

The Level of Psychological Burnout among Referees of Team Sports in Palestine in Light of Some Variables

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Abstract

The study aimed at verifying the level of psychological burnout among referees of team sports in Palestine. It also aimed at identifying the differences in the level of psychological burnout according to the variables of (refereeing experience, type of sport, the refereeing role, happiness of working as a referee, and the satisfaction of the federation's support for referees). To achieve this purpose, the study was conducted on a sample of (126) referees from the federations of football, volleyball, basketball, and handball. The participants responded to the Scale of "Burnout in Refereeing" that was developed by Alawi (1998). The results of the study showed that the level of psychological burnout among referees of team sports was within the moderate level. Moreover, the results indicated statistically significant differences in the level of psychological burnout among referees, and which can be attributed to the variables of (refereeing experience, type of sport, the refereeing role, happiness of working as a referee, and the satisfaction of the federation's support for referees). The study found that the level of psychological burnout was less among the more experienced referees compared to the less experienced ones, assistant referees compared to main referees, referees of volleyball compared to referees of other sports, referees who are happy to work as referees compared to unhappy referees, and referees who are satisfied with the federation's support compared to the referees who are not satisfied with the federation's support. The study recommended the necessity of preparing less experienced referees psychologically through conducting counseling and psychological courses to refine the referees' characters and enhance their positive feelings towards their profession. Furthermore, it is vital to pay attention to developing appropriate organizational support strategies to improve the referees' working conditions and enhance their job satisfaction.

Keywords: Psychological burnout, Psychological stress, Exhaustion, Referees, Team sports, Palestine

Introduction

The concept of psychological burnout is one of the relatively recent concepts that appeared in the early seventies of the twentieth century. Scientist Freudenberg used it for the first time to express the physical and emotional responses resulting from work stress among workers in the humanitarian professions who exhaust themselves in pursuit of difficult goals (Freudenberg, 1974).

Many scientific references agree that the term (psychological burnout) is related to the phenomenon of work stress. It can be defined as a state of mental, emotional and physical exhaustion that affect individuals because of workloads that exceed their capacity. As a result, this would result in a group of psychological, physical and mental symptoms that lead to the formation of a negative perception of the person towards himself, his work and his interaction with others. Moreover, it is a concept that consists of three main aspect. The first is the emotional exhaustion, which results from the imbalance between the requirements of the work and the capabilities required to implement it by the individual in charge of the work. It leads to the individual's feeling of anxiety, fatigue and stress. The second aspect is called Depersonalization, which means the set of changes that occur in an individual's behavior towards his work and the direction of his interaction with others, such as indifference and neglect in work and the tendency to treat people negatively. The third aspect is known as the reduced sense of accomplishment. It means a person's negative self-evaluation and a low feeling of his efficiency and productivity at work, and the feeling of his ineffectiveness in front of others (Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Roelofs et al., 2005).

With regard to sports, psychological pressures have become one of the manifestations that accompany sports activities associated with competitions. Athletes (players, coaches, referees) are exposed to many psychological pressures that result from personal factors, such as the search for distinction and excellence, fear of failure, and difficulty controlling emotions. External factors include crowds' reactions and media criticism. As for competition factors, they include the nature of the opponent, the importance of the match, and emotions resulting from the interaction between players, referees and coaches. (Almustafa, 2019; Al-Hashm, 2016). At the same time, the athlete's inability to positively adapt to or face these pressures leads to a low level of performance and dissatisfaction with his work or profession. At the end, the athlete would reach the burnout state or leave his profession, whether at his will or without it. This is consistent with the results of many studies, which showed that coaches, referees and players are susceptible to various levels of burnout (Alam et al., 2012; Alhajaya & Al-Zghailat, 2016; Al-Haliq et al., 2014; Almustafa, 2019; Gama et al., 2018; Gencay & Gencay, 2011; Gerber et al., 2018; Jamali & Jabari, 2014; Karademir, 2012; Malinauskas, 2010; Nikolaos, 2012; Nixdorf et al., 2020; Şirin & Döşyılmaz, 2017; Yıldırım et al., 2018).

