Factors Impacting Athletic Identity in an Adolescent Population

Brianne N. Heydinger
Ohio University

Laura L. Harris
Ohio University

Janet E. Simon
Ohio University

Factors Impacting Athletic Identity in an Adolescent Population

Brianne N. Heydinger, AT; Laura L. Harris, PhD, AT; Janet E. Simon, PhD, AT
Ohio University, College of Health Sciences and Professions

_____

OBJECTIVE
Using the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) (1) describe athletic identity in high school athletes pre- and post-sports seasons and (2) determine the impact on athletic identity across sport specialization levels and injury statuses.

DESIGN AND SETTING
A prospective cohort study using survey methods to explore athletic identity in adolescents enrolled in a large, public, Midwestern school district.

PARTICIPANTS
A convenience sample of healthy 13-19-year olds who were active on the roster for at least one school sponsored sport during the Fall 2020 and Winter 2020-2021 were recruited. Initially, 24 subjects (5 males, 19 females) were recruited, but due to errors when filling out the assessments, four subjects were excluded. The subjects included in the study (n=20; 3 males, 17 females) completed a baseline AIMS and sport specialization scale prior to their sports seasons; Fall 2020 (n=12; 1 male, 11 females) and Winter 2020-2021 (n=8; 2 males, 6 females). A postseason assessment (n=11; 1 male, 10 females) of the AIMS was repeated.

INTERVENTION
The preseason assessment included a demographics questionnaire, the 10-item AIMS, and a three-item sport specialization scale. The postseason assessment repeated the demographics questionnaire, the 10-item AIMS, and added questions regarding illnesses or injuries sustained during the season.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASUREMENTS
Descriptive statistics were calculated for the dependent variable (AIMS scores) by time, injury, and sport specialization. A repeated measures ANOVA was to be calculated for AIMS by time (pre- and post-season) and injury (yes or no). A second repeated measures ANOVA was conducted for AIMS by time (pre and post) and sports specialization level (low, moderate, or high). Post hoc testing was conducted as necessary, and the alpha level was set at 0.05 for all analyses.

RESULTS
AIMS scores overall averaged 30.35 ± 7.727 for the preseason and 40.73 ± 8.968 for the postseason. AIMS scores could not be analyzed over time with consideration for injury due to the lack of participants sustaining an injury (n=2). There was not a significant difference in AIMS scores for all participants who took both the pre and post assessments (p = 0.101). There was also not found to be a significance for AIMS scores between sports specialization levels (p = 0.816).

CONCLUSION
Previous studies have shown that athletic identity may be impacted by factors such as injury and level of participation. In this study, there was a lack of subjects necessary to analyze AIMS scores in relation to injury, and most subjects classified themselves as highly specialized, which impacted data analysis. No results were significant, so it remains unclear if adolescent's athletic identity is impacted by injury or level of sports specialization. Future research should focus on recruiting a larger number of participants as one is unable to draw widespread conclusions based upon the sample used in this study.

KEY WORDS: *Adolescent Athletes, Athletic Identity, Athletic Identity Measurement Scale, Sports Specialization*