

Psychological predictors of sport injuries among soccer players

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Background

Involvement in competitive soccer is connected with a high injury rate. One sport with relatively high injury rates is soccer. For instance, in a Swedish elite sample, researchers found that between 65-95% of the players reported at least one injury during a single season. A wealth of evidence indicates that sport injury can be an extremely stressful and emotionally disruptive event for elite athletes. In addition to having to cope with the physical stresses of injury (e.g., pain, discomfort, the rigors of rehabilitation), athletes must contend with the psychosocial stresses of injury such as threats to self-esteem, threats to athletic career involvement, and isolation from peers.

Study 1. Injury prediction

Aim

The aim of this study was to prospectively examine whether personality (i.e., trait anxiety), history of stressors (i.e., negative life event stress, daily hassles) and maladaptive coping strategies predicted injury occurrence among a sample of Premiere League soccer players in Sweden.

Result

Results of the path analysis suggested that 24% of the variance in injury occurrence could be explained by the hypothesized model.

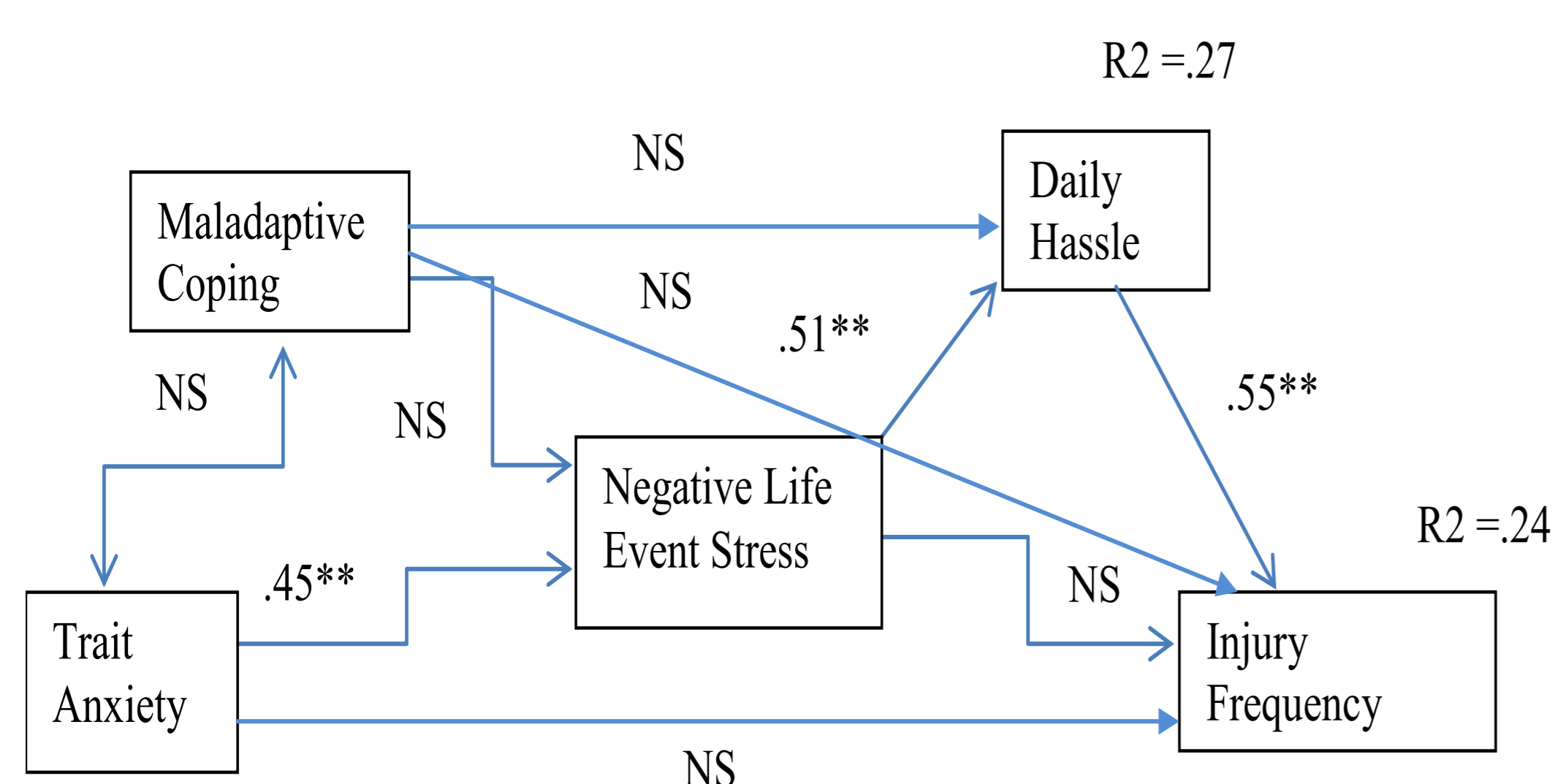


Figure 1. Relationships between trait anxiety, negative life event stress, maladaptive coping, daily hassle and injury frequency. In: Ivarsson, A., Johnson, U., & Podlog, L. (2012). Psychological predictors of injury occurrence: A prospective investigation of professional Swedish soccer players. *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation*. In press.