In view of the refereeing profession, the functions and tasks performed by the referees are among the important factors for the success of any sporting competition. The referee acts as a negotiator to discuss and resolve the tension that arises between the players during the match; as a judge who applies the laws and special rules in the game and takes unbiased appropriate decisions; and as an administrator and mentor for all participants in the sports competition. On the other hand, players, coaches, and fans perceive and understand these roles differently, the matter that constitutes a source of disagreement between players and coaches on one hand, and between referees during sports competition on the other. This helps increase the referees' exposure to some psychological pressure, which is one of the important reasons for the occurrence of physical, psychological and mental exhaustion of the referee (Almustafa, 2019). This happens since the mistakes of the referees are usually subject to criticism and follow-up, whether from the jury (refereeing committee), players, coaches, or by multiple sports media and public opinion (Weinberg & Richardson, 1990). Therefore, the profession of refereeing was classified as one of the exhaustive professions and was considered as one of the worst professions in the sports field (Baldwin, 2008).

Many studies indicate that among the most important factors causing psychological pressures for referees are: personal conflict (*dealing with a bad coach or player*), fear of physical harm (*attempted assault by players or fans*), time pressure and its effect on the family relationship (*refereeing requirements versus family care*), conflict with colleagues, fear of failure (*wrongful refereeing decisions*), negative perception of referee (*questioning the integrity of the referee by coaches, fans, players and media workers*), and the lack of social esteem (*lack of recognition of the referee's value and its enforcement financially and psychologically*) (Folkesson et al., 2002; Kruger et al., 2012; Louvet et al., 2009; Rainey & Hardy, 1999; Tsorbatzoudis et al., 2005). Moreover, studies have shown that these pressures negatively affect the referees' psyche and their satisfaction with their profession especially when they cannot cope with it or adapt positively to it, or when the referees realize that their efforts or relationships with others have not contributed to the return they expect. In turn, this leads to an increase in their feeling of physical and emotional exhaustion and negative thinking towards their dealings with others; consequently, they reach a state of burnout (Al-Haramlah, 2017; Galeh et al., 2016; Jamali & Jabari, 2014; Rainey & Hardy, 1999; Taylor et al., 1990).

Psychological burnout results in some negative psychological responses that affect the individual and his profession. This includes mental responses, such as reduced ability to concentrate, thinking disorder, impaired ability to solve problems, and issuing of wrong decisions and judgments. In addition, emotional responses such as feelings of anxiety, depression, anger and psychological loneliness, behavioral responses such as aggression, decreased job satisfaction and commitment, increased absenteeism, fatigue, and a tendency to leave the profession (Mansour, 2013). Therefore, there is a need to research the phenomenon of psychological burnout that affects workers in the humanitarian professions, which includes the refereeing profession because sports competitions are full of many psychological pressures that affect the referees' level of exposure to burnout. Consequently, the level of influence of the referees may differ according to some of their professional and personal characteristics, such as experience, type of sport, and the refereeing role.

By reviewing the literature for the subject of the study, we can say there were some researchers interested in studying the phenomenon of psychological burnout that may affect referees in different sports and environments. However, no studies have focused on investigating the psychological state of sports referees in the Palestinian environment. This means that there is a need to research the psychological phenomena of burnout that may face referees. This is important because of the administrative changes that took place in the Palestinian sports system, and since most Palestinian sports federations adopted the application of the professional system in 2009. Therefore, based on its results, this study will provide some information that can help officials and workers in sports federations to identify one of the most important psychological and functional problems that team sports referees may encounter. This study will also contribute to providing reference values that support the literature and researchers in order to conduct studies on the referees of other team and individual sports in the Palestinian environment and in different environments and cultures. Hence, this exploratory study seeks to identify the level of

psychological burnout among the referees of team sports in the State of Palestine in light of some variables. In particular, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

- *RQ1*: What is the level of the psychological burnout among the referees of team sports in the State of Palestine?
- *RQ2*: Are there a difference in the level of psychological burnout among the referees of team sports in Palestine that attributed to the variables (Refereeing experience, type of sport, refereeing role, happiness of working as a referee, satisfaction with federation support for referees)?

