Mental Health Effects on Young Athletes: A Comprehensive Review

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ABSTRACT

Just like physical health, mental health is just as important for any young athlete. This is imperative as mental illness continues to rise in individuals ages 10-24, in addition to the demands that come with playing a competitive sport. The purpose of this review of literature was to observe how mental health affects young athletes and their methods of seeking help. Statistics have shown that mental health has taken a toll on younger populations in recent years, and it is important to consider how the components of being an athlete can weigh in. Methods throughout these studies consisted of various scales, surveys, and questionnaires to research how mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety have an impact on young individuals who participate in playing a sport, specifically their attitudes towards receiving the help they may need. Results showed that there are significant differences of mental health concerns between athletes and non-athletes, especially when there are other factors such as academics involved. Stigmas attached to mental health also showed to be a concern when it came to seeking counseling services, and many said that positive attitudes from figures like coaches would help. This review can be useful for implementing mental health programs and services designed specifically for athletes and bringing more awareness to this issue.

Key Words: Mental health, athletes, counseling

RESULTS

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<th>Article Title</th>
<th>Article Findings</th>
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<td>Prevalence of and Risk Factors Associated with symptoms of Depression in Competitive Collegiate Student Athletes</td>
<td>This article showed how widespread symptoms of depression are in college athletes, and the factors that are affiliated in influencing these symptoms in this specific population. It was found that 21% of the subjects had experienced depressive symptoms, and females had greater odds than males, and freshmen had greater chances of symptoms of depression than the seniors (Yang, Peek-Asa, Corlette, Cheng, Foster, 2007).</td>
<td>These results matter because of the increasing number of suicides, especially in young people, due to not receiving the help they need. It is important to acknowledge what people consider as factors hindering them from engaging in help seeking behaviors.</td>
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<td>Social impairment and depression after traumatic brain injury</td>
<td>This study was conducted to evaluate how depression affected social factors in the first year of a traumatic brain injury (Gomez-Hernandez, Max, Kosier, Paradiso, Robinson, 1997). It was found that patients’ job satisfaction, fear of job loss, and close interpersonal relationships were all factors that contributed to depression (Gomez-Hernandez et al, 1997).</td>
<td>The importance of these findings is being able to make a difference in the influence of prevalent factors in the early stages of post-traumatic brain injury, such as social interventions as the article suggested. (Gomez-Hernandez et al, 1997). This is crucial because head injuries are extremely common throughout sports, and young athletes under the age of 25 are still in the process of fully developing their brains.</td>
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<td>Barriers and facilitators to mental health help-seeking for young elite athletes: a qualitative study</td>
<td>The recorded data showed the most significant barrier was stigmas, such as embarrassment, attached to mental illness and seeking help. In addition, poor mental health literacy, lack of transportation, finances, and past experience were other barriers mentioned (Gulliver, Griffiths, Christensen, 2012).</td>
<td>The results here show the importance of fighting the stigma that comes with mental health, as that was one of the main reasons young athletes do not reach out for help. The promotion of facilitators and mental health literacy can improve how these individuals seek the guidance needed in battling mental illness.</td>
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<td>Internet-Based Interventions to Promote Mental Health-Seeking in Elite Athletes: An Exploratory Randomized Controlled Trial</td>
<td>In feedback reports of this study, researchers found the online interventions to be helpful in increasing mental health literacy and destigmatizing, but not for an overall improvement in help-seeking behaviors (Gulliver, Griffiths Christensen, Mackinnon, Calear, Parsons, Bennett, Batterham, Stanimirovic, 2012).</td>
<td>Breaking barriers are the first step in increasing the intentions of seeking help and creating positive attitudes toward the action. Also, if the experiment had a larger pool of subjects, it is possible the results would have shown more significant results.</td>
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<td>College Student-Athletes’ Attitudes Toward Help-Seeking Behavior and Expectations of Counseling Services</td>
<td>It was found that most expectations had a direct influence on the students’ attitudes toward seeking help in general. The results also concluded that there were distinct differences between those who were athletes and non-athletes. With this being said, student-athletes had a much more negative attitudes toward getting help than students who did not play a sport (Watson, 2005).</td>
<td>Knowing what exactly is expected should make the creation of mental health programs much more helpful and useful to this population. These could be counseling services that are knowledgeable and have an understanding of it takes to be a young athlete.</td>
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REFERENCES