

What makes coaches burn out in their job? Prevalance and correlates of coaches' burnout in Poland

Krzysztof Sas-Nowosielski, Wioletta Szóstak and Ewa Herman

Abstract

Objective: The aim of this study was to determine the range of burnout among sport coaches in Poland and identify its personal (especially psychological) and situational correlates.

Methods: The sample consisted of 174 male and 70 female coaches from 21 sports disciplines, aged from 23 to 82 ($M = 39.00$, $SD = 10.93$). Coaching experience ranged from 1 to 40 years ($M = 12.00$, $SD = 9.99$). Participants filled in four questionnaires: Maslach Burnout Inventory, Coaching Efficacy Scale. The questionnaire of adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism, and Preferred Management Style Questionnaire.

Results: Coaches reported experiencing low levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation, but high level of reduced sense of personal accomplishments. The latter was observed in 61.06% of respondents. The correlates of individual dimensions of burnout turned out to be: (a) emotional exhaustion – gender, age, deriving financial satisfaction from one's job, motivation efficacy, maladaptive perfectionism, democratic management style, and the nature of competition; (b) depersonalisation – deriving financial satisfaction from one's job, building character efficacy, maladaptive perfectionism, democratic, autocratic and liberal management styles; (c) reduced sense of personal accomplishments – deriving financial satisfaction from one's job, motivation efficacy, game strategy efficacy, maladaptive perfectionism, and democratic management style.

Conclusions: Our study suggests that sport coaches are not emotionally exhausted and do not depersonalise their charges, but are professionally undervalued. This phenomenon is related to several personal and situational variables.

Keywords

Coaching efficacy, depersonalisation, emotion, gender, management style, motivation, perfectionism

Introduction

Traditionally, sport coaches have been defined as people who are responsible for enhancing sport performance of the entrusted athletes, preparing them for competitions and advising them in the duration.¹ However, the reality of modern sport puts significantly higher requirements to this professional group. A good coach at each stage of training should skillfully perform multiple roles at the same time, which according to Gordon² include: teacher, trainer, motivator, disciplinarian, organiser and manager, public relations officer, fundraiser, friend and mentor, advisor and analyst. The complexity of a coach profession is expressed not only in the multitasking of roles that one should (and even: must) perform, but also in the lack of internal consistency among them, because performing one of them can impede the acting of others, and among some of them the obvious conflict can even exist.³ The situation

is aggravated by the fact that in the professional and social coach's assessment, the sport result dominates what is multilaterally conditioned and unpredictable, especially in such sport disciplines as team games or ski jumping. However, both entities which hire a coach (clubs and federations), and the supporters' community do not always take into account these facts in

Reviewers: Britt Brewer (Springfield College, MA, USA)
Paul Schaffran (Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany)

Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego imienia Jerzego Kukuczki w Katowicach Mikołowska 72 b Katowice, Poland

Corresponding author:

Krzysztof Sas-Nowosielski, Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego imienia Jerzego Kukuczki w Katowicach Mikołowska 72 b Katowice 40-065, Poland.

Email: k.sas-nowosielski@awf.katowice.pl

their evaluations of the coach's and athletes' efficacy, indicating frequently harsh judgments.

The abovementioned requirements, along with the desire to gain a professional success and a very high exposure to failure can put coaches under severe stress that can accumulate and over time can lead to burnout.⁴ This term refers to a "psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishments that occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity"⁵ (p.192). The first dimension of burnout, the emotional exhaustion, is the expression of fatigue and the sense of professional exploitation, as a result of frequent and intensive contacts with other people, and is manifested by irritability, mood decline, and even headaches, insomnia and other somatic symptoms. The second dimension, known as depersonalisation, manifests itself in indifferent, heartless, dehumanised, unsentimental or even negative attitude to other people within the work environment. The essence of the last dimension of burnout, reduced personal accomplishment, is downgrading one's own capabilities. It refers to the sense of both lack of competence and lack of satisfaction within the professional accomplishments, as well as low efficiency in work setting. The situation in which a person manifests simultaneously a high level of emotional exhaustion, a high level of depersonalisation and a significant reduction in the sense of personal accomplishments is considered as full-symptom burnout.

