



Impact of Major Injuries on the mental Health of Professional Football Players

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ABSTRACT

Mental health among professional football players is being examined and is also gaining more publicity because the players have been sharing their personal experiences of psychological distress during injuries which is one of the major physical challenges that players go through in their professional career and also has a profound effect on their mental health. This conceptual paper explores the impact of major injuries on the mental well being of professional football players drawing on existing literature the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the mental health implications of major injuries of professional football and inform future research and practice in this area.

Key words: major injuries, mental health, professional football players, impacts.

INTRODUCTION

Professional football is a physically demanding sport characterized by intense competition, rigorous training regimens, and the constant risk of injury. While injuries are an inherent part of the game, major injuries, such as ligament tears, fractures, and musculoskeletal injuries, can have far-reaching consequences beyond physical health. Increasing evidence suggests that major injuries in professional football players can significantly impact their mental health, leading to psychological distress, mood disturbances, and reduced well-being. Despite growing awareness of the importance of mental health in sports, the psychological effects of major injuries on football players remain understudied and poorly understood. This conceptual research paper seeks to address this gap by examining the impact of major injuries on the mental health of professional football players.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

- To study earlier researches on major injuries
- To learn about the mental health challenges faced by the football players during injury time

The data collected was in a qualitative research design that is the secondary data was collected and then through the secondary data the article was reviewed from articles, journal and various websites.

What is mental health?

according to the world health organization mental health is defined as "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Mental health is a state of well being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make contribution to his or her own community. Looking after one's mental health can help a person maintain their ability to enjoy life. Stress depression and anxiety can affect mental health and may disrupt a person's routine. Mental health is being studied in this article because it has a severe impact on the state of mind of professional football players when they are injured and have to take long breaks from playing to recover.

What are major injuries?

As the paper studies the impact of major injuries on the mental health of football players, in the context of sports and physical activity major injuries refer to significant and severe bodily harm that can significantly impact an individual's health, well-being and the ability to participate in the chosen activity. These injuries often require medical attention, rehabilitation and extended recovery periods.

Some of the major injuries football players go through in their career :-

1.Knee injuries:

- **Anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) tears:** A rupture or tear of the ACL, a crucial ligament in the knee joint, often caused by sudden stops, pivots or collisions
- **Meniscus tears:** Damage to the meniscus (cartilage) in the knee due to twisting or excessive force

2.Ankle sprains:

- Stretching or tearing of the ligaments around the ankle joint, commonly occurring during rapid changes in the direction or awkward landings

3.Hamstring strains:

- Overstretching or tearing of the hamstring muscles at the back of the thigh, often occurs due to explosive movements.

4.Achilles tendonitis:

- Chronic inflammation of the Achilles tendon (connecting the calf muscles to the heel bone), this injury is typically caused by repetitive stress

5. Concussions and head injuries:

- Head impacts, collisions or falls can lead to concussions, affecting cognitive functioning and mental health

6. Fractures and Dislocations:

- Broken bones (such as fracture in the leg or arm) or joint dislocations are also considered as major injuries

7. Spinal injuries:

- This type of injuries are rare but severe, spinal injuries occurs due to collisions, falls and awkward landings.

These injuries can have long-term consequences, affecting physical performance, mental health, and overall quality of life. Proper prevention, early diagnosis, and effective rehabilitation are crucial for managing major injuries in soccer players.

How major injuries cause mental health distress to professional football players?

Major injuries in professional football can have significant impact on the mental health of the players due to many reasons such as a major injury takes a long time to recover, this period of rest and rehabilitation can lead to stress, boredom, feeling of loneliness, frustration. When the players are majorly injured and spend a significant amount time away from their teammates and the sport itself leads to isolation and the feel alienated from their support network. During the injury time the players tend to rely on medical professionals, support staffs, physiotherapists to help them recover from their injury leads to feeling of dependency and loss of autonomy which will negatively impact the mental well-being. When the players return to training and competition after progressing through rehabilitation, they experience heightened anxiety and fear of re-injury these issues may lead to hinderance to regain their confidence in their physical ability. Major injuries can have financial implications for professional football players, particularly when they cannot compete and earn their usual salary this loss of income can lead to loss of income and uncertainty in their future career prospects which causes feelings of stress, insecurity and self-doubt. The mental health issues require a holistic approach to be addressed such as access to mental health resources support from coaches and teammates and focus on overall well-being and recovery.

