

Research/Technical Note

A Conceptual Model of Student-Athletes' Time Demands

Jay Claus Santos* 

Department of Psychology, Central Luzon State University, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, Philippines

Abstract

Time demands of student-athletes continue to rise. Because of their roles as students and athletes in higher education institution, student-athletes are considered unique. Their academic and athletic tasks are hardly similar, and thus, compete for student-athletes' time and attention. These competing roles transcend to their adoption of identities and eventually behavioral manifestations. When a conflict between socially-situated identities exists individuals cognitively resolved the conflict by favoring one over the others to define oneself in the most prominent identity. In this context, time demands on academics and athletics are consequences of the student-athlete's assumed identity, which is largely formed by the social expectancies and self-efficacy. Time demands will produce academic and athletic outcomes, which will also emphasize and validate the saliency of the chosen identity. The purpose of this paper is to offer a model to explain the antecedents and outcomes of time demands made on athletics and academics by college athletes. This article incorporates the relevant features of theories of expectancy, self-efficacy, role conflict, and social identity, particularly as antecedents, in understanding student-athlete time demands and its academic and athletic outcomes.

Keywords

Time Demands, Student-Athletes, College Athletes

1. Introduction

One of the primary objectives of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is the integration of athletics with academics [1] (NCAA, 2015). It adopts the 'Collegiate Model of Athletics' which serves as a guide for member-schools to promote a balance between the academic, social, and athletic experiences of student-athletes. As amateurs, students' participation in college sports should be primarily motivated by academic pursuits and secondary by physical benefits, hence the term 'student-athlete.' Even with inter-collegiate athletic participation, the fundamental mission of higher education institutions remains academic in nature. The act of balancing the academics and athletics, however, is the sole responsibility of the student-athletes themselves.

Student-athletes composed a distinct population because of the uniqueness of their academic, athletic, and personal experiences related to participation in college athletics [2]. They are also called 'nontraditional' students because of their distinct culture and socialization process, and being prone to discrimination and prejudice [3]. Clearly, intercollegiate athletics offers challenges to student-athletes. Time spent on athletics and academics is among the challenges they have to deal with [4].

Initial results from the recent Growth, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Learning of Students in college (GOALS) survey revealed that time demands made by student-athletes were the highest since 2006 [5]. At an average, each student-athlete

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typically spends about 70 hours per week in attending to academic and athletic commitments. Compared to the GOALS data in 2010, the only other time the survey was conducted, the 2015 findings indicated that median spent time both in athletics and academics increased in three divisions of the NCAA. For Division I, the median time spent during the season was 34 hours per week (vs 23 hours in 2010) for athletic tasks and 38.5 hours/week (vs 35.5 hours in 2010) in academic pursuits. Among teams, football players topped the men's sports (40-42 hours/week) and softball in women's side (39 hours/week) in time spent in athletics. For Division II players, the median time spent was 32 hours/week athletics and 38.8 hours/week academics. Division III showed the highest discrepancy in time demands between academics (40.5 hours/week) and athletics (28.5 hours/week).

While more time is spent in academics than athletics, the 2015 NCAA GOALS findings also revealed that it is becoming difficult to achieve the academic-athletic equilibrium. Specifically, the observed increase in median time spent in athletics likely means that negative academic outcomes are happening. Over-emphasis on athletics has been found to be detrimental to academic achievement [6, 7] and self-efficacy career decision-making [8] among college athletes. These are among the reasons why the education value of athletic participation is considered more negative than positive [9].

Roles as athletes and as students differ significantly, but the existence of one depends on the other. For majority of student-athletes, the chance to get a college degree is contingent on athletic ability while continued athletic participation requires meeting the academic requirements [10]. Because there are different expectations on either role, this situation is best described as a conflict rather than a complementarity. In the case of student-athletes, they deal with the conflict by defining themselves in their most salient identity [11]. For instance, college basketball players managed the conflict between their athletic and academic roles by identifying themselves primarily as athletes and only secondary as students [12].

