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Mental Well-Being of Varsity Athletes during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Athletic and Social Identities

Walker Chilton, Courtney Haines, Jackson Kirschner, Valentina Leon-Ledezma



Introduction

During the pandemic, the disruption of activities and group settings would lead to a decrease in mental well-being in varsity athletes (Graupensperger, 2020). Identities like social and athletic identity can determine how a varsity athlete copes with the ongoing pandemic, as well as how social media is utilized.

Research Question

How does the relationship between social identity, coping, and mental well-being affect varsity athletes during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

Background Research

- The Pandemic has had an immense power on athletes, offsetting them for a long period of time. (Taku, 2020)
- Belonging to a group is a factor that athletes take into consideration when evaluating their identification with being an athlete and mental well-being.

 (Bruner, 2018)
- Athletic identity determines how committed a student athlete might feel towards their sport, suggesting that students with low athletic identity have been negatively impacted by the Pandemic. (Visek, 2008)
- Turning to social media for comfort and reassurance about the Pandemic can reassure an athlete about their identity and place in society.
 (Schmalz, 2018)

Hypothesis

Collegiate athletes that have high levels of social identity and athletic identity, along with a large usage of social media will have greater mental well-being.

Measured Variables

Mental Well-Being -How athletes perceive themselves emotionally, psychologically, and socially in the past 12 months, amid the pandemic

Athletic Identity-Determines how strongly an athlete identifies with being an athlete and how they are impacted if are not able to compete

Social Identity-How strongly tied an athlete feels towards the team, along with how positive they feel about being a part of the group

Social Media Coping- Feelings towards using social media as a coping mechanism and why they used social media during the pandemic

Methods

N = 75

Participants were college aged varsity athletes (18 years or older) currently on a sports team.

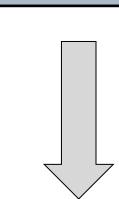
Gender Race Sport • 29.3% Track and Field • 32 Males • 70.13% White • 43 Females • 14.29% Black • 20% • 1 Non-Baseball Binary • 5.19% Other • 14.6% Softball • 3.9% • 9.3% Soccer • 3.9% Asian • 26.8% Other sports • 2.6% Other teams

Procedure

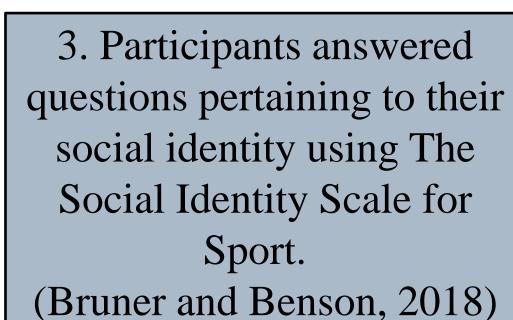
1. Participants answered questions pertaining to mental well-being using The Mental Health Continuum

Short Form.

(Keyes, 2009)



2. Participants answered questions about their athletic identity using The Athletic Identity Measurement Scale. (Visek et al., 2008)



4. Participants answered questions concerning their social media usage using a modified Brief-COPE scale.

(Schmalz et al., 2015)

Results

	1.	2.	3.	4.	В	p
Mental Well-Being	-	-	-	-	54.34	.000
Athletic Identity	.13	-	-	_	.35	.19
Social Identity	.02	.63*	_	_	-1.05	.57
Social Media Coping	11	.09	.17	-	-2.24	.36
ean	55.64	37.83	5.64	2.76		
)	13.28	7.41	1.10	0.65		

Findings

The three predictors explained 3.7% of the variance ($R^2 = .037$, F(3, 71) = .901, p = .45). The three predictor variables athletic identity ($(\beta = .354, p = .189)$), social identity ($\beta = -1.050, p = .566$), and SMS ($\beta = -2.236, p = .357$), were **not significant** to the criterion variable of mental well-being.

Discussion

Limitations

- Limited to online survey only for data collection.
- Number of UMW athletes that took the survey.
- Survey was self-report style.
- No data collected of athletes before COVID-19.

Implications

- Social identity was correlated to athletic identity.
- Understanding of UMW varsity athlete's mental wellbeing.

Future Research

- How do different cultural influences effect wellbeing?
- Long term implications of COVID – 19 pandemic on mental wellbeing.
- Impact of different types of social media on social identity.
- Athletes during and after the Pandemic.

Conclusion

The original prediction that collegiate varsity athletes that have high levels of social identity, athletic identity, and social media usage would have greater well-being, was not supported by our findings within this study. There were no significant findings that supported the variable of mental well-being.

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