Review of literature

1. Susan Wood, Lesley K Harrison & Jo Kucharska (2017) Male professional footballers' experiences of mental health difficulties and help-seeking, *The Physician and Sportsmedicine*, 45:2, 120-128, DOI: [10.1080/00913847.2017.1283209](https://doi.org/10.1080/00913847.2017.1283209)

The article shows that professional footballers face a range of mental health disorders including anxiety, depression and performance related stress the study also reveals the barriers of seeking help that are concerns about confidentiality, fear of appearing weak and a lack of trust in mental health professionals, the participants also emphasized on mental health awareness programs and promote help seeking behavior among other football clubs. Overall the article sheds light on the complex experiences of male football players and the potential strategies to support their mental well being

2. Kristoffer Henriksen, Robert Schinke, Karin Moesch, Sean McCann, William D. Parham, Carsten Hvid Larsen & Peter Terry (2020) Consensus statement on improving the mental health of high performance athletes, *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 18:5, 553-560, DOI: [10.1080/1612197X.2019.1570473](https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2019.1570473)

The paper underscores the high performance sports and acknowledge the unique stressors and faced by the athletes . The authors used the consensus building approach involving experts in sports psychology , coaching and athlete welfare , a set of recommendations was developed to improve mental health support available for high performance athletes with the help of collaborative discussions and analysis of existing literature .overall the article states that by implementing the recommended strategies high performance athletes can experience enhanced well being , performance and quality of life

3. Fried, T., Lloyd, G.J. An Overview of Common Soccer Injuries. *Sports Medicine* 14, 269–275 (1992). <https://doi.org/10.2165/00007256-199214040-00005>

This article examines how soccer is physically demanding sport which increases high risk of injuries and also how it is a world wide sport. The article also explains about the types of injuries such as muscle injuries, ankle injuries, head injuries, ligament injuries and fractures which are the main types of injuries that could affect the players professional career. The article emphasizes on the causes of injuries, risk factors and preventive strategies that promotes health and safety of soccer players

4. Junge, A., Dvorak, J. Soccer Injuries. *Sports Med* 34, 929–938 (2004). <https://doi.org/10.2165/00007256-200434130-00004>

The article introduces soccer as a sport with a high risk injuries due to its physical nature including running, jumping, tackling and sudden change in directions. The authors discuss the prevalence of injuries, emphasizing that they occur during the training sessions and games. The article also discusses the major risk factors such as age, gender, playing position, previous injury history and environmental factors such as playing surface and weather conditions. the authors have examined the prevention strategies such as proper warm up and cool down routine, adequate rest and recovery, rehabilitation programs and education on safe playing techniques have been highlighted.

5. [Mental health difficulties among professional footballers](#)

Gary Woods, Thomas McCabe, and Amit Mistry *Sports Psychiatry* 2022 1:2, 57-69

The authors likely explore the various factors that contribute to the mental health challenges that football players face during the time of high stakes competition, intense pressure to perform, scrutiny from fans and media, physical injuries and the transient nature of their career. the authors also discuss the stigma associated for seeking help for mental health issues in traditionally macho and competitive environment like professional football. the article delves into specific mental health difficulties commonly experienced by football players such as depression, anxiety, adjustment disorders and substance abuse. Furthermore, the authors may propose strategies for addressing mental health challenges in professional football, including destigmatizing mental health discussions, providing comprehensive support services for players, implementing mental health education and awareness programs, and fostering a culture of openness and support within clubs and leagues.

6. Olmedilla A, Ortega E, Robles-Palazón FJ, Salom M, García-Mas A. Healthy Practice of Female Soccer and Futsal: Identifying Sources of Stress, Anxiety and Depression. *Sustainability*. 2018; 10(7):2268. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10072268>

The article explores the mental health challenges faced by female soccer and futsal players. The research likely revealed the various stress, anxiety, depression among female players. These includes major injuries concerns and performance pressure. The study's findings have implications that promote mental well-being of female players, strategies suggest to mitigate stressors such as implementing mental health support programs, providing resources for coping with performance pressure, fostering a supportive team environment and raising awareness about importance of mental health in sports. In conclusion the article provides insights into the mental health experiences faced by female soccer and futsal players, highlighting the importance addressing stress, anxiety and depression within these sports to support the well-being of athletes.

