

Title: Factors Influencing Flemish Elite Athletes' Decision to Initiate a Dual Career Path at Higher Education

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Secondary Theme(s): N/A

Aims: The study's main objective was to gain insight in the factors taken into consideration by athletes when deciding to initiate a dual career in HE

Method: Fifteen Flemish elite athletes in secondary education participated in semi-structured interviews. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, with the Holistic Athletic Career model (HAC) and Push Pull Anti-push Anti-pull as guiding theoretical models.

Results and Practical Implications: Using the Push Pull Anti-push Anti-pull framework (Mullet et al. 2000) and the HAC model (Wylleman and Rosier 2016), the current study shows that a variety of reasons situated at different levels of development (i.e. athletic, psychological, psychosocial, academic/vocational and financial) can influence athletes' DC decision. The multitude of current and future influencing factors shows that there are a lot of reasons to choose for a DC in HE. This illustrates that this decision is influenced by a wider range of factors than the well-known reasons such as getting a diploma as an incentive and time limits as a deterrent. Current findings can help DC support providers in preparing and supporting athletes to take a well-informed decision to initiate the combination of elite sport and HE. More specifically, using the findings, practitioners can help DC athletes to critically reflect on their decision process by comparing their reasoning with the reasoning

of others. In doing so, DC support providers could challenge athletes to consider possible factors athletes might not have thought about, adding possibly valuable arguments in the end-decision of the athlete. Moreover, practitioners could support DC athletes to structure their decision process by using the combination of the HAC framework and the Push Pull Anti-push Anti-pull framework in coaching sessions or reflection exercises. In doing so, DC practitioners should aim at helping the DC athletes to get a realistic view and awareness of the challenges, barriers and resources associated with the engagement in a DC in HE.

TASS have produced this lay summary. The full article is available (permissions may apply):
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17430437.2019.1669324>