Title: The Adapted Italian Version of the Baller Identity Measurement Scale to Evaluate the Student-Athletes' Identity in Relation to Gender, Age, Type of Sport, and Competition Level

Authors: Lupo, C., Mosso, C.O., Guidotti, F., Cugliari, G., Pizzigalli, L., Rainoldi, A.

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Aims: The aim of the current study is therefore to validate the properties of the Italian version of the Baller Identity Measurement Scale (i.e., BIMS-IT), a self-report questionnaire based on the athletic and academic identities; and to investigate differences in psychosocial factors such as gender, age, type of sport, and competition level.

Method: The BIMS-IT was considered appropriate to be administered to Italian student athletes and participants individually completed the 10-item BIMS-IT, indicating their level of agreement (i.e., from a minimum of 1 – strongly disagree, to a maximum of 5 – strongly agree) with the statements. General information (i.e., gender, age, type of discipline, competition level) was also collected at the beginning of the survey. To participate in the study, the following inclusion criteria for student athletes was adopted: 1) being enrolled in a university course at the University of Torino in Italy; and 2) currently competing at a national sub-elite (i.e., from local to national competition steps within the same season) or elite (i.e., from national to national or international competition steps within the same season), or international level.

Results: Seven hundred and sixty (23 ± 4 years, range: 18-51 years) Italian student athletes met the inclusion criteria and volunteered for the study. The majority of the participants

were ≤ 24 years of age (81%) and competed in individual sports (42%). Both males (49%) and females (51%) were recruited into the study. In terms of competition level, a large proportion of student athletes reported competing at a national sub-elite level (67%). Results related to exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis supported a model of measurement composed of two correlated factors: the athletic and academic identities and affectivity related to identities. For both factors, differences emerged between age and competition level sub groups. Specifically, higher identity scores emerged for ≤ 24 years old student athletes with respect to their age counterparts. National sub elite student athletes reported lower identity values than those of national elite and international levels.

The Italian version of the BIMS-IT is psychometrically robust and could be adopted for empirical uses. The BIMS-IT is a tool which may improve the knowledge and understanding of student athletes' behavioural patterns. The study also highlighted that the Italian student-athletes' identity is more distinct in the ≤ 24 years old category, and in national elite and international competition level categories, suggesting a high and effective academic and athletic involvement. Further research should focus on student athletes' identity in other European Member States which present different policies to support the student athlete role. This will allow interpretation of challenges experienced by student athletes living in countries with little dual career formal arrangements.

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