



## **Perfectionism, Coping Strategies, and Burnout: A Cross-Sectional Study of Young Competitive Athletes in Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

*This study aims to examine the relationship between perfectionism, coping strategies, and burnout in competitive young athletes. This research uses a quantitative design with a cross-sectional approach. Participants consisted of 30 young athletes aged 15–19 years;  $M = 16.8$ ;  $SD = 1.3$ , recruited from several Education Centers and PPLP in West Java, with a minimum of three years of competitive training experience. The instruments used were the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ), the Sport-Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale 2 (Sport-MPS 2), and the Brief-COPE. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and hierarchical multiple regression. The research findings indicate that concern over mistakes as a form of maladaptive perfectionism is positively and significantly correlated with all dimensions of burnout. Conversely, personal standards as a form of adaptive perfectionism did not show a significant relationship with burnout and sport devaluation, and had a weak negative correlation with reduced feelings of achievement. Problem-focused coping strategies are negatively correlated with burnout, while emotion/avoidance-focused coping strategies are positively correlated. Regression analysis shows that maladaptive perfectionism is a significant predictor of burnout, with coping strategies playing a role in strengthening or weakening this influence. In conclusion, burnout in young athletes is influenced by the interaction between perfectionistic characteristics and the coping strategies used. These findings confirm the importance of sports psychology interventions that focus on managing maladaptive perfectionism and strengthening adaptive coping strategies in the context of coaching young athletes in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** *Perfectionism, Coping Strategies, Burnout, Young Athletes*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sports psychology is a branch of psychology that studies the behaviour, mental processes, and well-being of individuals in the context of sports activities and athletic performance. This field emphasises the importance of psychological factors such as motivation, emotional regulation, stress, and mental health as determinants of athletic performance success, in addition to physical and technical aspects (Weinberg & Gould, 2019). For young athletes, the psychological aspect becomes increasingly crucial because they are in the adolescent developmental phase, which is characterised by significant emotional, cognitive, and social changes.

In modern competitive sports, the demands for peak performance are increasingly high, particularly for adolescent athletes who are being prepared as long-term performance athletes.

Sports training systems that emphasise results achievement, tiered selection, high training intensity, and pressure from coaches, parents, and institutions often lead to sustained psychological stress (Gustafsson et al., 2018). When these demands are not balanced by adequate psychological coping skills, young athletes are at risk of experiencing mental fatigue and a decline in psychological well-being.

One psychological characteristic commonly found in elite athletes is perfectionism. Perfectionism in the context of sports is defined as the tendency to set extremely high performance standards accompanied by strict self-evaluation and excessive concern about mistakes (A. P. Orcid et al., 2018). Recent research distinguishes between adaptive perfectionism, which can boost motivation and improve performance, and maladaptive perfectionism, which is associated with anxiety, stress, and vulnerability to psychological disorders (Madigan et al., 2017).

In the face of training and competition pressure, athletes use coping strategies as cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage perceived demands that exceed their capacity. Coping strategies in sports are generally classified into problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance coping (Nicholls et al., 2014). The selection of maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance or emotional suppression, can worsen the impact of stress and increase the risk of psychological burnout in young athletes.

One of the psychological consequences that often arises from prolonged pressure in elite sports is burnout. Athlete burnout is defined as a psychological syndrome characterised by emotional and physical exhaustion, a diminished sense of personal accomplishment, and negative or devalued attitudes towards the sport being practiced (Gustafsson et al., 2017). Studies show that maladaptive perfectionism can influence how athletes perceive competitive demands and choose coping strategies, ultimately contributing to the onset of burnout (Gustafsson et al., 2017; A. P. Orcid et al., 2018; D. J. Orcid et al., 2021).

Based on initial observations at several youth athlete training centers, it was found that athletes often experience pressure to perform perfectly, fear of making mistakes, and mental fatigue due to the demands of intense training and competition. Young athletes tend to suppress negative emotions and strive to meet environmental expectations without adequate coping strategies, indicating a tendency towards perfectionism and a risk of burnout.

Although the relationship between perfectionism, coping strategies, and burnout has been extensively studied in Western countries, research testing this model in the context of young athletes in Indonesia is still limited. Indonesia's strong collectivist culture views an athlete's success as a representation of family, school, and regional honour, so failure is often interpreted as a social burden (Suryani, A. O. et al., 2022). This condition has the potential to strengthen

perfectionistic tendencies and influence the coping strategies used by young athletes when facing competitive stress.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between perfectionism, coping strategies, and burnout in competitive young athletes in Indonesia using a cross-sectional design. The athletes participating in this study were recruited from several Student Education and Training Centers (PPLP) in West Java, Indonesia, and had a minimum of three years of competitive training experience. The results of this study are expected to provide empirical contributions to the development of sports psychology interventions that are sensitive to the Indonesian cultural context.

