

Title: The Role of Adolescent Athletes' Task Value Patterns in their Educational and Athletic Career Aspirations

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Sports: Individual and team sports (winter and summer Olympic sports and non-Olympic sports)

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Main Theme: Task value patterns

Secondary Themes: Student-athletes, upper secondary school, educational and athletic careers

Aims: Little is known about the types of value patterns student-athletes show when constructing a dual career, and how these patterns are reflected in their educational and career aspirations. The current study aimed to examine patterns of task values that student-athletes have at the beginning of upper secondary school, how stable these patterns are across the first two years of upper secondary school, and how these patterns are related to the student-athletes' future educational and athletic career aspirations.

Method: The sample was drawn from the ongoing Finish Longitudinal Dual Career Study that follows student athletes from the beginning of upper secondary school to the end of upper secondary school. A total of 391 athletes from 6 different sport high schools in Finland were invited to participate. The students were 15-16 years old at the start of the study and represented team, individual, summer, winter, and non-Olympic sports. The participants were at a national, European, and international level in their respective sports. A self-report questionnaire was filled out by the participants at three different time points

during their upper secondary school career (i.e., at the beginning and end of Grade 1 and at the end of Grade 2). The questionnaire measured: task values for school work, task values for sport, educational aspirations, athletic aspirations, type of sport, level of sport competition, and grade point average.

Results and Practical Implications: The latent profile analysis identified three different and highly stable task-value patterns among the sample: “Dual Motivated”, “Low academically motivated”, and “Relatively low sport motivated” patterns. The percentage of athletes demonstrating the dual motivated pattern decreased across the first two years of upper secondary school from 63% to 47%, whereas the percentage of athletes showing either the low academically motivated pattern or the relatively low sport motivated pattern increased from 25% to 30% and from 13% to 23% respectively. Compared to others, student-athletes with a “Low academically motivated” pattern were more likely to either have no educational expectations at all, or to plan to have less than a university degree in the future, rather than aim for a university degree. Athletes with a relatively low sport motivated pattern, were less likely to have professional athletic career aspirations than those with the other types of profile. In the current study, three different task-value patterns were identified. The most common was the “Dual motivated” pattern characterised by a high value placed on both sport and school work. The results of the present study increase our knowledge and understanding of student-athletes’ task values and future aspirations in both sport and education. To support talented and or/elite athletes’ construction of a successful dual career and prevent drop out from both domains (i.e., education and sport), it is important to highlight how to optimally support athletes’ motivation simultaneously in both sport and school during adolescent years. Task-value patterns seem to be formed already before upper secondary school and therefore, future research is required to discover the role of different social agents, such as parents, friends, and coaches in the formation of athletes’ motivational patterns.



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