From a human development perspective, sports participation not only enhances acquisition of skills but also the affirmation of athletic identity [8]. The accumulation of successful experiences in sports will eventually lead to the development self-efficacy, the belief that one has the capacity and the tools to organize and execute an action [13]. Previous performance accomplishments are among the sources of increased self-efficacy [14]. Therefore, it is expected that athletes at the college level have the necessary self-efficacy to perform their tasks in athletics.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an explanation on the time demands made by college athletes from the frameworks of identity and role conflict, expectancy, and self-efficacy. This also offers an elucidation of the outcomes of athletic participation. Considering the negative outcomes of overemphasis on athletic participation, and the positive outcomes associated with academic achievement, this paper will contribute to the literature on how to optimize the college experience of student-athletes. Spec-

cifically, academic counselors, advisers, tutors, and other professionals working with athletes will benefit from this study.

2. Review of Related Literature

Research on the academic outcomes of athletic participation has been substantially explored. Most of these studies were focused on the academic achievement, personal development, and the overall college experience [15].

2.1. The Academic Performance Metrics of the NCAA

In response to criticisms to the NCAA and its member-school due poor academic performance associated with student-athletes, the NCAA in 1991 mandated counseling and tutoring services for athletes in all Division I schools [16]. While not required, most of the Divisions II and III schools adopted the NCAA Life Skills program, which is now known as the Student-Athlete Affairs program. In 2003, the NCAA also implemented the Academic Performance Program (APP) as part of an academic reform package to ensure that participating-schools promote optimum academic experience for their student-athletes. In this latest policy, failure to meet minimum academic standards would result to sanctions, which can include practice and playing restrictions, scholarship reductions, postseason bans, and coaching suspensions [1].

The metrics of APP consist of Academic Progress Rate (APR), which measures continuous eligibility and retention on a team for athletes who received institutional financial aid over a period of four years, and graduation rates [1]. To measure graduation rates, Graduation Success Rate (GSR) is used in Division I schools while Academic Success Rate (ASR) is used in Division II and Division III institutions. While GSR and ASR are basically similar, they are different from the federal graduation rate (FGR) in terms of computation.

The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) started calculating FGR of all higher education institutions in 1990 while the NCAA adopted its own formula in 2002. Both the federal and NCAA formulas compute the number of students who graduated in a six-year cohort period. The FGR for any NCAA school usually gives a lower number because it does not include student-athletes who transferred, even though they ended up graduating in another school. The NCAA, meanwhile, tracks down transfer student-athletes. Despite of the differences, these formulas are useful in comparing specific groups of students as well as schools. The FGR provides a comparison among schools, e.g. among three NCAA division levels and NCAA vs non-NCAA schools, and between athletes and non-athletes. The NCAA graduation rate, on the other hand, provides a more accurate academic success among student-athletes.

Arguably, the policies set by the NCAA have been instrumental in the recent academic success of student-athletes, based

on recent reports on graduation rates [17]. Using the NCAA formula and for the cohort that began in 2008, an all-time high 86% of student-athletes in Division I earned their degrees. Graduation rate for Division II student-athletes is at 72% for the same period. The federal data on the same cohort, meanwhile, shows that college athletes graduated better compared to non-athletes. Student-athletes posted 67% graduation rate, also the highest ever, and better than the general student body's 65% rate among Division I schools. Student-athletes from Division II schools also outpaced the general student population's graduation rate by six (6) percent, 55% to 49%.

2.2. Consequences of Time Demands on Academics

Degree-attainment rate—or graduation rate—is one of the measures of academic success, with grades and grade point average (GPA) as the most common [18]. Various studies have attempted to explain the intricacies of the academic success and achievement of college athletes. Studies on the predictors of their academic success have focused on Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores and non-cognitive variables [3], achievement goals and ability measures [19], hope [20], emotional intelligence [21], parental and peer support [22], and self-efficacy and stress [23].

A direct correlation between time spent on a task and success for academics and athletics exists [24]. In the NCAA, a relationship between academic and athletic time commitments exists across its three divisions [25]. Several sports, in fact, reported that they allotted more time on athletics than academics. Generally, less time on academics would result to difficulty in obtaining quality grades [26] and lower grade point average [27]. While graduation rates might indicate that student-athletes do not necessarily suffer academically, these are not reflective of the current college experience of the student-athletes, particularly in consideration of the increasing amount of time they are spending on both athletics and academics [5]. In fact, graduation rates of student-athletes and non-athletes are not related to school's athletic achievement [28].

