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### Original Research

## An Assessment of Burnout in Undergraduate Athletic Training Education Program Directors

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### Abstract

**Context:** Athletic training education program directors (ATEPDs) often manage their time among students, program administration, and patient care.

**Objective:** To assess the level of burnout in ATEPDs and to determine the relationship between burnout and various demographics of ATEPDs.

**Design:** Cross-sectional study.

**Setting:** Public and private colleges and universities nationwide.

**Patients or Other Participants:** Two hundred forty-nine ATEPDs of undergraduate athletic training education programs accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education.

**Intervention(s):** We administered the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to all participants.

**Main Outcome Measure(s):** The MBI consisted of 21 items assessing 3 characteristics of burnout: *emotional exhaustion*, *depersonalization*, and *personal accomplishment*. Another component of the survey requested demographic information about the ATEPDs. We used univariate, multivariate, and factorial analyses of variance with the  $\alpha$  level set a priori at .05. We also calculated Pearson product moment correlation coefficients.

**Results:** Women had greater emotional exhaustion than men ( $20.67 \pm 9.43$  and  $16.47 \pm 9.64$ , respectively) ( $P = .001$ ). The difference between tenure-status groups for emotional exhaustion was significant ( $P = .014$ ), with tenure-track ATEPDs scoring higher on emotional exhaustion than tenured ATEPDs. Pearson product moment correlation coefficients revealed a weak negative relationship among emotional exhaustion and age ( $r = -0.263$ ,  $P < .001$ ), years of program director

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experience ( $r = -0.157, P = .013$ ), and years at current job ( $r = -0.162, P = .010$ ), indicating that as ATEPDs aged, gained more experience, and stayed in their current jobs, their emotional exhaustion scores decreased. There was also a weak negative relationship between age and depersonalization ( $r = -0.171, P = .007$ ). There was a weak positive relationship between years at current job and personal accomplishment ( $r = 0.197, P = .002$ ).

**Conclusions:** We found that ATEPDs experienced a moderate form of emotional exhaustion burnout and low depersonalization and personal accomplishment burnout, with women experiencing greater emotional exhaustion than males. Additionally, ATEPDs in tenure-track positions experienced greater emotional exhaustion than tenured ATEPDs. The ATEPDs need to obtain healthy coping strategies early within their directorships to manage components related to burnout.

**Keywords:** [emotional exhaustion](#), [depersonalization](#), [personal accomplishment](#)

Jessica M. Walter, MEd, ATC, and Bonnie L. Van Lunen, PhD, ATC, contributed to conception and design; acquisition and analysis and interpretation of the data; and drafting, critical revision, and final approval of the article. Stacy E. Walker, PhD, ATC, contributed to conception and design; analysis and interpretation of the data; and drafting, critical revision, and final approval of the article. Zahra C. Ismaeli, MS, ATC, contributed to analysis and interpretation of the data and drafting, critical revision, and final approval of the article. James A. Oñate, PhD, ATC, contributed to conception and design; acquisition and analysis and interpretation of the data; and drafting, critical revision, and final approval of the article.

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