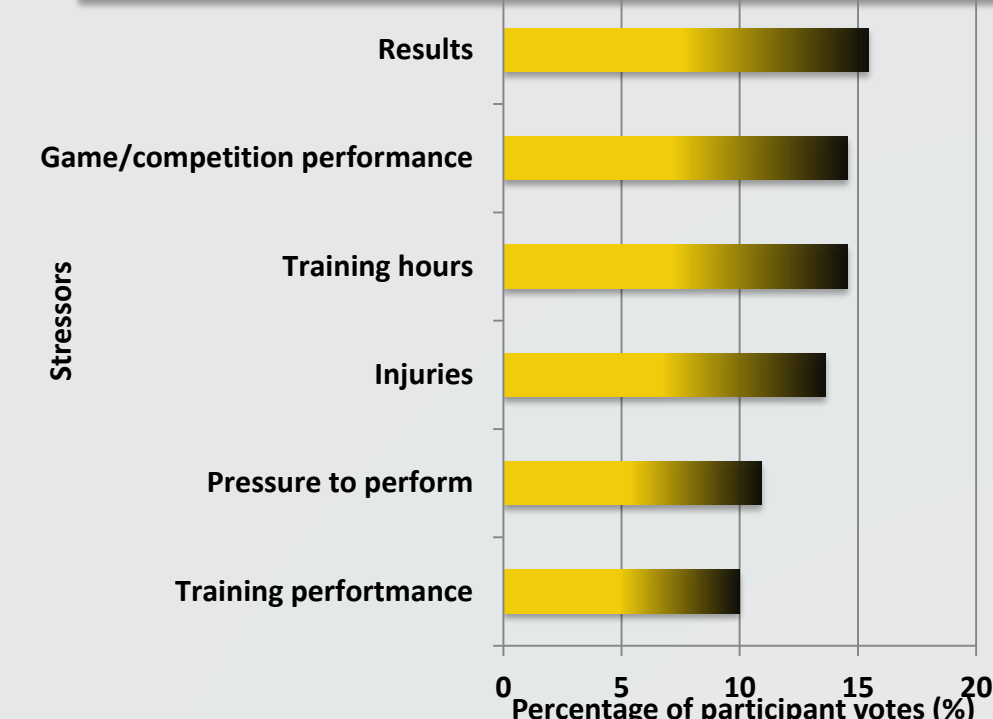


Figure 1. Contributing factors to game / training related stress

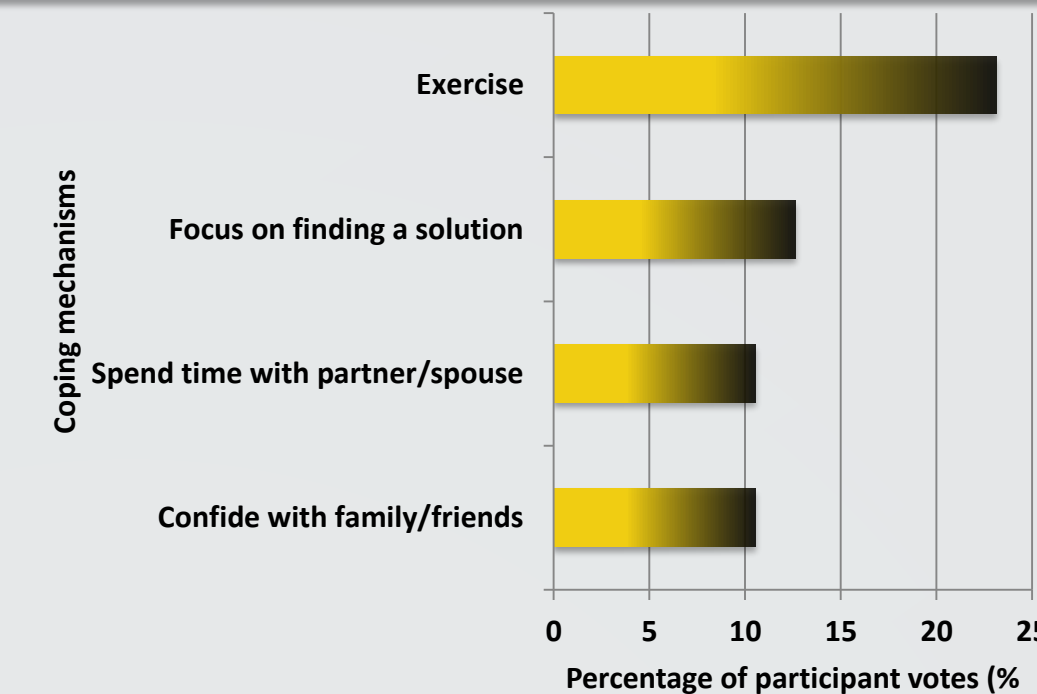


Figure 2. Coping strategies for game / training related stress

Question 2: What are the factors that contribute to study / course related stress and what coping mechanisms are relied upon to help manage this stress?