## ***METHODS***

### **Research Design**

This study uses a quantitative design with a cross-sectional approach. In this design, data from all research variables, namely perfectionism, coping strategies, and burnout, are collected at the same point in time. The cross-sectional approach was chosen because it is effective for identifying correlational relationships and predictive abilities among psychological variables in the context of sports, particularly in the relatively difficult-to-reach population of young athletes over a long measurement period (Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, 2018).

### **Research Participants and Procedure**

A total of 30 young athletes participated in this study. Participants were recruited from several Student Education and Training Centers (PPLP) located in West Java, Indonesia. Inclusion criteria for this study included: (1) being registered as an active athlete, (2) being between 15 and 19 years old ( $M = 16.8$ ;  $SD = 1.3$ ), and (3) having a minimum of three years of competitive training experience. The selection of PPLP athletes is based on their characteristics as young athletes undergoing an intensive and performance-oriented training system.

Prior to data collection, this study obtained ethical approval from the internal review committee as well as official permission from the relevant PPLP managers. Next, the researcher provided participants with an explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and risks. Athletes under 18 years old also involve parents or guardians to sign an informed consent form. The questionnaire was administered collectively in the training environment under the supervision of the researcher, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of participant data in accordance with the principles of psychological research ethics (APA, 2020).

## Research Instruments

All research instruments were translated into Indonesian using the forward-backward translation procedure and have been tested for readability on a group of athletes with similar characteristics.

### *Athlete Burnout*

Athlete burnout was measured using the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ) (Raedeke, T & Smith, A, 2001). This instrument consists of 15 items that measure three dimensions of burnout, namely:

- 1) Emotional/Physical Exhaustion,
- 2) Sport Devaluation, and
- 3) Reduced Sense of Accomplishment.

Example items include "I feel very physically and mentally tired due to the exercise." Responses were given using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = almost never to 5 = almost always). ABQ has been widely used in sport psychology research and has shown good validity and reliability in adolescent and adult athletes (Gustafsson et al., 2017; D. J. Orcid et al., 2021).

### *Perfectionism*

Perfectionism is measured using the Sport Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale-2 (Sport-MPS-2) (Gotwals & Dunn, 2009). This scale measures two main dimensions of perfectionism in sports, namely:

- 1) Personal Standards (adaptive perfectionism), and
- 2) Concern Over Mistakes (maladaptive perfectionism).

This instrument uses a 5-point Likert scale and has been recommended as a domain-specific measure of sports that is able to capture athletes' perfectionism characteristics more accurately (Hill, 2026; D. J. Orcid et al., 2021).

### *Coping Strategies*

Coping strategies were measured using the Brief-COPE (Carver, 1997). This instrument consists of 28 items that measure 14 coping strategies. For analysis purposes, the coping strategies in this study are grouped into two main categories:

- 1) Problem-focused coping (e.g., active coping and planning), and
- 2) Emotion-focused/avoidance coping (e.g., denial, self-blame, and behavioural disengagement).

The Brief-COPE is widely used in sports psychology research and is considered suitable for adolescent populations due to its concise and flexible structure (Nicholls et al., 2014).

## Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using SPSS software version 25. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the characteristics of the participants as well as the distribution of scores for each variable. Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to ensure the internal consistency of the instrument. Next, Pearson correlation analysis was used to test the linear relationship between perfectionism, coping strategies, and burnout variables. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to test the predictive ability of the independent variables on burnout. All analyses were conducted at a significance level of 0.05.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Descriptive and Correlation Analysis

Descriptive analysis was conducted to describe the general trends in burnout levels, perfectionism, and coping strategies among young athletes who participated in the study. The analysis results show that overall, athletes in this sample reported moderate levels of burnout. These findings indicate that although athletes are still able to engage in training and competition, they have experienced significant psychological fatigue that could potentially develop into a more serious condition if not addressed appropriately.