7. Gouttebauge, V., Aoki, H., Ekstrand, J. *et al.* Are severe musculoskeletal injuries associated with symptoms of common mental disorders among male European professional footballers?. *Knee Surg Sports Traumatol Arthrosc* 24, 3934–3942 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00167-015-3729->

The article investigates the potential correlation between severe musculoskeletal injuries and symptoms of common mental disorders in male European professional footballers. The researchers conducted a cross-sectional survey with a total participants of 643 male professional footballers in Europe for the survey. The study found out that there is a significant association between musculoskeletal injuries and symptoms of common mental disorders. Specifically, footballers experiencing these injuries were exhibiting symptoms of common mental disorders compared to those who did not report to these injuries. In conclusion, the study suggests that severe musculoskeletal injuries and symptoms of common mental disorders have a notable link, emphasizing the significance of mental health care in sports medicine and athlete welfare.

8. Ivarsson, A., & Johnson, U. (2010). Psychological factors as predictors of injuries among senior soccer players. A prospective study. *Journal of sports science & medicine*, 9(2), 347.

The article investigates the role of psychological factors in predicting injuries among senior soccer players. The study focuses on understanding the psychological variables such as stress, anxiety, coping strategies and motivation might influence injury occurrence in this population. The findings provide valuable insights into the potential role of psychological factors in injury prevention and highlight the importance of considering mental well-being in athlete health and performance. The study contributes to our understanding of the relationship between psychological factors and injury risk in senior soccer players, highlighting the importance of considering mental well-being in athlete health and safety initiatives.

9. Tucker, A.M. Common Soccer Injuries. *Sports Med*. 23, 21–32 (1997). <https://doi.org/10.2165/00007256-199723010-00003>

The article aims to provide the outline of common injuries in soccer and also offers insights into the occurrence, characteristics and management. The author describes the various types of injuries frequently encountered in soccer such as muscle strains, ligament strains (ankle injuries), fractures, contusions and overuse injuries like tendonitis. The author discusses the factors contributing to soccer injuries such as physical contact, biomechanical stresses player conditioning, training intensity and environmental conditioning. the article also provides an overview of treatment approaches such as rest, rehabilitation exercises, physical therapy, Orthopedic interventions (such as splinting or surgeries for severe injuries) and pharmacological

interventions for pain management and inflammation. The author also discusses several prevention strategies such as proper warm up and cool down routines, strength and conditioning program and protective equipment (such as shin guards). The article concludes by highlighting the significance of understanding and addressing common soccer injuries to optimize player safety, performance, and longevity in the sport.

10. López-Valenciano A, Ruiz-Pérez I, Garcia-Gómez A, et al, Epidemiology of injuries in professional football: a systematic review and meta-analysis ,British Journal of Sports Medicine 2020;54:711-718.

The article provides a comprehensive overview of the prevalence and characteristics of injuries among professional football players. The authors likely conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis, synthesizing data from various studies to analyze the incidence, types, and risk factors associated with football-related injuries. They may have examined injury rates across different levels of play, positions, and phases of the season. Overall, the article likely serves as a valuable resource for coaches, medical professionals, and stakeholders involved in professional football, offering insights to inform injury prevention and management strategies and ultimately enhance player health and performance.

CONCLUSION:

The mental health of professional football players is a complex and multifaceted issue that warrants attention from researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders in the sports community. Major injuries represent a significant risk factor for adverse psychological outcomes among players, highlighting the need for proactive measures to support their mental well-being. By elucidating the psychological consequences of major injuries, identifying contributing factors, and proposing interventions, this conceptual research paper aims to raise awareness of the importance of mental health in professional football and inform strategies for promoting psychological resilience and recovery among players. Continued research efforts and collaborative initiatives are essential for advancing our understanding of this critical issue and improving the overall welfare of professional football players.

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