

**Title:** Exploring Wellness Practices and Barriers: A Qualitative Study of University Student-Athletes

**Author(s):** Janse Van Rensburg, C., Surujlal, J. & Dhurup

**Year:** 2011

**Keywords:** dual career, South Africa, university, transition, student-athletes, wellbeing

**Sports:** N/A

**Journal:** Physical Health Education

**Main theme:** Wellbeing

**Secondary themes:** Transitions

**Aims:** The aim of the study was to explore the physical, intellectual, social and emotional wellness of university student-athletes, as well as identify barriers to wellness. Wellness is a continuous, active process, which is geared towards balancing one's physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual well-being in order to enhance one's life quality.

**Method:** Data was collected through focus groups with student-athletes who had been at university for more than one year.

**Results and Practical Implications:** Results suggest that student-athletes perceived that adjustment from the school to the university environment had been challenging for them. Reasons for difficulties in adjustment were described as choosing the wrong friends, being far away from home, poor time management, their cultural background and finding the new academic environment different from their previous academic environment. These results highlight how important support is during the transition period for student-athletes, and they may benefit from preparing for these potential challenges. Social wellness was also very important for student-athletes, and interaction with peers and family members was very important during their time at university. Additionally, student-athletes were aware of the importance of exercise, nutrition and sleep to aid their physical wellness, yet they did

not execute them. Athletes described how they had poor diets, and had little knowledge of the importance of a proper diet, suggesting that nutrition support may be a key area for university student-athletes. There were also a number of barriers (things that hinder fulfilling certain goals) to student-athletes achieving their wellness. These included peers pressure, as the influence of their peers coupled with them being away from their parents presented obstacles that resulted in lower wellness. Student-athletes also found it difficult to free themselves from the restraints of their background and culture. A lack of funds was also described as making it difficult for athletes to follow a proper diet and attend regular training, due to inability to pay for transport. Finally, athletes stated how the scheduling of training and social events often clashes with academic programmes, putting them under added pressure. Finally, the article concludes by recommending how important it is to have student support services for athletes at university, and they should be encouraged to attend counselling sessions which could help with financial management, health issues and time management. In order to create awareness amongst student-athletes, it is also suggested that information on wellness could be advertised on notice boards that are strategically located.

TASS have produced this lay summary. The full article is available (permissions may apply): [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Christine\\_Janse\\_Van\\_Rensburg/publication/272458815\\_Exploring\\_wellness\\_practices\\_and\\_barriers\\_A\\_qualitative\\_study\\_of\\_university\\_student-athletes/links/588c3e8faca272fa50dde95e/Exploring-wellness-practices-and-barriers-A-qualitative-study-of-university-student-athletes.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Christine_Janse_Van_Rensburg/publication/272458815_Exploring_wellness_practices_and_barriers_A_qualitative_study_of_university_student-athletes/links/588c3e8faca272fa50dde95e/Exploring-wellness-practices-and-barriers-A-qualitative-study-of-university-student-athletes.pdf)