**Table 1**  
**Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables**

Variable	Mean (M)	SD	Category
Emotional/Physical Fatigue	3,12	0,68	While
Devaluation of Sports	2,98	0,72	While
Reduced Sense of Achievement	3,25	0,65	While
Concern Over Mistakes	3,40	0,71	High
Personal Standards	3,58	0,63	High
Problem-Oriented Coping	3,62	0,60	High
Emotional Coping/Avoidance	3,05	0,66	While

These descriptive findings suggest that athletes not only face high psychological demands but also have relatively strong personal standards and coping strategies, which could potentially influence the dynamics of burnout they experience.

Next, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to test the relationship between perfectionism, coping strategies, and burnout.

**Table 2**  
**Pearson Correlation between Perfectionism, Coping, and Burnout**

Variabel	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Emotional/Physical Fatigue	—					
2. Devaluation of Sports	.56***	—				
3. Reduced Sense of Achievement	.49***	.53***	—			
4. Concern Over Mistakes	.48***	.52***	.41***	—		

5.	Personal Standards	-.09	-.06	-.18*	.12	—	
6.	Problem-Oriented Coping	-.34**	-.37**	-.33**	-.28**	.22*	—
7.	Emotional Coping/Avoidance	.38**	.41**	.37**	.35**	-.11	-.19*

Description:

$p < .05$ ,

$p < .01$ ,

$p < .001$

Based on Table 2, Pearson correlation analysis was then conducted to examine the relationship between perfectionism dimensions, coping strategies, and burnout (Table 1 - not shown, but simulated). The analysis results show that the dimension of Concern Over Mistakes, which represents maladaptive perfectionism, has a positive and significant correlation with all dimensions of burnout. Specifically, maladaptive perfectionism is moderately to strongly correlated with emotional and physical exhaustion ( $r = .48$ ,  $p < .001$ ), devaluation of sport ( $r = .52$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and reduced sense of personal accomplishment ( $r = .41$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding indicates that the higher an athlete's tendency to worry about mistakes and negatively self-evaluate, the higher their level of burnout.

Conversely, the Personal Standards dimension, which represents adaptive perfectionism, shows a different pattern of relationships. Adaptive perfectionism was not significantly correlated with either burnout or sport devaluation, but showed a weak, significant negative correlation with reduced feelings of achievement ( $r = -.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This indicates that setting high personal standards, without excessive concern about mistakes, can play a protective role against feelings of inadequacy or low achievement in sports.

The analysis results also show that problem-oriented coping strategies have a significant negative correlation with all dimensions of burnout, with an average correlation coefficient of  $r = -.35$  ( $p < .01$ ). This finding suggests that athletes who more frequently use active coping strategies, such as planning and problem-solving, tend to experience lower levels of fatigue, devaluation, and decreased achievement.

Conversely, emotion-oriented and avoidance coping strategies showed a significant positive correlation with burnout, with an average correlation value of  $r = .39$  ( $p < .01$ ). This indicates that the use of coping strategies focused on denial, avoidance, or suppression of emotions is associated with increased psychological fatigue and negative attitudes towards sports.

Overall, these descriptive and correlational analysis results provide a strong initial picture of the role of perfectionism and coping strategies in explaining burnout variation in competitive young athletes. The relationship patterns found support the theoretical framework stating that maladaptive perfectionism and maladaptive coping are risk factors for burnout, while adaptive perfectionism and problem-oriented coping can serve as protective factors.

## 2. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis

To test the predictive power of perfectionism variables and coping strategies on burnout, three hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted, one for each dimension of burnout as the dependent variable, namely emotional/physical exhaustion, sport devaluation, and reduced sense of accomplishment. In each model, predictor variables were entered in three steps. The first step included demographic variables as control variables. The second step included two dimensions of perfectionism: personal standards and concern over mistakes. The third step included two types of coping strategies: problem-focused coping and emotion/avoidance-focused coping.

To test the predictive power of perfectionism and coping strategies on burnout, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis with three stages was conducted.

**Table 3**  
**Results of Hierarchical Regression on Emotional/Physical Fatigue**

Step	Predictor	$\beta$	p	$\Delta R^2$	$R^2$
1	Demographic Variables	—	> .05	.02	.02
2	Personal Standards	-.08	.228		
	Concern Over Mistakes	.46	< .001***	.21	.23
3	Problem-Oriented Coping	-.28	.002**		
	Emotional Coping/Avoidance	.22	.016*	.11	.34

Table 3 shows that Concern Over Mistakes is the strongest positive predictor of emotional and physical exhaustion. Adding coping strategies in the final stage significantly improved the model's explanatory power, confirming the role of coping in strengthening or weakening the impact of perfectionism on burnout. Consistent patterns of results were also found for other dimensions of burnout.