The phenomenon of burnout among sport coaches, although it has been present in the scientific discourse for about 30 years, is still poorly understood, especially in terms of factors that may increase the risk of experiencing it or, conversely, that can protect against it.⁶ In the studies that have been conducted so far, proportions of this phenomenon among coaches and its individual dimensions were diagnosed in specific sport disciplines⁷⁻⁹ or in some spectrum of them,¹⁰ and its psychological, demographic and situational correlates were tried to be determined,¹⁰⁻¹⁶ including consequences for the athletes.¹⁷ Moreover, it is supposed that a cultural context might also be helpful in understanding burnout in coaches.¹⁸ However, as Altfeld and Kellmann¹⁸ pointed out, data from European countries are scarce and there have been no such studies in Poland. The community of coaches in this country is exposed to similar social expectations in terms of performing roles as in other countries and is often subject to similar pressure from different backgrounds, such as club authorities, sponsors, parents, media, etc. On the other hand, in each country there is a specific macrosocial context in the form of legal authorisation of the coach's profession, and organisation of sport in general and at particular levels, which may be factors modifying the risk of burnout in the profession.

However, although the study of differences existing between different populations may be of cognitive interest, from the point of view of counteracting the discussed phenomenon among coaches, it seems that the search for correlations which may be of universal nature in the training environment is particularly important.

With the above in mind, two aims of the study were put forward:

- Diagnostic: to determine the degree of burnout in coaches selected from various sport disciplines
- Explanatory: to explore correlates of burnout. Three groups of such factors were controlled:
- demographic variables – gender, age and coaching experience
- psychological variables – coaching self-efficacy, adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism, the preferred leadership style and the financial compensation satisfaction
- situational variables – type of sport discipline due to its collectiveness or relation between opponents during competition.

The selection of correlates was in a way atheoretical and was guided by the state of recent research and by practical consideration, evaluating those factors which may be changed at the level of an individual or the organisation and which may be regarded as universal for coaches' community.^{4,6,9}

Methods

Participants

Participants for this study were professionally active sport coaches non-randomly drawn (non-random occasional selection based on the principle of availability) from sports clubs and Academic Sport Federations in Silesia, Poland and at the national conferences for football, swimming and handball coaches taking place in Katowice, at the Academy of Physical Education. A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed; 253 questionnaires were returned (the response rate was approximately 42%) and nine questionnaires were excluded due to incompleteness. Ultimately, 244 questionnaires were included in data analyses, including 174 males and 70 females. Most of the respondents held university degree ($n = 230$, 94.26%). A small portion of participants reported completing secondary education ($n = 13$, 5.33%) or vocational education ($n = 1$, 0.41%). Coaches were aged between 23 and 82 ($M = 39.00 \pm 10.93$) and their coaching experience ranged from 1 to 40 years ($M = 12.00 \pm 9.99$). The majority of participants were the team game coaches ($n = 150$, 61.48%), in particular football and handball,

and subsequently, basketball, volleyball and ice hockey. In total, the coaches represented 21 sport disciplines, apart from those mentioned above, which are swimming, tumbling, track and field, fencing, judo, cycling, tennis, figure skating, table tennis, horse riding, archery, canoeing, sport climbing, tobogganing and ski jumping. Having regarded the criterion of the character of competition, and whether it is direct (“against oneself”), or indirect (“by one’s side”),¹⁹ 169 coaches (69.26%) were classified as representing the first group, whereas 75 of them (30.74%) the second one.

Measurements

The following questionnaires were applied as research tools:

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) in Pasikowski’s adaptation.²⁰ MBI consists of 22 items assessing three dimensions of burnout: the emotional exhaustion (nine items), depersonalisation (five items) and the sense of personal accomplishments (eight items). Each item is rated on a seven-point Likert scale from 0 (“never”) to 6 (“daily”). The internal reliability assessed by Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were .75 (depersonalisation) and .85 (emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishments).

The MBI is used to measure burnout in a wide range of occupations, with particularly frequent use in teaching and healthcare. The first one includes the profession of coach, but in the absence of standards for the training profession, the general cut-off points proposed by Maslach et al.⁵ were used to determine the levels of burnout. They are featured in Table 1.

Coaching Efficacy Scale. Coaching efficacy was measured using the Coaching Efficacy Scale (CES) developed by Feltz et al.²¹ consisted of 24 items anchored to the prefix “How confident are you in your ability to...” and divided into four subscales: motivation efficacy (seven questions), game strategy efficacy (seven questions), character building efficacy (four questions) and teaching technique efficacy (six questions). Each item is evaluated on a 10-step Likert scale from 0 (not at all confident) to 9 (extremely confident). The measure was adapted for Polish by the authors

of the study according to translation – translation feedback procedure. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were as follows: .91 motivation efficacy, .88 game strategy efficacy, .73 character building efficacy, and .85 teaching technique efficacy.

