

The Psychology of Gaelic Games

A Co-Produced Scoping Review to Inform Research,
Policy, and Practice

Summary Report

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UNIVERSITY OF
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Summary Report

This report summarises findings from a scoping review of psychology research conducted in Gaelic games published in the *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*.

Research design at a glance

WHAT

This is the first review to find, synthesise and appraise all published studies on psychology in Gaelic games.

WHY

To establish characteristics of studies conducted to date.
To identify topics studied.
To synthesise key findings.
To identify implications for research, policy and practice.

HOW

The review was developed and conducted by researchers at the University of Lincoln, Technological University of the Shannon, and members of the Gaelic Games Sport Science Working Group.

Published studies conducted on psychology in Gaelic games were found via online searches conducted until September 1st 2023 and screened for eligibility.

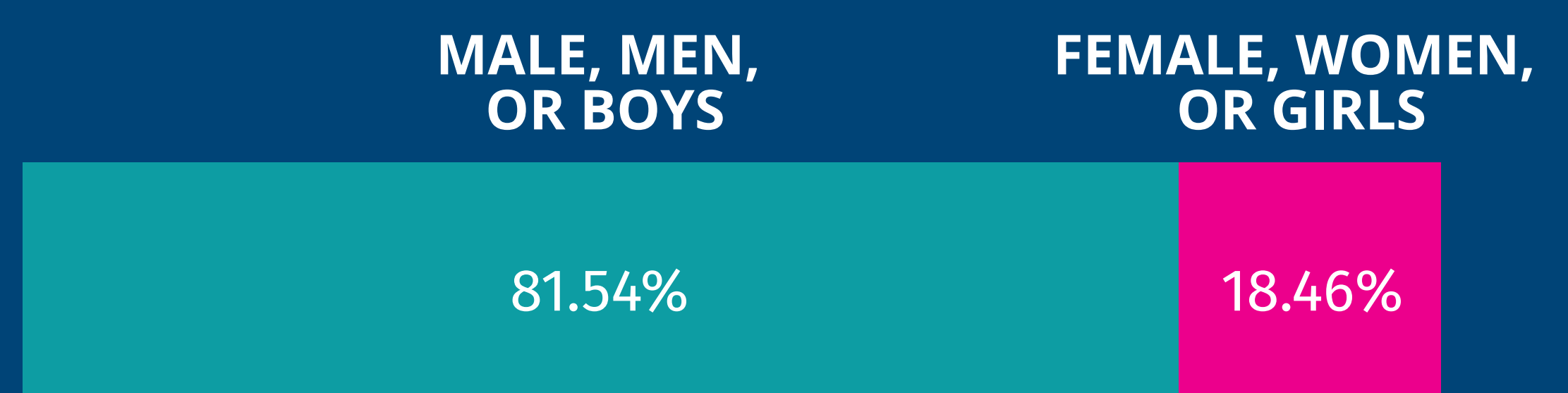
Information on included studies

42 studies were included

4963 participants

4134 players, 438 referees,
358 coaches, 22 parents, 7
sport science personnel, 4
administrators