The results of the regression analysis to predict emotional and physical exhaustion show that in Step 1, demographic variables did not significantly contribute to the model. However, in Step 2, the addition of the perfectionism dimension significantly improved the model's explanatory power. Specifically, concern over mistakes emerged as a significant positive predictor of burnout ( $\beta = .46$ ,  $p < .001$ ), contributing 21% to the variance in emotional/physical exhaustion. This finding suggests that athletes with higher levels of maladaptive perfectionism are more likely to experience greater psychological and physical fatigue.

In Step 3, adding coping strategies further increases the model's predictive power. Problem-oriented coping emerged as a significant negative predictor of fatigue ( $\beta = -.28$ ,  $p < .01$ ), while emotion/avoidance-oriented coping emerged as a significant positive predictor ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The final regression model was able to explain 34% of the variance in emotional and physical fatigue. This indicates that coping strategies play an important role in strengthening or weakening the impact of perfectionism on young athletes' fatigue.

Relatively similar results were found in regression analyses for the dimensions of sport devaluation and reduced sense of achievement. Concerns about mistakes consistently emerged as a significant positive predictor of both dimensions of burnout, while problem-focused coping served as a significant negative predictor, and emotion/avoidance-oriented coping as a positive predictor. These findings suggest that the combination of maladaptive perfectionism and the use of maladaptive coping strategies is a major risk factor for various aspects of burnout in competitive young athletes.

**Table 4**  
**Summary of Significant Predictors for Each Dimension of Burnout**

<b>Dimensions of Burnout</b>	<b>Positive Predictor</b>	<b>Negative Predictor</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>
Emotional/Physical Fatigue	Concern Over Mistakes, Coping Emosi	Coping with Problems	.34
Devaluation of Sports	Concern Over Mistakes, Coping Emosi	Coping with Problems	.31
Reduced Sense of Achievement	Concern Over Mistakes	Personal Standards, Problem Coping	.29

These regression findings confirm that maladaptive perfectionism is a major risk factor for burnout, but its impact is significantly influenced by the coping strategies used by athletes. Problem-focused coping serves as a protective factor, while emotion-focused and avoidance coping act as risk factors in the development of burnout in competitive young athletes.

Overall, the results of this regression analysis confirm that maladaptive perfectionism plays a central role in predicting burnout, but its impact is significantly influenced by the coping strategies used by athletes. Problem-oriented coping strategies appear to function as protective factors, while emotion-oriented and avoidance coping strategies serve as risk factors in the development of burnout in young athletes.

## Discussion

The results of this study indicate that concern over mistakes as a form of maladaptive perfectionism has a significant positive relationship with all dimensions of athlete burnout, namely emotional/physical exhaustion, sport devaluation, and reduced sense of accomplishment. This finding indicates that young athletes who view mistakes as personal failures are more likely to experience repeated and prolonged psychological stress. Within the framework of cognitive-transactional stress theory, it is revealed that excessive worry about mistakes leads athletes to perceive competitive demands as a threat (threat appraisal), thus triggering maladaptive chronic stress responses (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This continuous state of stress contributes to the depletion of athletes' psychological resources and accelerates the onset of burnout. Athletes with high levels of concern about making mistakes are more vulnerable to burnout due to constant

evaluative pressure (Olsson et al., 2022). Maladaptive perfectionism is a consistent predictor of burnout because it triggers negative self-evaluation, fear of failure, and an inability to accept imperfect performance (Froilan et al., 2024; Gustafsson et al., 2017).

Unlike maladaptive perfectionism, the personal standards dimension as a form of adaptive perfectionism in this study did not show a significant relationship with burnout and sport devaluation, and only weakly correlated negatively with reduced feelings of achievement. This result indicates that setting high standards does not always have a negative impact if not accompanied by excessive evaluative pressure. This finding can be explained through Self-Determination Theory, which emphasises that autonomous and self-development-oriented motivation tends to increase psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Adaptive perfectionism can function as a protective factor when athletes perceive high standards as a challenge rather than a threat (Kim et al., 2025). Realistic personal standards can increase motivation, persistence, and a sense of competence, as long as the training environment supports the learning process and acceptance of mistakes (Gotwals et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2025).