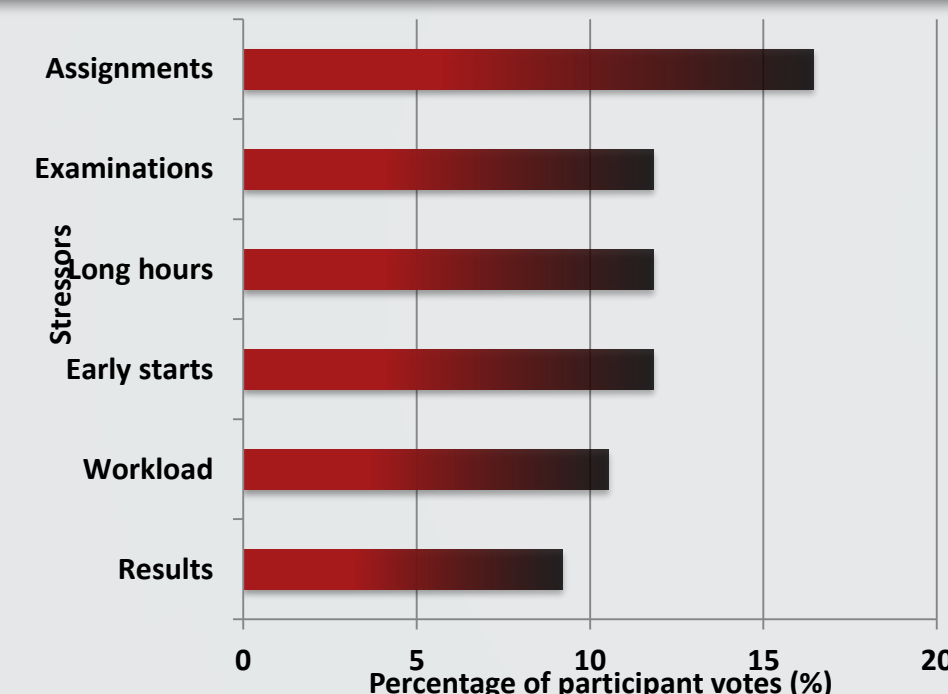


Figure 3. Contributing factors to study / course related stress

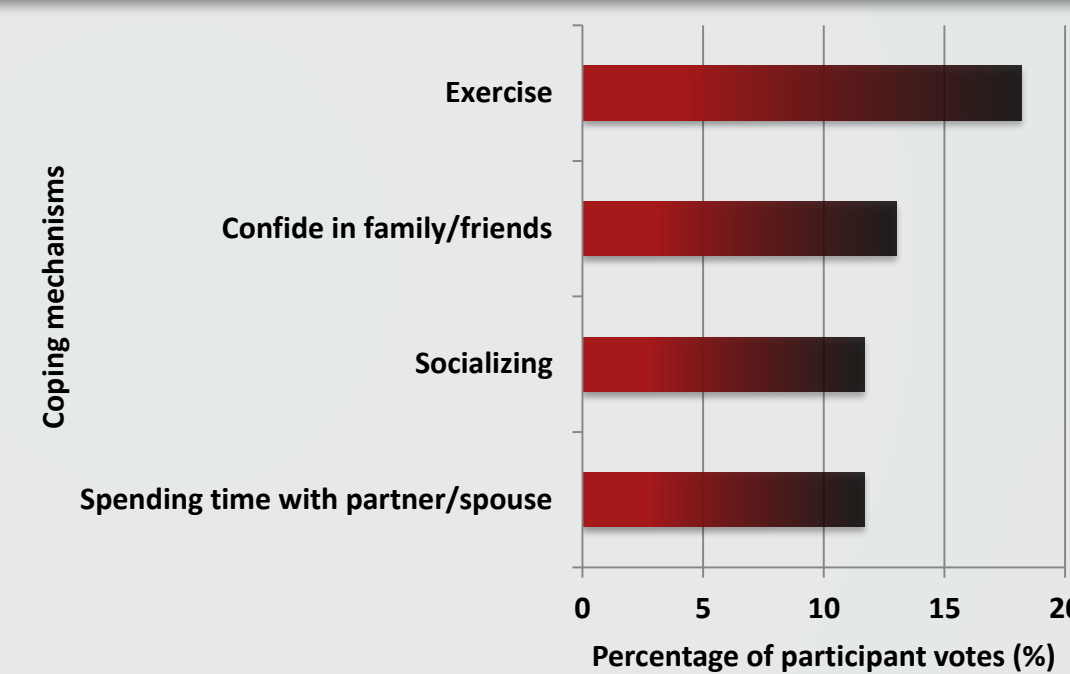


Figure 4. Coping strategies for study / course related stress

Question 3: Does an approaching academic commitment (examination, assignment etc.) negatively affect sport/training performance? Coping mechanisms relied upon to manage this stress.