The questionnaire of adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism developed by Szczucka²² consisted of 35 items assessed on a Likert scale from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”) and was divided into two dimensions of perfectionism: adaptive, operationalised as setting oneself high personal tasks in the pursuit of perfection (e.g. “If I do something, I want it to be done in the best possible way”) and maladaptive, appearing in such reactions as to be tormented by failures, the lack of acceptance for the lower than assumed results, and intolerance of errors (e.g. “Whatever I do, it never seems to me to be good enough”). The internal reliability assessed by Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were: .91 for the subscale of maladaptive perfectionism and .84 for adaptive perfectionism.

Questionnaire of the Preferred Leadership Style created by the authors of the study consists of 27 items: 10 items related to the autocratic management style (e.g. “I make all the decisions about athletes on my own, expecting that they will be dutifully performed”), 10 items related to the democratic management style (e.g. “I empower my athletes in the decision-making process”) and seven items related to the liberal management style (e.g. “I rarely interfere with the group matters”). The items were rated on Likert scale that ranged from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). The questionnaire was analysed by test items in terms of content validity, using the method of competent judges for this purpose. Each judge was given a definition of a variable to be measured by a test tool and then evaluated each of its test items on a scale: 1 – the item is essential for the test, 2 – the item is useful, but not essential for the test and 3 – the item is not relevant for the test and should not be included in it. In the final test, the positions with the highest “1” marks were included, assuming as a minimum that half of the judges would give their “1” marks. Cronbach’s alpha values amounted to: .68 for the autocratic style, .76 for the democratic style, and .58 for the liberal style. The last of the subscales nearly approached the value of 0.60 which, according to Sokolowski and Sagan,²³ was the limit of the acceptable reliability of the tool. It should be noted, however, that Cronbach’s alpha value is “sensitive” to the number of scale items, increasing as their number increases. Thus, in scales with a small number of items, alpha values may reach low values without discrediting the tool as unreliable. Also Nunnally²⁴ considered that there are studies in which scale reliability may be considered acceptable at values below 0.60. We are convinced that this is the case in our research, so we have decided

Table 1. The reference levels of three dimensions of burnout.

Reference levels of burnout dimensions	Dimensions of burnout		
	Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalisation	Personal accomplishments
High	27+	10+	0–33
Moderate	19–26	6–9	34–39
Low	0–18	0–5	40+

to retain all three subscales, although we are aware that we should be careful about the results obtained from them.

The economic satisfaction survey was carried out with the help of one question: “Are you satisfied with your salary?” with two options for a “yes/no” answer. Ethical approval for the study was provided by the Bioethical Commission acting at the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice.

Statistical analyses

In the statistical data analysis, descriptive statistics were employed. For comparison of two means, the Student's *t*-test was used, completed by the Cohen's *d* test as a measure of the size effect. In order to determine the impact of independent variables other than dichotomous variables on individual burnout dimensions, the multiple linear stepwise regression analysis was applied. Statistical tests were conducted using significance level $\alpha = .05$. All analyses were performed using STATISTICA 12 (Statsoft, PL) software.

Results

The prevalence of burnout among coaches

The results indicate that coaches experience low levels of the emotional exhaustion ($M = 14.70 \pm 7.66$, min–max 0–39) and depersonalisation ($M = 3.77 \pm 3.65$, min–max 0–21); however, they also feature the low sense of personal accomplishments ($M = 31.60 \pm 6.58$, min–max 12–48). In Table 2 the amounts and percentages of coaches' meeting the benchmarks (see Table 1) of high, moderate, and low levels of individual dimensions of

burnout are presented. Moderate-to-high levels of the emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation and a sense of personal accomplishments were diagnosed only in, respectively, 28.59% and 18.84% of coaches, whereas the substantial proportion of the sample (88.92%) experienced the reduced sense of personal accomplishments. Having regarded previously mentioned criterion of full-blown burnout, it has been found that only about every twentieth coach can be considered as such ($n = 13$, 5.33%).