2.3. Academic Outcomes of Time Demands on Athletics

As a rule, the NCAA only allows maximum 20 hours per week during in-season and eight (8) hours/week during off-season of countable athletically-related activities (CARA) [1]. Based on the initial findings of the GOALS survey conducted by the NCAA in 2015, a typical college athlete currently spends as low as 28.5 hours to as high as 34 hours per week in attending to athletic tasks during the season [5]. In the off-season, at least two-thirds of athletes in Divisions I and II, and half in Division III stated that time spent on athletics is as much as during the in-season. These situations fit with the description of athletics being explicitly emphasized in an

academic environment [6, 7].

Time required by athletics programs on athletically-related activities result to lesser attention to academics [29, 30]. In fact, academic performance is lower during in-season than off-season [31], suggesting that athletic time demands interfere with the academic tasks of student-athletes. Among the teams, players from revenue-generating sports, specifically men's basketball and football, have the worst academic performance among college teams [32, 33]. These findings support the assertion that the negative academic outcomes of college athletes are among the reasons why the education value of athletic participation is least likely positive [9]. In addition, the outcomes of college sports programs are not congruent with the academic principles by their respective institutions and they need to refocus their effort to better academic outcomes for student-athletes [34].

2.4. Efficacy and Academic Performance

In previous studies of the predictors of academic performance, efficacy is prominent as a factor. For instance, students with high self-efficacy for academics got higher grades and persisted on traditionally challenging majors compared to students with low self-efficacy [35]. Self-efficacy directly affects academic performance [36]. Two succeeding meta-analytic reviews discussed the extensive relationship between academic performance and self-efficacy.

In a meta-analytic study of the psychological factors of college students' academic performance, self-efficacy was identified as the strongest correlate of GPA [37], which is a common measure of academic success, aside from grades and graduation rate [18]. In another meta-analysis of 109 studies on college outcomes and its antecedents, academic self-efficacy and achievement motivation were identified as the best predictors of GPA [38]. Therefore, it can be assumed that self-efficacy—or the lack thereof—is one reason why college athletes gravitate away from academic tasks and toward the athletic tasks.

2.5. Athletic Identity and Academic Performance

Simply viewing oneself as either more of a student rather than an athlete or vice versa has implications on the academic and athletic experiences of a student-athlete [25]. If a student-athlete identifies himself/herself more as a student, he/she has significantly better self-reported GPA (3.22), lesser average weekly athletic commitments (30 hours), higher average weekly academic commitments (40 hours), and lesser missed class time per week (1.3 classes). On the other hand, if a student-athlete identifies oneself more as an athlete, the self-reported average GPA is lower (2.90), average time spent on athletics per week is higher (35 hours), average time spent on academics is lower (36 hours), average missed class per week is higher (1.7 classes).

Athletic identity refers to the construct associated with the athletic role [2]. Strong athletic identity is attributed to higher commitment to sports activities [39] as well as to decreased engagement in academic endeavors [40-43]. Evidently, the consequence of identification with athletics is consistent with the objectives of athletic department but not with the fundamental mission of the institution. In fact, this seemingly undermining of the academic mission of the educational institution is more prominent in the structure of big-time athletic programs [6]. If this organizational conflict exists, it is expected that the main actors—arguably the student-athletes—within the organization also experience this conflict. Thus, identification with athletic identity more than the academic identity is detrimental to the academic experience of student-athletes.

2.6. Proposed Framework

While it is established by research that student-athletes identify more with their athletic rather than academic identity, there is available literature why they explicitly engaged in behaviors associated with the expectations attached to their roles. In the case of student-athletes, it is not limited to the mere manifestation of the behaviors but which to choose on the conflicting roles.

A role entails a set of expectations about a behavior is a hierarchy [44]. But when the expected behaviors are inconsistent, a conflict follows. Therefore, role conflict is defined according to the congruency or compatibility of the expectations in the specific role. When conflict between socially-situated identities exist, individuals resolved the conflict by defining oneself in the most salient identity [11]. Among college athletes, such conflict is resolved by identifying with the athletic identity [12].

On the other hand, expectancy theory explains why an individual choose when presented with two or more behavioral choices [45]. The choice is often made based on the perceived value, which refers the psychological experience of being attracted to (or repulsed) by an object or activity [46]. For student-athletes, the decision depends on which between

athletics and academics is perceived to be more valuable. Using expectancy theory, student-athletes exert optimum time either on academics and athletics because they believe that effort is contingent with performance.

