

Title: A Systematic Literature Review on the Academic and Athletic Identities of Student-Athletes

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Sport(s): Mixed

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Main Theme: Identity

Secondary Theme(s):

Aims: The paper aims to review all of the previous literature which explores the academic and athletic identity development of student-athletes. Identity is defined as individual's understanding of who they are, and how they fit with their social world in relation to others.

Method: The researchers conducted a systematic search of the literature to find all the relevant studies within this area. In total, 42 research studies were included in the review. The studies were then analysed, and were separated into four over-arching themes: identity development of student-athletes; role conflict and wellbeing of student-athletes; career maturity and motivation; and student-athlete stereotypes.

Results and Practical Implications: The results showed that athletes competing at the elite level had a stronger athletic identity and confirmed the risk of this group for developing an exclusively athletic identity. However, it also showed that the importance of an athletic identity can weaken over time as athletes consider retirement. These findings show the importance of recognising identity as something that is fluid and can change over time. While combining multiple roles, like in a dual career, can be difficult and cause poor wellbeing if conflict between roles is experienced. Through managing roles sufficiently, student-athlete experiences positive wellbeing benefits from a balance of roles.



Furthermore, motivation was shown to closely relate to identity. For instance, a stronger athletic identity showed more commitment towards sporting careers, whereas athletes with a stronger academic identity were more likely to explore their careers outside of sport. It is therefore, important for student athletes to develop strategies to cope with their demands and for practitioners to support them in reducing the conflict of roles.

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