Methodology

Participants

The participants in this exploratory study were (126) referees registered in the records of Palestinian sports federations for team sports (Football, Basketball, Volleyball, and Handball). Referees' ages ranged between 26-46 years, with a mean of (34.2 ± 6.54) . Moreover, their refereeing experience ranged between (2-18) years, with a mean of (8.6 ± 4.4) . Table 1 shows a description of the study sample according to its variables:

Variables	Groups	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Refereeing experience	Less than 5 years	39	31.0%
	5-10 years	53	42.0%
	More than 11 years	34	27.0%
Type of sport	Football	39	31.0%
	Basketball	35	27.8%
	Handball	25	19.8%
	Volleyball	27	21.4%
Refereeing role	Main Referee	56	44.4%
	Assistant referee	70	55.6%
Are you happy to work as a referee	Yes	78	61.9%
	No	48	38.1%
Are you satisfied with the Federation support for referees	Yes	73	58.0%
	No	53	42.0%

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the study participants

Study Instrument

Participants answered a two-part questionnaire; the first part consists of seven questions related to referees' demographic information, namely: (age, academic level, years of refereeing experience, type of sport, refereeing role, happiness working as a referee, satisfaction with the Federation's support for referees). The second part consists of the Psychological Burnout Scale for Sports Referees that was developed by Alawi (1998). It is an adapted and Arabized version of the burnout scale of sports referee that was designed by Weinberg and Richardson (1990) to measure the feeling of the sports referee of psychological burnout under the title: "Burnout in Refereeing". The scale includes (15) items to which the referee answers according 7-point Likert-type scale, and these answers range from 1 (does not apply to me completely) to 7 (applies to me completely). The psychological burnout score for the referees is calculated through the process of adding the scores of all the items together to achieve a total score ranging from 15 to 105. After that, the referees' burnout degree is classified into three levels: a low level of burnout (less than 41 degrees), a moderate level of burnout (from 42-85 degrees), and a high level of burnout (higher than 86 degrees) (Alawi, 1998).

As for the validity of the burnout scale of sports referees, the structural validity and content validity of the scale were verified by Alawi (1998) and Almustafa (2019). As for the reliability of the scale, Alawi (1998) indicated that the re-test coefficient of the burnout scale of sports referees reached 0.86. However, Almustafa (2019) indicated that the re-test coefficient of the scale reached 0.88. Additionally, internal consistency reliability was checked for the burnout scale of sports referees in the current study where the Cronbach's alpha stability coefficient reached 0.92.

Procedures

After obtaining referees' contact information from the sports federations, the researcher sent an email to notify the referees about the research. The email included information related to the study, its objectives, the importance of the referees' participation in the research, and the researchers' contact addresses. A week later, another email was sent to referees containing an electronic link to the questionnaire, and an explanatory paragraph explaining the mechanism for answering the questionnaire. It was emphasized that participation is voluntary, the referees' answers will be anonymous and will be treated with complete confidentiality, and will be used for scientific research

purposes only. One month after sending the second email, the referees were contacted by phone to remind them and encourage them to participate in the research.

Data Analysis

After collecting data from the referees, they were coded and processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 23 software. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated to find the referees’ level of psychological burnout. The independent T-test was used to find the differences in the level of psychological burnout according to the variables of the refereeing role, the happiness working as a referee, and the satisfaction with the federation’s support for the referees. Moreover, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and LSD test were used to find out the differences in the level of psychological burnout according to the variables of refereeing experience and the type of sport. The study recognized the value of (p<0.05) as a level of statistical significance.

Results

Results related to the answer to the first question, which states: "What is the level of psychological burnout among the referees of team sports in the State of Palestine?"

To determine the levels of burnout among referees of team sport in Palestine, the frequencies, percentages, the mean, and the standard deviation of the referees' responses on the burnout scale of the sport referee were calculated as shown in Table 2.

Level of burnout	Range	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
Low	15-41	32	25.39%	50.28	12.34
Moderate	42-85	87	69%		
High	86-105	7	5.55%		

Table 2. The level of psychological burnout among referees of team sports

It is evident from the results of Table 2 that (25.39%) of the referees reported low levels of burnout, and (69%) of the referees suffered from moderate levels of burnout. However, (5.5%) of the referees suffered from high levels of burnout. In general, the level of psychological burnout among the referees of team sports in Palestine was within the moderate level (mean = 50.28, S.D. = 12.34).

The results related to the second question: “Are there a difference in the level of psychological burnout among the referees of team sports in Palestine that attributed to the variables (Refereeing experience, type of sport, refereeing role, happiness of working as a referee, satisfaction with federation support for referees)?

To answer the second question, the researcher used means, standard deviations Independent -Samples T-test, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) as shown in Tables (3,4,5,6, and 7).

As for the refereeing experience, the results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that there are statistically significant differences in the level of burnout among the referees of team sports in Palestine that are attributed to the refereeing experience (F= 27.207, p. ≤ 0.000). According to the result of the LSD test that was applied to find out the source of the difference, it was found that the level of burnout of referees with less than 5 years of experience (Mean = 60.43 ± 13.92) is higher than the burnout level for referees whose refereeing experience exceeds 6 years and 11 years. (Table 3).