Network-embeddedness notion of commitment states that implicit assumption that multiple identities are mutually independent, which means that resources (e.g., time and energy) spent in one role will be taken away from other roles [47]. When conflicted, however, individual time and energy as resources are limited, so fulfilling one role makes fulfilling difficult [48]. In the case of student-athletes, the saliency of their athletic identity is the more practical use of limited resources.

Central to social-cognitive theory is the concept of self-efficacy [13]. Defined as the belief to organize and execute a specific action, self-efficacy is formed by past experiences. In college sports, because time commitments in athletics decreased time commitments in academics [25], self-efficacy is therefore enhanced in athletics but weakened in academics.

Expectancy theory's assumptions operate on the cognitive level [44, 45], but self-efficacy is formed with reference to past behaviors [13]. It is therefore assumed that expectancies at the cognitive level and self-efficacy at the cognitive-behavioral levels influenced role conflict. Consequently, resolving the conflict by identifying with the most salient identity is the most practical use of limited energy. In the context of college sports, role conflict influences college athletes' decision to spend more time in athletics, because it is the role that not only they have strong self-efficacy but is also the role that is easier to fulfill compared to the academic role.

The conceptual framework presented here depicts an explanation on why student-athletes have increasing time demands made towards athletics. Specifically, this hypothesized that repeated athletic performance in an education setting strongly confirms efficacy in athletics and also continues the ongoing student vs. athlete conflict. It is also assumed that because the fundamental mission of a university is academics, academic identity is a natural consequence rather than a result of role conflict.

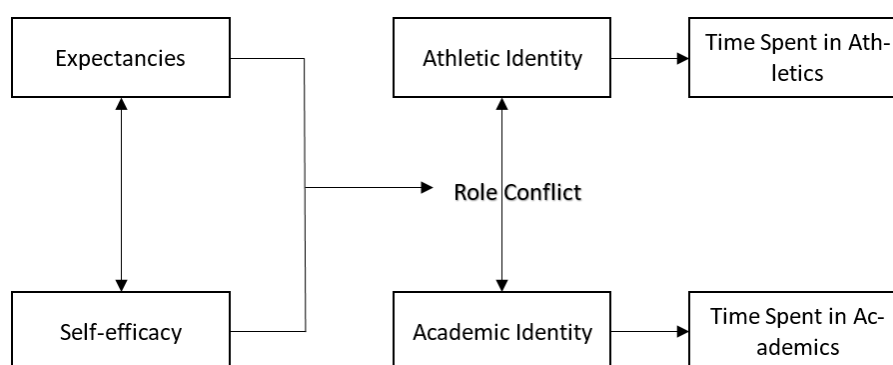


Figure 1. The conceptual model of analysis showing the antecedents of time demands.

It is argued that expectations and self-efficacy interact to produce role conflict. For instance, a student-athlete who is expected to excel in athletics but is also expected to do well in academics will result in role conflict. To excel in academics or athletics, time should be considerably spent. Because both academic and athletics require focus and therefore time, it is cognitively easier to adopt a specific identity instead of trying to balance academic and athletic identities. Thus, if a student-athlete decides to be an athlete first, he/she will spend most of his/her time to excel in his/her sports. On the other hand, an academically-oriented student-athlete will devote most of his/her graduate for academic tasks.

3. Implications

Considering that academic tasks have more positive outcomes than athletic ones, this finding will be helpful to athletic administrators and professionals who are working with student-athletes in optimizing their college experience.

While it is assumed here that expectancies and efficacy interact with each other as cognitive-behavioral processes, there is a need to address the potential role of individual and family expectations on time spent on athletics and academics by NCAA athletes.

4. Conclusion

This paper concludes that time spent in athletics is a consequence of role conflict, which is strongly influenced by the interaction of two cognitive-behavioral processes: expectancy and efficacy. In addition, the following assumptions are made:

Assumption 1: Role conflict is cognitively processed and behaviorally resolved. Specifically, expectancies as cognitive processes and self-efficacy as behaviorally-confirmed uniquely interact to initiate role conflict.

Assumption 2: Given the demands of multiple or conflicting identities, student-athletes resort to constraint their time and energy as limited resources. As such, they resolve the conflict through the saliency of athletic identity.

Likewise, based on the literature reviewed, positive academic outcomes are derived from time spent on academics. On the other hand, time demand on athletics does not only interfere with time commitment in academics, but it is also detrimental to academic achievement.

Abbreviations

NCAA National Collegiate Athletic Association

Author Contributions

Jay Claus Santos is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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