

Title: Wellbeing and Performance in Dual Careers: The Role of Academic and Athletic Identities

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Year: 2019

Keywords: Life satisfaction, student-athlete, sport, talent development, education.

Sports: Multi Sport

Journal: The Sport Psychologist

Main Theme: Academic and athletic identities

Secondary Themes: Life satisfaction

Study 1

Aims: This research aimed to gain a contextual understanding of the academic and athletic identities of Australian student-athletes.

Method: The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with eight student-athletes who were enrolled in the Elite Athlete Program of an Australian University. The participants competed in a variety of sports, either at national (n=5) or international level (n=3). Four participants were enrolled in full-time studies, four studied part-time at the time of measurement. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Results and Practical Implications: Results are congruent with the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity and indicate that student-athletes develop both academic and athletic identities. The majority of participants acknowledge that being an athlete was more important to their sense of self than being a student. Unanimously, the participants perceived their academic and athletic identities as separate, meaning that their academic identity was not affected by their athletic identity and vice versa. The findings also indicate that these identities are fluid and may shift in salience in response to role demands and relative performance in each domain. The corresponding fulfilment of self-determined

needs in both academic and athletic identities was deemed beneficial to student-athletes' wellbeing. The majority of participants were satisfied with their dual career balance. Despite the satisfaction with their dual careers, the majority of the participants reported struggling to manage the demands from education and sport, as well as additional demands such as employment.

Study 2

Aims: In Study 2, the researcher aimed to generate a more comprehensive understanding of associations among academic and athletic identities, and their relationship with wellbeing and performance.

Method: A quantitative approach was taken in Study 2, using the Academic and Athletic Identity Scale (AAIS) and the Brief Multidimensional Student Athlete Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSALSS). Participants were 86 students ranging from 18 to 43 years of age who studied at an Australian university. The sample included 79 full-time students, and 11 students were who enrolled in part-time studies.

Results and Practical Implications: The results showed that student-athletes rated their athletic identity as significantly more central to their sense of self than their academic identity. No significant associations were found between the student-athletes' academic and athletic identities. The results also showed that academic identity was positively associated with student-athletes' GPA and life satisfaction. A negative relationship was found between athletic identity and GPA, with no significant associations found among athletic identity and any of the life satisfaction domains. Differences in athletic identity were found based on the student-athletes' sport competition levels.

Taken together, the research findings suggest that student-athletes' academic and athletic identities are positively associated with indicators of performance and wellbeing in dual



careers, this may particularly be the case if student-athletes' self-determined needs are fulfilled. Further, the development of a salient academic identity does not come at the cost of student-athletes' athletic identity or level of sporting performance. Previous research on the identities of student-athletes has almost exclusively considered their athletic identity. Yet, the combined findings of this research indicate that academic identity is an important determinant of academic attainment and wellbeing of Australian student-athletes, and is not associated with competitive sport performance levels achieved by student-athletes. Therefore, it is recommended that researchers and practitioners investigate and facilitate the development of strong, self-determined, academic and athletic identities among student-athletes.

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