

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE COLLOQUIUM

i-SPEAK **2026**

**SPORTS AND PHYSICAL EXERCISE
ASSEMBLY OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING**

SERIES 1. 2026

COLLOQUIUM PROCEEDINGS

EXTENDED ABSTRACT



Malaysia, 10 February 2026



eISBN 978-629-7989-01-3



Gender Differences in Burnout Levels Among University Student-Athletes: A Comparative Study

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Keywords: Athlete Burnout, Gender Differences, University Student-Athletes

I. INTRODUCTION

University student-athletes must balance academic demands with competitive sport participation, exposing them to increased psychological and physical stress that may contribute to burnout [1][2]. Athlete burnout is conceptualised as a multidimensional syndrome consisting of emotional and physical exhaustion, reduced sense of accomplishment, and sport devaluation [3]. International research has reported gender differences in burnout experiences, with variations observed in emotional exhaustion and sport devaluation across male and female athletes [4]. However, empirical evidence within the Malaysian university sport context remains limited. The absence of localised gender-specific data constrains the development of targeted psychological support interventions for student-athletes. Therefore, this study aimed to examine gender differences in burnout levels among university student-athletes at UiTM Seremban 3, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia.

II. METHODS

A quantitative cross-sectional comparative design was used. Participants were 80 university student-athletes (38 females and 42 males) aged 18–25 years selected through purposive sampling. Burnout levels were assessed using the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ), which measures emotional exhaustion, reduced sense of accomplishment, and sport devaluation using a 5-point Likert scale. Data were analysed using Jamovi software. Descriptive statistics were computed to determine burnout levels, and independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine gender differences at a significance level of 0.05.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Female student-athletes demonstrated slightly higher mean scores than males across all burnout dimensions. A statistically significant gender difference was identified only in reduced sense of accomplishment ($p = 0.046$), indicating that female athletes experienced stronger feelings of inefficacy and unmet achievement in sport. Similar gender-related trends have been reported in previous burnout research, where female athletes often report higher perceptions of reduced accomplishment compared

with males [4]. No significant gender differences were found for emotional exhaustion or sport devaluation, suggesting comparable fatigue levels and sport attitudes between genders, a pattern also observed in some collegiate athlete populations [6].

These findings suggest that gender differences in burnout among Malaysian university student-athletes may be dimension-specific rather than global. The higher reduced sense of accomplishment among females may relate to greater self-evaluative tendencies and perceived performance pressures documented in athlete burnout literature [1]. Conversely, similar levels of exhaustion and sport devaluation indicate that academic and training demands may affect male and female athletes similarly within the university sport environment [2].

TABLE I
GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ATHLETE BURNOUT DIMENSION

	Gender	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Reduced Sense of Accomplishment	Female	38	2.92	0.714	2.03	.046*
	Male	42	2.60	0.678		
Emotional Exhaustion	Female	38	2.93	0.926	0.5	.622
	Male	42	2.83	0.932		
Sport Devaluation	Female	38	2.75	0.939	1.08	.288
	Male	42	2.52	0.962		

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study found that female university student-athletes reported a significantly higher reduced sense of accomplishment than males, while emotional exhaustion and sport devaluation showed no gender differences. The findings highlight the importance of gender-sensitive psychological support in university sports, particularly interventions aimed at strengthening perceived competence and achievement among female athletes. This research provides localised evidence on athlete burnout in Malaysian higher education and supports the development of targeted mental health strategies for student-athletes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to the Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)

Seremban 3, for supporting this research. Gratitude is also extended to all university student-athletes who voluntarily participated in this study. Special thanks are given to the research supervisor for valuable guidance and support throughout the completion of this project.

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