Rferees' experience	Frequency	Mean	S.D.	F	P	LSD
A. Less than 5 years	39	60.43	13.929	27.207	0.000*	B, C < A
B. 6-10 years	53	46.90	8.1648			
C. More than 11 years	34	44.29	8.4693			

* P < 0.05

Table 3. Results of ANOVA analysis to determine differences in burnout level depending on the refereeing experience variable

With regard to the variable of the type of sport, the results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that there are statistically significant differences in the level of burnout among the referees of team sports in Palestine that are attributed to the type of sport (F= 27.207, p. ≤ 0.05). According to the result of the LSD test that was applied to find out the source of the difference, it was found that the burnout level of volleyball referees (Mean = 44.29 ± 10.64) is less than the burnout level of the referees of football, basketball and handball (Table 4).

Type of sport	Frequency	Mean	S.D.	F	P	LSD
A. Football	39	52.5897	11.48161	3.122	0.029*	D < A, B, C
B. Basketball	35	50.8286	12.88064			
C. handball	25	52.9200	13.06688			
D. Volleyball	27	44.2963	10.64033			

* P < 0.05

Table 4. Results of ANOVA analysis to determine differences in burnout level depending on the sport type variable

With regard to the variable of the refereeing role, the results of the t-test showed that there are statistically significant differences in the level of burnout among referees of team sports in Palestine that are attributed to the variable of refereeing role ($t= 2.69$, $p. \leq 0.008$). It was found that the level of psychological burnout among the main referees (Mean = 53.62 ± 13.2) is higher than the psychological burnout level of the assistant referees (Mean = 47.80 ± 10.62). (Table 5).

Refereeing role	Frequency	Mean	S.D.	t	P
Main Referee	56	53.62	13.26	2.69	0.008*
Assistant referee	70	47.80	10.62		

* P < 0.00

Table 5. Results of T-Test to determine differences in burnout level depending on the refereeing role variable

As for the variable of the happiness at working as a referee, the results of the t-test showed that there are statistically significant differences in the level of psychological burnout among referees of team sports Palestine that are attributed to the variable of happiness working as a referee ($t= 4.75$, $p \leq 0.000$). It was found that the level of psychological burnout among referees who are not happy to work in the refereeing profession (Mean = 56.54 ± 13.89) is higher than the level of psychological burnout among referees who are happy to work in refereeing profession (Mean = 46.60 ± 9.56). (Table 6)

Are you happy to work as a referee	Frequency	Mean	S.D.	t	P
No	48	56.54	13.89	4.753	0.000*
Yes	78	46.60	9.563		

* P < 0.05

Table 6. Results of T-Test to determine differences in burnout level depending on the variable of happiness at working as a referee

With regard to the variable of satisfaction with the federation's support for the referees, the results of the t-test showed statistically significant differences in the level of psychological burnout among referees of team sports in Palestine that are attributed to the variable of satisfaction with the federation's support for the referees ($t= 2.15$, $p. \leq 0.033$). It was found that the level of psychological burnout among the referees who are not satisfied with the federation's support for the referees (Mean= 53.13 ± 14.56) is higher than the level of psychological burnout among referees who are satisfied with the federation's support for the referees (Mean = 48.3 ± 10.8). (Table 7)

Are you satisfied with the Federation support for referees	Frequency	Mean	S.D.	t	P
No	53	53.13	14.566	2.15	0.033*
Yes	73	48.39	10.088		

* P < 0.05

Table 7. Results of T-Test to determine differences in burnout level depending on the variable of satisfaction of the federation's support for the referees

Discussion

The literature indicates the existence of many different psychological and professional phenomena, most of which need some explanation and clarification. This includes the phenomenon of psychological burnout, which is expected to increase in the coming years due to the increased competition pressures facing referees during matches. Therefore, this study aimed at identifying the level of burnout of team sports referees in Palestine in light of the variables (refereeing experience, type of sport, refereeing role, happiness working as a referee, satisfaction with the federation's support for referees).

