



Learning from extreme athletes: Investigation of the context-dependency of coping strategies in men and women

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What makes a situation stressful for one individual and challenging for another? According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), appraising a stressor as a challenge rather than a threat is a dynamic and adaptive process relying notably on one's perception of their resources and their coping skills. Successful coping strategies considerably decrease the negative impacts of stressful environments on health, both on physiological and psychological levels, as they decrease allostatic load (McEwen, 1998).

Extreme athletes regularly face sport-specific stressors and need to cope with risks threatening their life (Breivik, Johnsen, & Augestad, 1994). Yet, they assess these risks as challenges rather than threats. While this suggests that extreme athletes benefit from efficient coping strategies, it is still unclear whether they can manage their stress well in everyday stress situations.

This project follows two main objectives. The first task is the investigation of the coping strategies used by extreme athletes and their efficiency in acute and chronic stress settings, using sport-specific stressors (Frenkel et al., 2019). The second task is to understand factors of participation among women and to determine whether the practice of an extreme sport actively promotes efficient coping strategies.

Keywords: adaptation, coping, extreme sport, stress

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