

Particularities of mental health disorders in university student athletes: prevalence and mechanisms involved in their development

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Reality of university student athletes

University student athletes experience a combination of issues related to:

- their developmental phase
- their university studies
- their practice of elite sport.





Reality of university student athletes

- This accumulation of issues can lead to symptoms and mental health disorders.
- In addition to all these issues, the pandemic has added additional challenges.

So, what is the process behind the development of mental health difficulties in university student athletes during the pandemic?

To our knowledge, no study has yet investigated this longitudinally.



Method

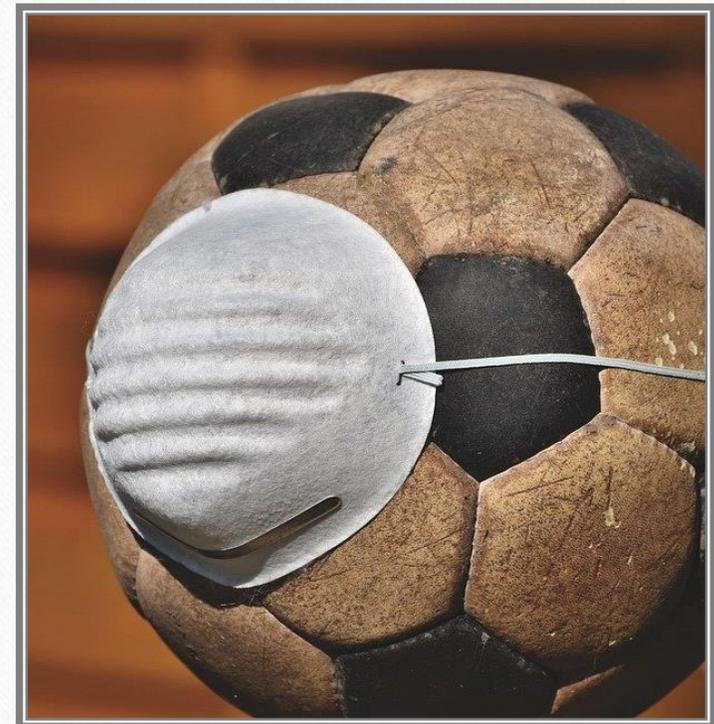
Our longitudinal study :

- Autumn 2020 (2nd wave of the pandemic)
- Spring 2021 (3rd wave)
- Autumn 2021 (4th wave)

Target population: every university student athletes in the province of Quebec

Online questionnaire (French and English versions)

- Anxiety symptoms (GAD-7)
- Depression symptoms (PHQ-9)
- Disordered eating (EAT-26)
- Alcohol use disorders (AUDIT-C)
- Social support availability (ÉPS-10)



Sample, until now...

	Autumn 2020 (2 nd wave)	Spring 2021 (3 rd wave)	Autumn 2021 (4 th wave)
N (total)	424	232	Coming soon
% francophones	85.3%	91.9%	
% females	62.9%	79.0%	
Mean age (SD)	21.83 (2.60)	22.13 (2.21)	
Mean of training hours per week (SD)	14.06 (7.50)	7.42 (5.77)	
Sports practiced	Soccer, volleyball, rugby, ultimate, football, cheerleading, swimming, track and field, cross-country running, badminton, basketball, ice hockey, tennis, golf, triathlon, others		

163 student athletes participated to both measurement times



Preliminary results

Table 1. Differences in the prevalence of mental health difficulties between the 2nd and 3rd waves of the pandemic

Prevalence of significant symptoms of	Valid percentage (frequency)		Pearson's Chi-square	Degrees of freedom	Cramer's V	N
	Autumn 2020 (2 nd wave)	Spring 2021 (3 rd wave)				
Depression	33.82 (46)	27.94 (38)	32.65***	1	.49***	136
Anxiety	26.87 (36)	17.91 (24)	11.09***	1	.29***	134
Disordered eating	7.38 (9)	9.02 (11)	39.37***	1	.57***	122
Alcohol use disorders	9.48 (11)	9.48 (11)	28.75***	1	.50***	116

Note : *p ≤ .001



Next steps

To analyze the three measurement times by performing a latent trajectory modeling analysis (LGCM) by mental health disorder and then explore the predictors involved (ex: stressful events, impacts of the pandemic) in each trajectory.



Knowing what are the risk and protective factors involved in the development of mental health difficulties during the pandemic will help to:

Better understand the social repercussions of certain pandemic issues on the mental health of university student athletes (ex: stopping competitions, virtual school) and will help to make informed decisions about the health measures to be put in place (ex. better weigh the pros and cons of stopping university sports practice).

Prevent the development of mental health issues by attempting to reduce risk factors (ex. isolation) and promote protective factors (ex. social support).

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