With regard to the level of psychological burnout among the referees of team sports in Palestine, the results of Table 2 showed that (94%) of the referees suffered from low to moderate levels of burnout, and that the burnout level of the team sports referees in Palestine was within the moderate level (mean = 50.28, S.D. = 12.34). This result is consistent with the results of many studies which showed that sports referees are subject to various levels of burnout that is considered as one of the main problems that sports referees may encounter, regardless of

the type of sport they referee (Alam et al., 2012; Al-Haliq et al., 2014; Almustafa, 2019; İlkım & Güllü, 2016; Karademir, 2012; Martínez-Moreno et al., 2021). At this point, we can say that the duties incumbent on the referees while leading the matches are among the important reasons for referees to be exposed to the psychological pressures that result in burnout. Referees are required to enforce the laws and rules of the game, to make quick and accurate decisions, and to resolve disputes that may arise between players. On the other hand, players, coaches and fans' perception and understanding of these roles differ; the matter that makes referees subject to various pressures, such as fear of physical or verbal harm from players, coaches and fans, or fear of committing refereeing errors during the match. (Kruger et al., 2012; Louvet et al. 2009; Tsorbatzoudis et al., 2005). Moreover, the mistakes of the referees are usually subject to criticism and skepticism, either by the refereeing committee or by the various media and public opinion (Weinberg & Richardson, 1990). Such pressures negatively affect the referees' psyche and their satisfaction with their profession, especially when they cannot adapt positively to it. As a result, this would lead to a decrease in their technical and physical levels and to an increase in their feeling of physical and emotional exhaustion and negative thinking towards their profession, and this is what is known as "psychological burnout" (Al-Nahe, 2007).

With regard to the variable of refereeing experience, the results of Table (3) indicated that more experienced referees suffered from lower levels of burnout compared to less experienced referees. This result can be explained by the fact that the more experienced referees have acquired, through leading many matches, some psychological skills. These skills help them in dealing with conditions and problems of matches that cause psychological pressures to which they are exposed, and which have become a normal part of their job that they face during every competition. This explanation supports the results of some studies which indicated that more experienced referees are less affected by the psychological pressure of matches (Folkesson et al., 2002; Gillué et al., 2018).

On the other hand, the high level of burnout of less experienced referees can be explained by the so-called "reality shock", which appears by moving from the theoretical and practical qualification stage to the reality of competition and its difficulties. Newly employed referees begin their career in the refereeing profession with a high degree of enthusiasm and willingness to work to gain a professional position and prove themselves in the professional milieu. However, they quickly face many psychological pressures, such as lack of motivation, lack of social and organizational support, and they sometimes receive physical or verbal abuse from athletes, coaches, or fans. Because they lack experience and skill in dealing with these pressures, referees began to feel a lack of self-confidence and started to question their competence, and their professional performance. Consequently, they gradually begin to deplete their psychological and physical energies and reach the burnout stage. In general, the results of this study were consistent with some studies, which showed that less experienced referees are susceptible to higher levels of burnout compared to more experienced referees (Al-Haliq et al., 2014; Karademir, 2012).

As for the variable of the sport type, the results of Table (4) showed that volleyball referees suffered from lower levels of burnout compared to football, basketball and handball referees. We can attribute this result to the difference in the nature of team sports. Volleyball is considered as a "non-contact" sport, which does not include any intentional physical contact between the competing players. Unlike football, basketball and handball, which can be classified as "contact" sports, for they include a limited amount of physical contact that is permitted between competitors (Arnheim & Prentice, 1997). Therefore, it is possible that the nature of contact sports can create different sources of stress, such as fear of physical harm and conflict between players than in non-contact sports. In addition, the increased burden of physical exertion on contact sports referees in the administration of competitions is higher than the physical effort exerted by referees of non-contact sports. This increases the psychological pressure placed on referees in contact sports compared to non-contact sports and consequently increases their exposure to burnout. This explanation supports the study that was conducted by Kruger et al. (2012) which indicated that physical burden of exertion contributes significantly to the overall level of stress experienced by referees. In addition, the study of Goldsmith and Williams (1999) indicated that volleyball referees suffered from lower levels of stress compared to football referees.

With regard to the refereeing role variable, the results of Table (5) indicated that main referees suffered from higher levels of burnout compared to assistant referees. This result is consistent with the findings of previous studies, which indicated that main referees are susceptible to higher levels of burnout (Pedrosa & Garcia-Cueto, 2016; Şirin & Döşyılmaz, 2017). We can attribute this result to the increase in pressures and duties placed on the main referees' shoulders compared to the assistant referees. The main referees are the holders of the first authority in managing sports competition, enforcing laws and issuing decisions related to fouls committed by players and coaches. As a result, this may increase their anxiety about committing refereeing errors, especially as the fans and the sport media put responsibility for any improper refereeing decision on the shoulders of the main referees. This explanation supports Maslach et al. (2001) and Al Nahi (2007), who indicated that work stress is one of the main causes of burnout.

