

Sport commitment and burnout in South American football coaches

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ABSTRACT

The study analyzed the relationship between sport commitment and burnout in football coaches from South America. A total of 87 coaches from Peru (48%), Uruguay (30%), Venezuela (13%), and other countries (10%) participated, completing the SCQ-2 and CBQ. The results showed significant negative correlations between burnout and enjoyment, and positive correlations with other opportunities, while social support was negatively associated with reduced sense of accomplishment. These findings indicate that positive dimensions of sport commitment act as protective factors, whereas those oriented toward disengagement increase the risk of burnout. It is recommended to implement institutional strategies and psychoeducational programs to promote coaches' mental health.

KEYWORDS: commitment; burnout; football coaches; sport psychology.

INTRODUCTION

The work of sports coaches is key to the holistic development of individuals, integrating not only technical and physical aspects, but also psychological and social dimensions (Bailey, 2006). Within this framework, they serve as mentors and role models, dedicating personal resources to athletes' well-being (Scanlan et al., 2003).

In Latin America, coaches face complex contexts characterised by high pressure, limited resources, and scant recognition, which increase the risk of psychological burnout (Franciosi et al., 2022). In South America, this situation is intensified in soccer, exposing them to greater demands and risks to their mental health (Brandão et al., 2021; Frost et al., 2024; Leprince et al., 2024).

In this context, burnout is defined as a syndrome characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). In sports, burnout affects the well-being and retention of

coaches, indirectly impacting athlete performance (Goodger et al., 2007; Tutte & Los Fayos, 2010), with emotional exhaustion and decreased sense of accomplishment being its most frequent manifestations (Raedeke, 1997).

The Sports Commitment Model (Scanlan et al., 1993) explains continued participation in sports as a motivational state influenced by protective factors such as enjoyment, social support, and personal investment, and by weakening factors such as external opportunities and social constraints (Brandão et al., 2024; Scanlan et al., 2016). Thus, commitment can act as a resilience resource or a risk factor for burnout (García-Mas et al., 2010).

Empirical evidence indicates that enjoyment and social support are associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion, while external pressure and lack of recognition increase vulnerability to burnout (González-García et al., 2022; Gustafsson et al., 2017; Pulido et al., 2020). However, most of these studies have been conducted in Europe and North

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Conflict of interests: nothing to declare. Funding: nothing to declare.

Received: 9th December 2025. **Accepted:** 23rd March 2026.

Edited by: Pedro Teques  - Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro – Vila Real, Portugal.

America, with limited evidence in the South American context, where working conditions have unique characteristics (Frost et al., 2024; Madigan et al., 2023).

Consequently, a gap exists in understanding the relationship between sports commitment and burnout among South American coaches, underscoring the need for contextualised research to guide more effective interventions.

The objective of this study was to analyse the relationship between sports commitment and burnout in South American soccer coaches. It was hypothesised that positive dimensions of engagement (enjoyment, social support, and personal investments) would be negatively associated with burnout, while other opportunities would be positively associated with it.

METHOD

Sample

Eighty-seven soccer coaches from South America, aged between 19 and 68 years ($M = 43.3$; $SD = 10.5$), participated in the study. They were selected using purposive sampling. The sample was predominantly male (93%) and came from Peru (48%), Uruguay (30%), Venezuela (13%), and other countries (10%).

Instruments

The SCQ-2 was adapted for swimming coaches (Sánchez-Miguel et al., 2019) and linguistically adapted to the coaching context. It was structured into six dimensions: social constraint, other opportunities, enjoyment and enthusiastic commitment, social support, desire to excel, and personal investments. The model showed adequate fit indices ($CFI = .922$; $TLI = .915$; $RMSEA = .065$; $SRMR = .085$) and internal consistency ranging from .79 to .91.

The Coach Burnout Questionnaire (CBQ; Harris, 2005), linguistically adapted to the context of coaches, was also used. The final model included three dimensions:

emotional/physical exhaustion, diminished sense of accomplishment, and devaluation, with adequate fit indices ($CFI = .968$; $TLI = .961$; $RMSEA = .077$; $SRMR = .059$) and alphas between .76 and .91.

Procedure and analysis

A non-experimental, cross-sectional, correlational study was conducted with ethical approval (FCS-SCEI/763-11-24). Data were collected online voluntarily, anonymously, and confidentially, with informed consent.

After cleaning incomplete or inconsistent data, they were analysed in Jamovi using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations ($p < .05$), after verifying normality.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 1, Pearson correlation analyses identified several significant associations between sport commitment and burnout. Higher levels of enjoyment were associated with lower emotional and physical exhaustion ($r = -.27$, $p < .05$), reduced sense of accomplishment ($r = -.40$, $p < .001$), and sport devaluation ($r = -.33$, $p < .01$). Similarly, greater perceived social support ($r = -.29$, $p < .01$) and personal investments ($r = -.27$, $p < .05$) were linked to lower levels of reduced sense of accomplishment. In contrast, the perception of other opportunities was positively related to all burnout dimensions ($r = .43-.56$, $p < .001$), while social constraints did not exhibit statistically significant correlations with burnout.

DISCUSSION

The results show that enjoyment/commitment is negatively associated with the dimensions of burnout, confirming its protective role. This finding aligns with the literature highlighting intrinsic motivational resources as factors that mitigate burnout and promote professional continuity among coaches (Frost et al., 2024; Gustafsson et al., 2017; Pulido et al., 2020).

Table 1. Correlations between dimensions of sports commitment and burnout.

Dimension	Emotional/physical exhaustion	Decreased sense of accomplishment	Devaluation
Enjoyment/Commitment	-.27*	-.40***	-.33**
Social Support	-.13	-.29**	-.08
Personal Investments	-.09	-.27*	-.13
Other Opportunities	.47***	.56***	.43***
Social Restriction	-.08	.02	-.01

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Regarding social support, a negative association was observed only with decreased sense of accomplishment, suggesting a specific protective effect on perceived efficacy. The absence of relationships with other dimensions could be explained by the variability in the quality and source of support, whose effects may differ depending on its origin and nature (Ackeret et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, the “other opportunities” dimension was positively associated with all burnout dimensions, supporting the Sports Commitment Model. The perception of external alternatives can weaken the connection to the activity and increase burnout, especially in South American contexts with high workloads and multiple roles (Brandão et al., 2024; De Francisco et al., 2022; Mastrocola, 2021).

Regarding personal investments, their negative association with decreased sense of accomplishment suggests a limited protective effect. However, in contexts of high demands and low rewards, they can become a risk factor, highlighting their dual nature as both a resource and a vulnerability (Jang et al., 2025). Furthermore, the lack of relationships with social constraints could be explained by their indirect influence or their dependence on the organisational context (Yu & Cheng, 2024).

The results should be interpreted with consideration of the cross-sectional design, the specificity of the sample, and the reliance on self-reports. Longitudinal designs and multi-method approaches are recommended. Furthermore, as a practical implication, in the South American context, this highlights the need for institutional strategies that strengthen coaches’ well-being through burnout-prevention interventions and psychoeducational programs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the Latin American soccer coaches who participated in this study.

CRediT authorship contribution statement:

Mario Reyes-Bossio — Conceptualization; Methodology; Investigation; Resources; Data Curation; Writing – Original Draft; Writing – Review & Editing; Supervision; Project administration.

Verónica Tutte-Vallarino — Conceptualization; Methodology; Investigation; Data Curation; Writing – Original Draft; Writing – Review & Editing; Supervision.

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