Demographic correlates of coaching burnout

The only dimension of burnout, in which the statistically significant gender differences were observed, was depersonalisation, where women were significantly less depersonalising their subordinates than male coaches. The magnitude of the effect suggests that the relationship between coaches' gender and the intensity of behaviour such as negative, cynical, excessive remote distance in interpersonal contacts is moderately strong. Detailed data are listed in Table 3.

The dimension of depersonalisation was also the only one related to coaches' age. The regression model, with the variable as a predictor was statistically significant ($R^2 = .03$, $F_{(1,242)} = 7.74$, $p = .006$), and the sign of directional coefficients indicated that with age a tendency to depersonalising their athletes increased: $\beta = .18$, $b = .06$, $t_{(241)} = 2.78$, $p = .006$. Models for both of the other dimensions of burnout were statistically insignificant: the emotional exhaustion $F_{(1,242)} = 1.17$, $p = .311$; the sense of personal accomplishments $F_{(1,242)} = .46$, $p = .629$.

Psychological correlates of burnout

Coaching efficacy. To assess the relationship between the coaching self-efficacy and burnout, the step backward regression with individual burnout dimensions as dependent variables was used. All three models were proven to be statistically significant:

- the emotional exhaustion: $R^2 = .10$, $F_{(4,239)} = 6.72$, $p < .001$
- depersonalisation: $R^2 = .09$, $F_{(4,239)} = 5.87$, $p < .001$

Table 2. Amount (n) and percentages of coaches meeting the benchmark of low, medium and high level of burnout dimensions.

Burnout dimension	Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalisation	Sense of personal accomplishments
High	19 (7.79%)	15 (6.14%)	149 (61.06%)
Moderate	49 (20.8%)	31 (12.70%)	68 (27.86%)
Low	176 (72.13%)	198 (81.14%)	27 (11.06%)

Table 3. Gender differences in burnout among coaches.

Burnout dimension	Men <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Women <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>t</i> ₍₂₄₂₎	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Emotional exhaustion	14.77 ± 7.87	14.54 ± 7.13	.20	.834	.03
Depersonalisation	4.17 ± 3.98	2.74 ± 2.36	2.81	.005	.39
Sense of personal accomplishments	31.47 ± 6.78	31.90 ± 6.08	−.45	.650	−.06

- the reduced sense of personal accomplishments: $R^2 = .17$, $F_{(2,241)} = 24.55$, $p < .001$.

The predictor of the emotional exhaustion proved to be only motivation efficacy ($\beta = -.22$; $t = -2.27$, $p < .001$), the predictor of depersonalisation was character building efficacy ($\beta = -.26$, $t = -2.79$, $p < .001$), whereas for the reduced sense of personal accomplishments two predictors were statistically significant: motivation efficacy ($\beta = .22$; $t = 2.56$; $p = .011$) and game strategy efficacy ($\beta = .23$; $t = 2.71$; $p = .007$).

Coaching perfectionism. The overall mean scores for both aspects of perfectionism were 1.99 (± 1.08) for maladaptive and 4.64 ($\pm .82$) for adaptive. Models of regression with both dimensions of perfectionism as predictors of burnout explained from 12% to 23% variance; however, the maladaptive perfectionism was the only significant predictor:

- the emotional exhaustion: $R^2 = .12$, $F_{(2,241)} = 17.03$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .35$, $t_{(241)} = 3.84$, $p < .001$
- depersonalisation: $R^2 = 0.13$, $F_{(2,241)} = 19.45$, $p < .001$; $\beta = 0.38$, $t_{(241)} = 6.23$, $p < .001$
- the reduced sense of personal accomplishments: $R^2 = .23$, $F_{(2,241)} = 37.4$, $p < .001$; $\beta = -.47$, $t_{(241)} = -8.35$, $p < .001$.

Leadership styles: The overall means of leadership styles indicated that coaches prefer the democratic style ($M = 4.08 \pm .48$), and subsequently the autocratic style ($M = 3.04 \pm .54$). The activities and behaviours typical of the liberal management style were the least indicated ($M = 2.75 \pm .63$). All three regression models proved to

be statistically significant, explaining ranged from 4% to 13% variance:

- the emotional exhaustion: $R^2 = .05$, $F_{(2,241)} = 6.65$, $p = .002$
- depersonalisation: $R^2 = .13$, $F_{(2,241)} = 11.90$, $p < .001$
- the sense of personal accomplishments: $R^2 = .12$, $F_{(2,241)} = 10.74$, $p < .001$.