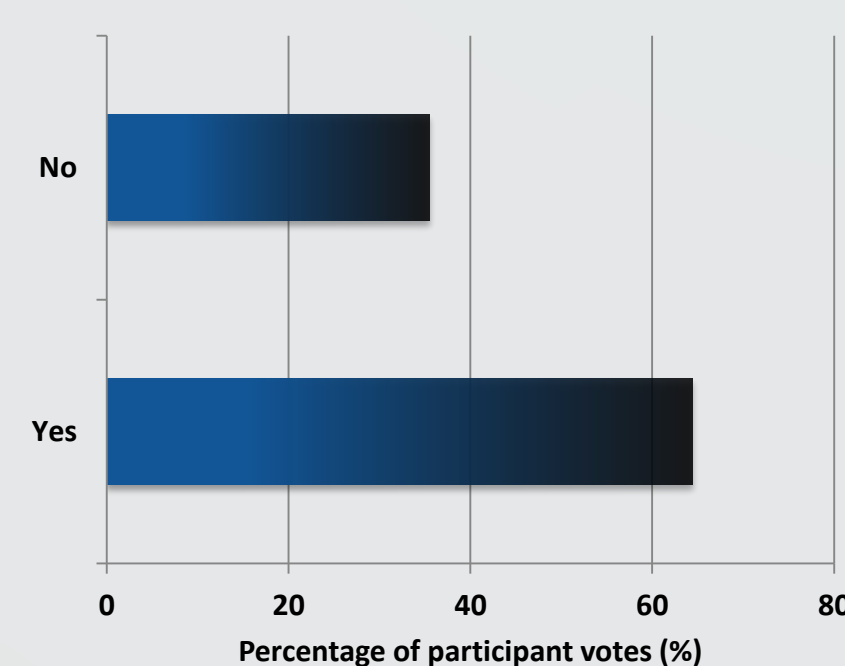


Figure 5. Training related stressors

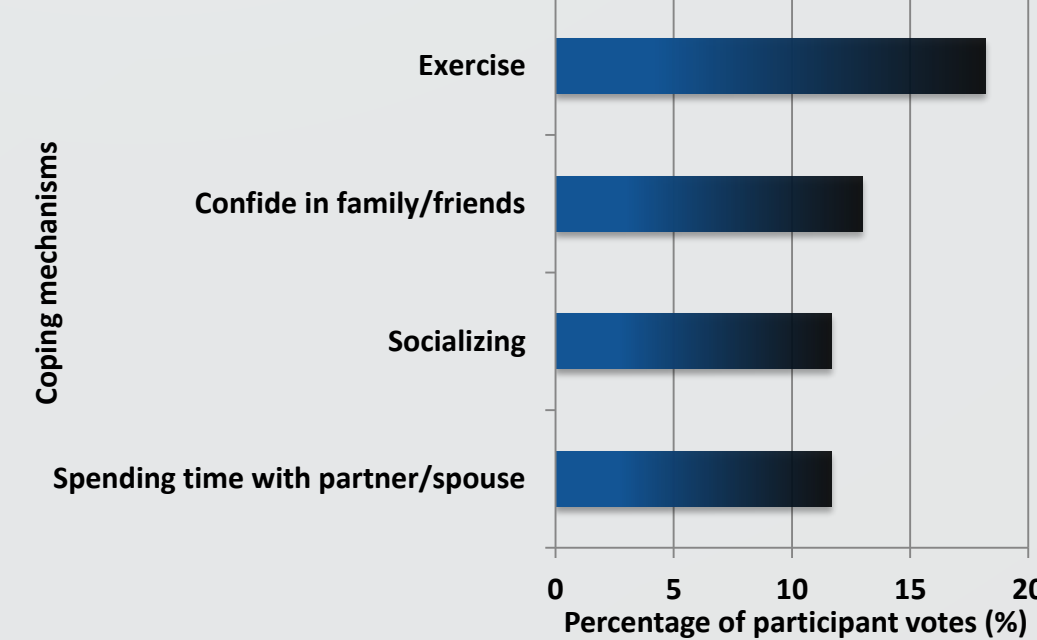


Figure 6. Training related stressors

Findings

- This study identified the potential stressors some of Wintec's student-athlete population face whilst studying and at their sport/fitness training.
- The factors that caused Wintec's student-athletes the most stress at training were: Results, game performance, training hours, Injuries, pressure to perform and training performance.
- Exercise, spending time with their partner/spouse, focus on finding a solution and confiding in a family member were identified as the most effective coping strategies to help student-athletes deal with this stress.
- The factors that cause Wintec's student-athletes the most stress at course were: assignments, long hours, early starts, examinations and workload.
- The coping strategies identified to help manage this stress were: exercise, spending time with their partner/spouse, spending time on social media and socialising.
- 55% of the participants believed that an upcoming athletic commitment does not negatively effect their academic performance.
- 64% of the participants indicated that an approaching examination or academic deadline effect's their athletic commitments negatively.

Recommendations

There has been a tendency for student-athletes' not to seek the help when needed. This study aimed to increase awareness of student support services, athletic departments, coaches and teachers about the different stressors student-athletes face and the coping mechanisms they adopt to manage this stress. This study and many previous studies have been carried out on a relatively small sample size. There is a need for further research involving larger participant numbers. More thorough research involving what stressors affect the genders within the student-athlete population and what coping mechanisms are preferred. Also further research into how student-athletes participating in different sports are affected by academic stress and how they cope would be recommended.

References

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- Ferris, E., Finster, M., & McDonald, D. (2004). Academic Fit of Student-Athletes: An Analysis of NCAA Division I-A Graduation Rates. *Research In Higher Education*, 45(6), 555-575.
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