With regard to the variable of happiness to work as a referee, the results of Table (6) showed that referees who were unhappy to work as referees suffered from higher levels of exhaustion than referees who were happy to work as referees. This result is consistent with some studies that have shown a negative relationship between

happiness and burnout (Karademir, 2012; Shams et al., 2014). This result can be explained by the fact that happiness is a concept that carries three main components: avoidance of negative feelings, the presence of positive emotions, and satisfaction with life. (Argyle, 2001). These components contribute to reducing frequent emotional exhaustion, for it is considered as the main cause of psychological burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). On the other hand, referees' feeling of happiness expresses their satisfaction with the refereeing profession, and reduces the possibility of burnout. This explanation supports the results of some studies that indicated a negative relationship between referees' job satisfaction and their level of burnout (Ilkim & Güllü, 2016; Şirin & Döşyılmaz, 2017).

As for the variable of satisfaction with the federation's support for the referees, the results of Table (7) showed that referees who were not satisfied with the federation's support for the referees suffered from higher levels of burnout compared to the referees who were satisfied with the federation's support. This result is consistent with some studies conducted in non-sporting contexts that demonstrate a negative relationship between perceived organizational support and the level of burnout (Cheng and O-Yang, 2018; Edith et al., 2016). The concept of perceived organizational support refers to the extent to which workers feel and are aware of the degree to which the organization they work in meets their social and emotional needs, appreciates their efforts and contributions, and is interested in developing their experiences and achieving their interests (Eisenberger et al., 1986). This means that when referees have a positive perception that their federation seeks to develop their expertise and care about their professional and social needs, this will reduce their feeling of stress and increase their satisfaction and commitment to the job. This is in line with the results of some studies that indicated a negative correlation between organizational support and pressures related to work requirements in refereeing versus family care (Hong et al., 2018), the existence of a positive correlation between the organizational support of referees and their job satisfaction (Kim, 2017), and the continuity of their work in refereeing (Cuskelly and Hoye, 2013).

Limitations and future directions

Despite of the findings of the study, there are some limitations that must be noted. First, the sample of this study included referees belonging to the football, basket, handball, and volleyball federations in the State of Palestine only. Therefore, the results of this study should not be generalized to referees in other team and individual sports, especially since sports competitions and the refereeing tasks they require differ from one sport to another. Consequently, this difference may constitute different psychological pressures that lead to different levels of burnout. Therefore, future research should include studying the burnout phenomenon to which referees are exposed in other types of team and individual sports. Second, the results of this study are based on the cross-sectional design that limits the explanation of causal relationships between the variables. Therefore, there is a need to conduct longitudinal studies to track the changes that occur in the level of burnout of sports referees over time and to link them with variables that may explain any relationship that causes burnout. Finally, this study did not determine whether participants work only in sports refereeing (full time) or that they have other professions in addition to their work in refereeing (part time). Therefore, the nature of the jobs in which the referees work (part-time) may be full of psychological pressures that may affect the level of their burnout. Consequently, future studies could compare differences in the level of burnout between full-time and part-time referees.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The weakness of the referees' ability to adapt positively to the psychological pressures resulting from sports competitions leads to referees to be exposed to different levels of burnout whose levels on the referees may differ according to their personal and functional variables. This is what the current study found when it showed that the level of psychological burnout among referees of team sports was within the moderate level. In addition, the variables (refereeing experience, type of sport, the role of refereeing, happiness working as a referee, and satisfaction with the organizational support of referees) are among the determining factors of the level referees' psychological burnout. Based on these results, this study suggests some measures that are preferable to be taken by the administrations of sports federations to reduce the level of exposure of referees to burnout, namely:

First: Prepare inexperienced referees psychologically through conducting counseling and psychological courses aimed at refining the referees' character, strengthening their positive feelings towards their profession, and developing their ability to deal more effectively with sources of tension associated with competitions.

Second: The necessity of adopting the application of psychological tests for the early identification of referees whose psychological state is negatively affected by competition pressures; in addition to conducting effective interventions to reduce the influence of factors that increase their stress.

Third: Paying attention to developing appropriate organizational support strategies to improve referees' working conditions and enhance their job satisfaction.

Conflicts of interest : The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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