In the dimensions of the emotional exhaustion and the sense of personal accomplishments, their only predictor was the democratic style, negatively correlated in the first case ($\beta = -.21$, $t = 2.33$, $p < .001$) and positively correlated in the second case ($\beta = .27$, $t = 4.12$, $p < .001$). In terms of depersonalisation, predictors turned out to be all leadership styles: the autocratic one ($\beta = .19$, $t = 2.19$, $p = .030$), the democratic one ($\beta = -.16$, $t = -2.51$, $p = .013$) and the liberal one ($\beta = .22$, $t = 3.33$, $p < .001$).

Financial satisfaction: More than half of the surveyed coaches ($n = 140$, 57.38%) declared being dissatisfied with their earnings. As the results presented in Table 4 show, this fact is indeed significantly related to all dimensions of burnout, where the effect of depersonalisation ($d = .52$) indicates the strongest degree level.

Situational variables. Collectivity of sport was not the predictor of burnout in any dimensions (the differences between coaches in individual and team sports were statistically insignificant). The varying variable was the relation between opponents during competition, though only in the aspect of the emotional exhaustion, which was significantly higher among coaches whose athletes competed "side by side". The accurate data are listed in Table 5.

Table 4. Financial satisfaction and burnout in coaches.

Burnout dimensions	Satisfied $M \pm SD$	Unsatisfied $M \pm SD$	$t_{(242)}$	p	d
Emotional exhaustion	13.24 $\pm$ 6.98	15.99 $\pm$ 8.01	-2.85	.005	.37
Depersonalisation	2.80 $\pm$ 2.40	4.62 $\pm$ 4.30	-4.00	<.001	.52
Personal accomplishment	32.82 $\pm$ 6.18	30.53 $\pm$ 6.76	2.74	.007	.37

Table 5. Coaching burnout vs. sport type.

Burnout dimensions	Individual – Team					Relation between opponents				
	Individual $M \pm SD$	Team $M \pm SD$	$t_{(242)}$	p	d	Aside $M \pm SD$	Against $M \pm SD$	$t_{(242)}$	p	d
Emotional exhaustion	15.48 $\pm$ 9.16	14.22 $\pm$ 6.53	1.25	.212	.16	16.28 $\pm$ 9.13	14.00 $\pm$ 6.81	2.15	.032	.30
Depersonalisation	3.79 $\pm$ 4.13	3.75 $\pm$ 3.33	.07	.944	.00	4.22 $\pm$ 4.38	3.56 $\pm$ 3.26	1.31	.189	.18
Personal accomplishments	32.11 $\pm$ 6.60	31.28 $\pm$ 6.57	.95	.341	.12	31.32 $\pm$ 6.75	31.72 $\pm$ 6.51	-.43	.660	-.06

Discussion

Coaches are considered to be particularly vulnerable to the risk of burnout in their work.^{4,12} They have, on one hand, to establish often intensive interpersonal relationship, and, on the other hand, they are highly exposed to the social assessment and high expectations for the resulting efficiency. At the same time, coaches should reconcile both protective and pedagogical function towards their charges. However, despite at least 30 years' history of research on coaching burnout in sport, still little is known about the causes and consequences of this phenomenon. Having regarded the existing state of knowledge, as well as appreciating the social importance of the phenomenon, the aim of the study was to recognise the prevalence of burnout among coaches and its intrapersonal, demographic and situational correlates. Referring to the diagnostic purpose, it can be claimed that the incidence of full-symptom burnout is experienced by about 5% of surveyed coaches, therefore it seems to be reasonably unburned community. However, more scrutinised examination reveals that over 60% of the coaches reported low sense of personal accomplishment, although the seven to eight out of 10 coaches were diagnosed with a low level of burnout in the dimensions of the emotional exhaustion component and depersonalisation. A similar profile of burnout was observed by Koustelios²⁵ among football coaches in Greece or by Hardin et al.²⁶ among softball coaches in the USA, suggesting that it was not only the feature of coaching community in Poland, assuming that there was no way to make direct comparisons among coaches from different countries and even representing different subcultures within a given culture area. Referring to the broad context of female and male burnout, without specifying a particular professional group, Schaufeli and Buunk²⁷ argue that, having regarded the confounding variables such as the position in the professional hierarchy and related earnings, the social status or the scope of autonomy, the differences between both sexes should not be observed, with the exception of depersonalisation, to which men are more liable. In the context of the coaching profession, this dependency was claimed as early as in the late 1980s by Dale and Weinberg,¹¹ and currently their observation was confirmed by our results. It was, however, the only dimension of burnout, which diversified the coaches of both sexes, whereas in other studies the differences in the dimension of the emotional exhaustion^{8,28,29} and/or within the sense of personal accomplishments²⁷ were also reported and no significant differences in any of the dimensions were found.⁹ The lack of consistency among the results of different studies is probably the consequence of cultural differences among various countries where studies were carried out, as well as among different sport disciplines

