

Literature Review

- Student Athletes (S-As):
 - More stress than non-athletes (Lopes et al., 2020; Santos et al., 2020)
 - Significant overwhelm and mental exhaustion (Radford, 2023)
- To fully understand impacts on performance for all athletes, an increased interest in “load management”
 - Physical and mental loads that cause stress, create changes in well-being, impact performance (Fuster et al., 2021.)
- Physiological load well established
- **Psychological** load is less understood relative to performance and injury (Mellalieu et al., 2021)

Purpose

Track psychological load in student-athletes as “total environmental demand” (i.e., psychological, sport, and life load; Mellalieu et al., 2021) across a semester

Methodology

Participants

- One male D3 winter sport team (27 athletes)

Materials

- Electronic survey consisting of 15 questions; psychological load (6 items), performance anxiety (3 items), self-reported performance (6 items).
- Items rated on 1 to 10

Procedure

- IRB approved, sent weekly during game weeks for a full season
- Summary reported to coaches and athletes each week

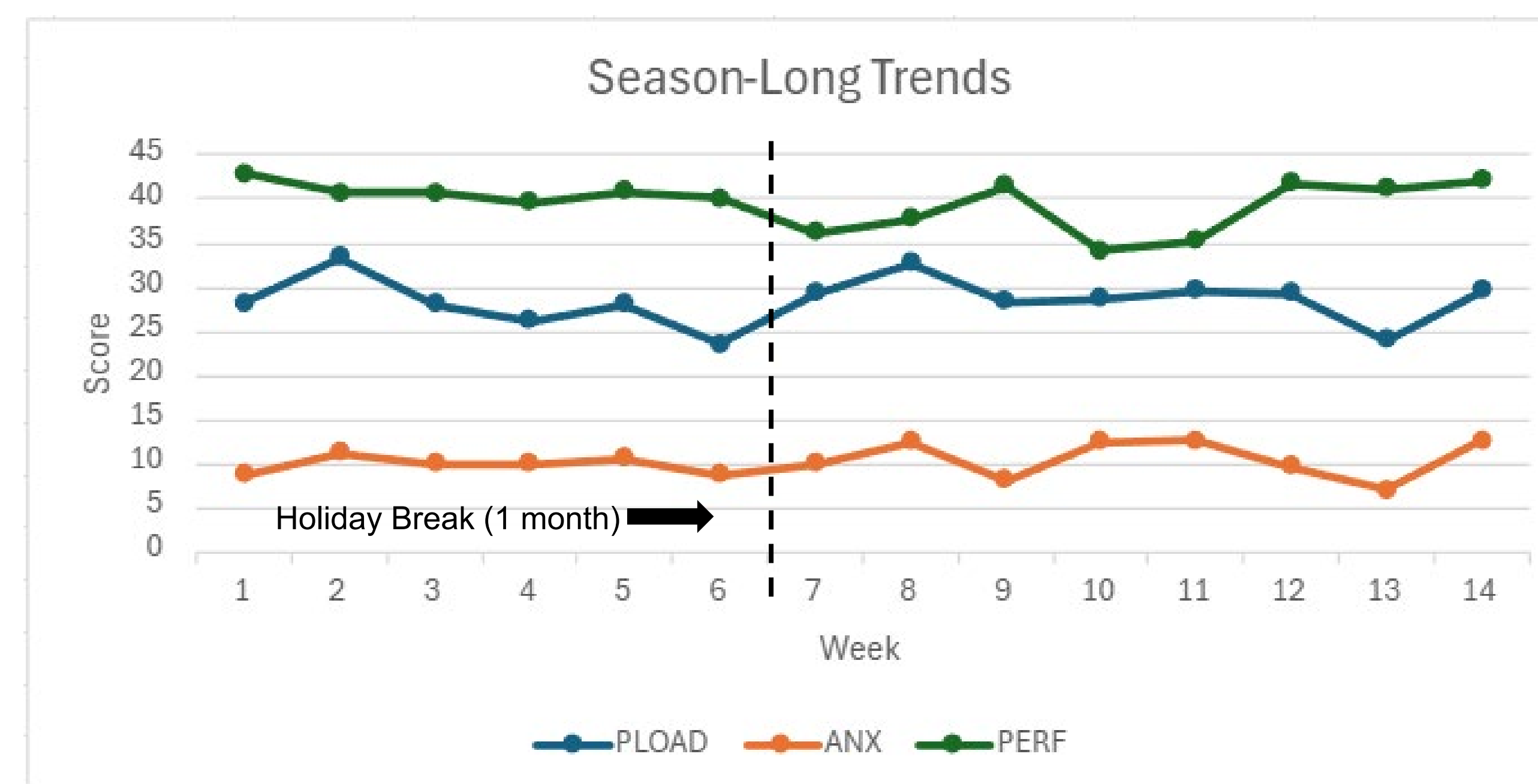
Findings

Hypothesis 1: Higher load = lower self-rated performance (**not supported**)

Hypothesis 2: Higher load = higher self-reported performance anxiety (**supported**)

Unplanned: Higher anxiety = lower self-rated performance (**supported**)

	PLOAD	ANXIETY	SELF-RATED PERFORM
PLOAD	1	.673** p = .008	-.180 Not sig.
ANXIETY		1	-.527** p = .05
SELF-RATED PERFORM			1



Subscale	Max Score Possible	Min Score Possible	Season Average
PLOAD	60	0 (N/A)	28.49
ANXIETY	30	0 (N/A)	10.23
S-R PERFORMANCE	60	0 (N/A)	39.58

Discussion

- Total N each week varied greatly – meaningful longitudinal analysis could not be conducted
- **Psych load predicted anxiety**
- **Anxiety predicted S-R performance**
- **Psych load did not predict S-R performance**
 - Suggests anxiety as possible moderator
 - However, used own anxiety tool that could not differentiate trait or state anxiety, which might be a factor here
 - Future research should explore this difference

Future Research Directions

- Prioritized assessment being short and easy to complete – not psychometrically sound (future research consideration)
- High variability across weekly respondents – could mean higher load than shown
- Findings posted and known by coaches (i.e., might have encouraged management activities to reduce load and anxiety)

Conclusions

Psych load may result in appropriate deployment of effort, rather than inherent stress or negative impacts (Gaillard, 1993) – i.e., **adaptive**

Coaches should consider a weekly assessment of load to help manage well-being and maximize performance