

## **Psychological distress in elite sambo athletes**

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### **Background**

Previous research suggests that as much as playing sports has a beneficial effect on mental health, playing sports, especially at the elite level, is also a mental health challenge. The main objective of this study is to determine the variations in the prevalence of psychological distress among athletes, elite sambo, and recreational.

### **Materials and methods**

The sample consisted of 245 athletes, of both genders (127 males and 118 females); out of the total sample, 105 are elite Sambo athletes who participated in European Sambo Championship in Cyprus (May 2021), and 140 are recreational athletes. Those participants completed The Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (DASS-21) the DASS was shown to possess satisfactory psychometric properties, Cronbach's Alpha in a range of 0.775 to 0.897, while indicators of distribution normality indicate that most athletes scored low scores in examined subscales of depression, anxiety and stress, and in general distress, with a large deviation from normality.

### **Results**

Results obtained by appropriate non-parametric measures indicate that elite sambo athletes achieve statistically significantly lower scores in all examined variables of psychological distress in comparison with recreational athletes. Although, when observing the total athletes sample, there are no gender differences in psychological distress, female elite sambo athletes achieve statistically significant lower scores in all examined variables than recreational ones. Females who practice recreational activities were distinguished as vulnerable subsamples in terms of psychological distress.

### **Conclusions**

Obtained variations in the prevalence of psychological distress in examined athletes' subsamples present valid guidelines for future investigations, with a growing emphasis on providing specific-sport and gender-dependent support for mental health issues.