and the level of sport advancement. Some of the research was conducted only within one sport discipline, for example judo⁹ and/or at the specified organisational level, for example only with college or university coaches,²⁹⁻³¹ whereas others, like our examination was carried out in mixed groups, in terms of sport disciplines and the charges' level of sport advancement. Other demographic factor that may be related to burnout is age; however, in our study it was significantly associated only with depersonalisation, with older coaches having a greater tendency to treat their athletes as objects. The potential reasons for this state have not yet been studied and interpreted, but it may be said that since the essence of burnout is the gradual loss of idealism, enthusiasm and energy to work, it necessarily reflects primarily on the trainers' charges.

Among the personal predictors of burnout, the personality variables take a special place because in contrast to the demographic variables, which as non-modifiable, can entail only indirect implications for the practice (allowing to identify risk groups), they can not only inform about the determinants of coaching burnout vulnerability or resilience, but also imply developing specific interventions. In our study, four types of variables were evaluated: perception of financial satisfaction, self-efficacy, perfectionism, and preferred leadership style. The first variable proved to be an important correlate of all three dimensions of burnout, demonstrating the greatest strength of the effect with the dimension of depersonalisation (Cohen's $d = .52$). Coaches dissatisfied with their earnings, therefore, had a greater tendency to a subject treatment of their athletes. They are also more exhausted emotionally and have a lower sense of personal accomplishments. According to our knowledge, the relationships among various aspects of the professional satisfaction (including the economic one) and coaching burnout were studied only by Hardin et al.²⁶ Altfeld and Kellmann,¹⁸ however, in contrast to our findings, did not declare any relationship among the financial satisfaction or financial security and burnout.

An important character feature conditioning the comprehensive range of behaviours and coaches' cognitive and affective responses is coaching self-efficacy, defined as "the extent to which coaches believe they have the capacity to affect the learning and performance of their athletes".²¹ From four areas of coaching competence specified by Feltz et al.,²¹ only self-efficacy in teaching sports techniques did not reveal any correlation with coaching burnout. In contrast, motivating efficacy was related to the emotional exhaustion (the less efficient coaches seem to be, the more prone to emotional exhaustion they are) and along with game strategy efficacy to the sense of personal accomplishments (both aspects of self-efficacy seem to be

protective factors against feelings of being undervalued in a coaching profession). Finally, the character building efficacy corresponded with lower tendencies of coaches to depersonalise their athletes. Although the subject of coaching self-efficacy and its correlates can be found for almost 20 years,³¹ the only research in the context of coaches' burnout was carried out by Short et al.³² in the pre-season and post-season periods. At both points of time, a negative correlation was observed between the two categories of variables, and over time the low-efficient trainers were burned out more than their high-efficient colleagues. However, direct comparison of these results with our findings is not fully justified, as authors employed the modified scale of burnout, designed rather for athletes in which in the place of traditional dimension of depersonalisation, the dimension referred to as sport depreciation appears.

An additional objective of the study was to examine the relationship between burnout and perfectionism which is defined as "an unwillingness to accept any standard or condition, that is other than absolutely faultless and free from defects."³³ Perfectionists burden themselves with high standards of performance, constantly striving for excellence and going up to the heights of motivation, which, however, can lead to a permanent dissatisfaction with the results, bothering themselves with failures and committed errors, unrealistic expectations to themselves or other people. Perfectionism can manifest itself as an adaptive and maladaptive mode of behaviour and reactions.^{22,33} Burnout can be the consequence of the latter, which with regard to collegiate coaches from Florida were found by Tashman et al.¹⁶ and confirmed our results. Maladaptive perfectionism represented a statistically significant risk factor for coaching burnout in all dimensions of the phenomenon, especially with regard to personal accomplishments, explaining 23% variation within them. The last of the hypotheses placed in connection with personality variables was related to the assessment of the link between coaching burnout and the preferred leadership style. The correlate of all three dimensions was the democratic management style acting as the protection against both the emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation, and at the same time conducive to enhancing the sense of personal accomplishments. The remaining styles were related only to depersonalisation, increasing the risk of developing such kind of relationships with athletes. These results are partially concurrent with the results obtained by Ryska,¹⁵ who also found that coaches preferring the high strategic-low collaborative style experienced high emotional exhaustion and low personal accomplishment, whereas coaches implementing rather the low bureaucratic-high collaborative

leadership style experienced lower depersonalisation and greater personal accomplishment.