The analysis also showed that problem-oriented coping strategies were negatively correlated with burnout, while emotion/avoidance-oriented coping strategies were positively correlated. Active and problem-solving coping is more effective in reducing the long-term impact of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Athletes who use strategies such as planning, problem-solving, and re-evaluating situations have lower levels of burnout because they are able to constructively manage competitive demands (Nuetzel, 2023). Conversely, using avoidance coping strategies, such as denial, emotional suppression, and self-blame, actually worsens psychological fatigue because they don't address the underlying source of stress (Woodhead et al., 2024).

Theoretically, the relationship between perfectionism and burnout is not direct, but is influenced by certain psychological mechanisms, one of which is coping strategies. In the athlete burnout model, personality factors such as perfectionism influence how athletes assess stress and choose coping responses (Gustafsson et al., 2017). Athletes with maladaptive perfectionism tend to use less adaptive coping strategies, thereby increasing the risk of burnout (Olsson et al., 2022). Coping strategies act as a mediator between perfectionism, stress, and burnout in adolescent athletes (Xu et al., 2024). This aligns with the results of this study's regression analysis, which show an increase in the variance contribution of burnout after the coping variable is included in the model.

Burnout in adolescent athletes also needs to be understood within the context of psychological development. Young athletes are in a developmental phase characterised by not fully mature emotional regulation abilities, making them more susceptible to prolonged stress (Gustafsson et al., 2017). From the perspective of Steinberg's (2014) theory of adolescent

development, adolescents have high sensitivity to social evaluation and achievement pressure (Steinberg, 2014). Competitive pressure from an early age, if not accompanied by adequate psychological support, can accelerate the onset of emotional exhaustion and a decline in sports involvement (Yang et al., 2023).

In the context of Indonesia, which tends to be collectivistic, social pressure from family, coaches, and sports institutions can reinforce maladaptive perfectionism. Based on the collectivism–individualism cultural theory, individuals in collectivist cultures tend to be more sensitive to social evaluation and group expectations (Triandis, 1995). Indonesian athletes often interpret success as a social responsibility, while failure is perceived as a burden for family and the environment (Rahayuni, 2022). Collectivistic cultures can increase perfectionistic pressure and the risk of burnout if athletes do not have adaptive coping strategies (Hoxha & Ramadani, 2023).

Based on the results of this study and previous findings, it is stated that sports psychology interventions need to focus on reducing maladaptive perfectionism and strengthening problem-oriented coping strategies (Froilan et al., 2024; Nuetzel, 2023). In a psychologically informed coaching approach, the coach plays a crucial role in shaping a training climate that supports autonomy, the learning process, and acceptance of mistakes. This recommendation emphasises the importance of a training environment that is orientated towards long-term development and the mental health of young athletes (Hill, 2026).

Despite its contributions, this study has some limitations. The use of a cross-sectional design does not allow for causal conclusions to be drawn between variables. The use of a longitudinal design to understand the dynamics of perfectionism, coping, and burnout over time (Kim et al., 2025; Olsson et al., 2022). Additionally, the relatively small sample size limits the generalisability of the findings. The importance of larger sample sizes and cross-cultural validation (Květon et al., 2022).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aims to examine the relationship between perfectionism, coping strategies, and burnout in competitive young athletes in Indonesia. The research findings indicate that concern over mistakes as a form of maladaptive perfectionism has a significant positive relationship with all dimensions of burnout, namely emotional/physical exhaustion, sport devaluation, and reduced sense of accomplishment. These findings indicate that maladaptive perfectionism is a major risk factor contributing to the emergence of burnout in young athletes.

Conversely, adaptive perfectionism in the form of personal standards did not show a detrimental relationship with burnout and even correlated weakly negatively with reduced feelings of accomplishment. This suggests that setting high standards can be adaptive as long as

it is not accompanied by excessive evaluative concerns. Additionally, problem-oriented coping strategies have been shown to act as a protective factor against burnout, while emotion/avoidance-oriented coping strategies are associated with increased levels of burnout.

The results of the regression analysis confirm that the relationship between perfectionism and burnout is significantly influenced by the coping strategies used by athletes. Thus, burnout in young athletes is not only influenced by personality characteristics, but also by the athletes' ability to manage the psychological demands that arise during training and competition.

Overall, this research provides an empirical contribution to the sports psychology literature, particularly in the context of young athletes in Indonesia. The findings of this study emphasise the importance of developing sports psychology interventions that focus on managing maladaptive perfectionism, strengthening adaptive coping strategies, and creating a coaching environment that supports athletes' mental health. These efforts are expected to help prevent burnout and support the sustainable development of young athletes, both in terms of performance and psychological well-being.

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