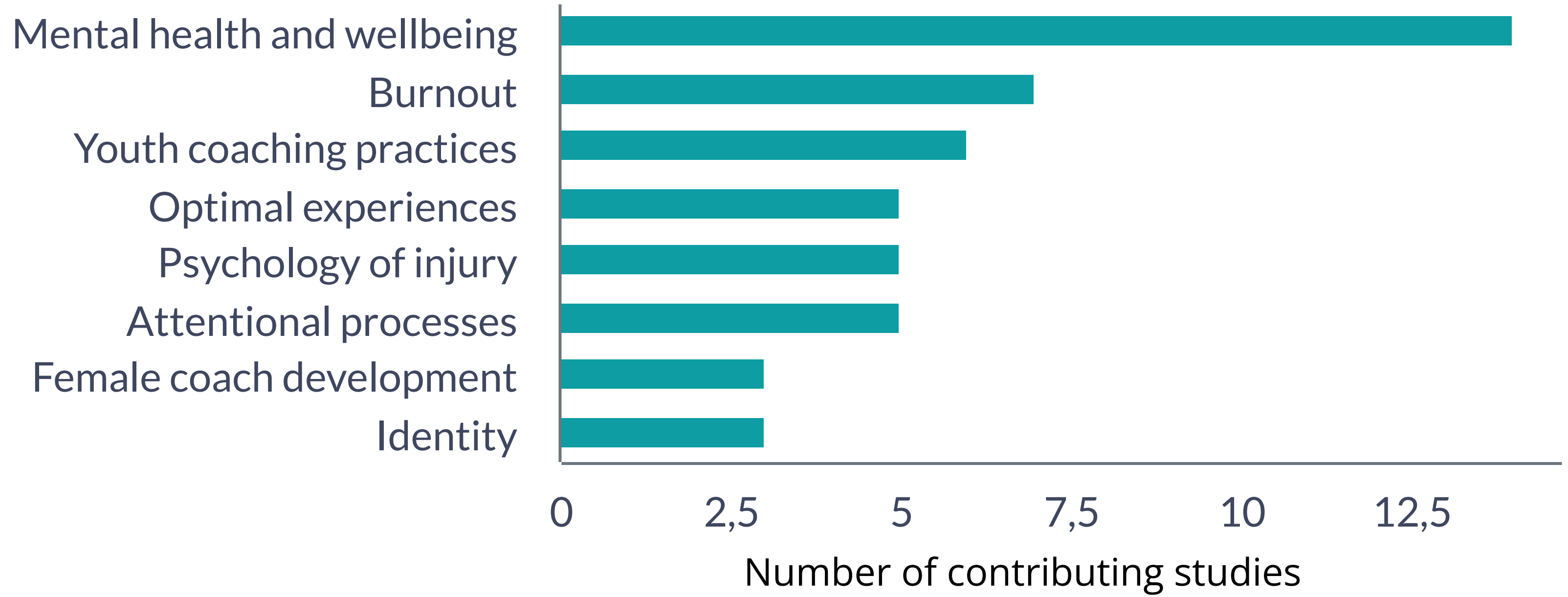
Clear gender gap in samples



Of the 19 studies that recruited samples that only consisted of players, 18 recruited males whereas only one recruited females only

Key Findings

Findings across the included studies were summarised into 8 categories



Recommendations for researchers

- 1** Conduct more equitable, diverse, and inclusive research

Further research with females and that adopts a female-specific lens is vital to address the gender inequality evident. Research that considers culture and inclusive Gaelic games is also warranted.
- 2** Align research with the Gaelic games player pathway

Broader policies in Gaelic games, including the Gaelic games player pathway and framework for sport science, should be considered in research design and conduct.
- 3** Widen research to consider the range of people in Gaelic games

Most participants were players. Further research is needed with the many other people involved in Gaelic games, including sport psychology practitioners, officials, coaches, and parents/carers.
- 4** Advance research conceptually and methodologically

Further research using social and organisational psychology frameworks is warranted. Mental health should be conceptualised as more than the absence of mental ill-health and perspectives that centralise (rather than reduce) culture should be embraced.
- 5** Increase the quality and ambition of mental health research

Developing effective and scalable, community-based mental health interventions through high-quality studies has the potential to reach large numbers of people and to have significant public health benefits.

Recommendations for policy and practice

- 1** Enhance coach education and support for female coaches

Findings offer evidence that can be used to inform psychology content in coach education courses. Female coaches can benefit from supportive club structures, strategies to support confidence development, and mentoring.
- 2** Clear guidelines and education are needed for mental health support

Awareness should be raised of factors that can negatively impact mental health. Clear guidance is needed for mental health referrals at all levels and individuals should be aware of available supports.
- 3** Efforts to curb burnout should consider multiple factors

Burnout prevention efforts should consider the culture of Gaelic games, competition structures, and psychological support.
- 4** Be wary of an athletic identity and complete focus on performance

Awareness is needed of the potential negative consequences of developing an identity deeply rooted in Gaelic games and having a single-minded dedication to performance.
- 5** Adopt an interdisciplinary approach to injury support

Players who develop injuries can benefit from being offered relevant psychological support after injury onset, during rehabilitation, and in the return to play as part of an interdisciplinary approach.

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Source

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