It is known from the research on moral reasoning in sport that to some extent, they are dependent on the type of sport the athlete practices.³⁴ By creating different stimuli for athletes, sport disciplines varying in such features as teamwork or the level of physical contact among athletes create also various conditions for coaches' work. Karabatsos et al.¹⁰ compared the coaches of three sport disciplines – basketball, volleyball, and track and field – ascertaining the highest level of the emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation in basketball coaches. In our study, sport disciplines were categorised according to two criteria: teamwork and the relation between opponents during competition. The first criterion was not found to be affiliated with any of the dimensions of burnout, and the second one was only related to the emotional exhaustion, which turned out to be significantly higher among coaches whose athletes compete side by side (track and field, swimming, cycling, skating, etc.) than among coaches, where individuals or teams compete face to face or "against each other" (combat sports, team games).

The obtained results contribute to the knowledge of factors that may become correlates of coaching burnout; however, they are not devoid of limitations that ought to be highlighted. Above all, due to the inability to create the sampling frame, which could provide the basis for sample-drawing, the latter was not fully representative. This fact certainly limits the potential of generalisation of the diagnostic part of our research, but should not reduce the cognitive values of described relationships between the variables. Another limitation was the low response ratio, which may result in the error known as non-response bias. Although it should not affect the part of our study that was devoted to examining relationships among variables, it may pose a problem within diagnostic part of our study. On the other hand, a low rate of return highlights the difficulties the researchers meet to explore community of coaches, for it is worth noticing that similarly low coefficients were obtained by Tashman et al.,¹⁶ Vealey et al.,¹² a little higher – within the limits of 50% by Dale and Weinberg,¹¹ Ryska,¹⁵ and Bentzen et al.³⁵ Finally, the cross-sectional study design does not allow to draw unambiguous cause-effect conclusions and, in addition, the diagnosis of variables took place within the specified time period, whereas the symptoms of burn-out, as well as such factors as for example the sense of self-efficacy, can change over time, assuming different values depending on the stage of periodisation where the coaches along with their athletes are located (preparatory, competitive, transit).

Regardless of the indicated constraints, the obtained results may provide greater understanding

of correlates of coaching burnout and enable to prevent the second conditions, especially in terms of personal accomplishments, which appear to be the biggest problem of the coaching community. According to Maslach and Goldberg,³⁶ the counteracting of burnout basically takes place on two levels: individual and organisational or situational. In view of the particular importance of the individual's reactions to the various situations they encounter in the etiology of burnout, and therefore how they perceive and evaluate themselves and their environment, coaching education in a broad sense should be a priority direction of preventive action. The aim would be to familiarise the trainers with individual and situational factors which influence the formation and development of the burnout syndrome in its individual dimensions and to develop psychological and behavioural skills which would allow them to minimise the risk. The results obtained, should include:

- shaping interpersonal skills and educational competences (especially methods of educational and motivational influence), thanks to which the self-efficacy in shaping the character of the players and their motivation could be increased,
- developing skills that do not allow the pursuit of perfection to turn into negative perfectionism, such as the evaluation of process goals (the pursuit of fluency in action) rather than merely the results, treating failures and mistakes as lessons from which to learn, without excessive worry about them and treating them as personal failures, not making self-esteem dependent on the results achieved,
- developing sensitivity that recognise the value of a democratic style of team leadership and social competence without sacrificing the objectives of athletic development.

The activities at the organisational level are all the more difficult as they are not always possible to implement (e.g. as they provide financial satisfaction at a level that would satisfy the trainer), but it should be remembered that people cope better with stress and challenges when they feel valued for their efforts (not only for the effects measured by normative criteria). The social support of trainers and the organisation of training workshops to help develop and strengthen these competences can and should guide the authorities of clubs and sports associations.

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