Study 2. Injury prediction

Aim

The aim of this study was to investigate if individual level and change in psychosocial stress (daily hassle) during a 10 week period could predict injuries, among junior elite players.

Result

The result, from a latent growth curve analysis, showed that both high initial levels of daily hassles, and less decrease (less positive change) in daily hassles could increase the injury risk in the specific population.

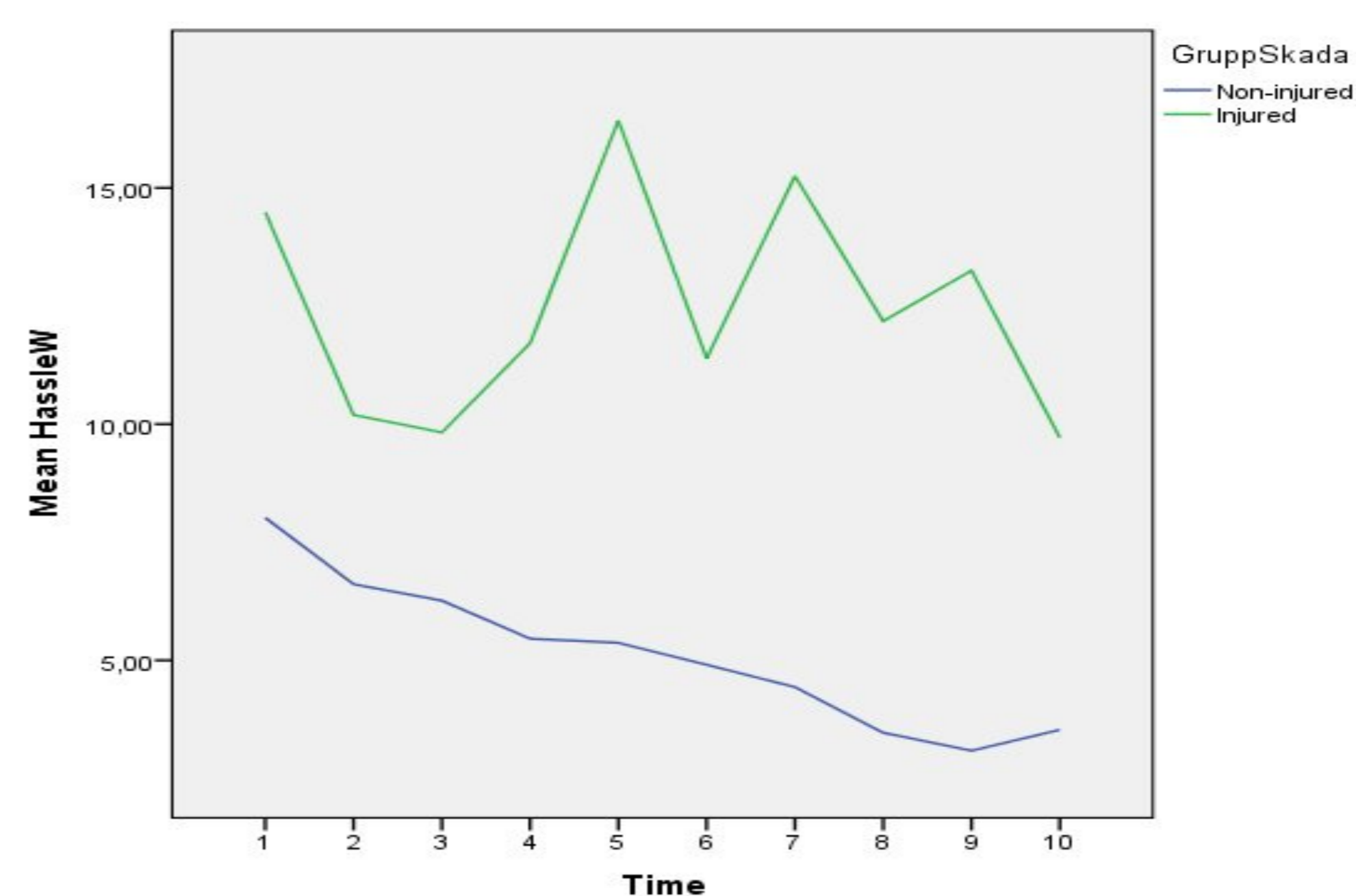


Figure 2. Intercept and slope in hassle for injured (n=41) and non-injured (n=54) players. The data from the injured group is only pre-injury data. In: Ivarsson, A., Johnson, U., Linwall, M. et al., (2012). Could level and change in psychosocial stress during a 10-week period predict sport injuries in a junior elite soccer population? A latent growth curve analysis. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*. Submitted.

Study 3 - Injury prevention

Aim

The aim of the study is to investigate if a, mindfulness based, injury prevention program will decrease injury frequency among junior elite soccer players. In both general psychology as well as in sport psychology is mindfulness a well-used approach that have been showed to both decrease individuals stress level and increase their well-being. Mindfulness could be defined as "an openhearted, moment-to-moment non judge mental awareness". Hypothesized result is that the experimental group will experience less injuries in comparison to the control group.