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Rowan University

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**MORE THAN ATHLETES: DO STUDENT ATHLETES PERFORM BETTER
ACADEMICALLY IN THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPETITIVE SEASON?**

by

Kristiina Michele Castagnola

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Higher Education
at
Rowan University
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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to every student-athlete who never thought they could accomplish anything outside of their sport. You can do anything you put your mind to and you are more than just an athlete!

Acknowledgments

I would like to take the time to thank Rowan University for the opportunity to pursue my Bachelor's and Master's degree at the place I love most. I also would like to thank my professors who have supported me throughout this journey. Dr. Stephanie Lezotte has been a pivotal figure in writing and conducting this research and I am extremely grateful for her knowledge and assistance.

I would also like to take the time to thank the Rowan Athletic Department who guided me and have continuously been there for me throughout my journey. A special thank you to Michelle Andre and Penny Kempf who led me to pursuing this master's program. If it weren't for you two, I would not be fully pursuing my dreams.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends. Without your support I would never have been able to complete this program and this thesis without you all!

Abstract

Kristiina Michele Castagnola
MORE THAN ATHLETES: DO STUDENT ATHLETES PERFORM BETTER
ACADEMICALLY IN THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPETITIVE SEASON?
2022-2023

Stephanie Lezotte, Ph.D.
Master of Arts in Higher Education

The purpose of this research study was to analyze the grade point averages of student athletes in their competitive season versus their “off” season. This study also provides suggestions to Rowan University on how they can better support their student athlete’s academic success. This research study used surveys and a quantitative data analysis to analyze the grade point averages of the student athletes. The participants in this research study were student athletes that attended Rowan University in the 2021-2022 academic school year and had completed one full academic year. The most significant data collected was that student athletes do not perform better academically in their competitive season. The findings also revealed that female student athletes who participated in a spring sport had the overall better GPA range compared to male student athletes. Recommendations include the suggestion to create mandated study hall hours for all student athletes and the suggestion for individualized tutoring just for student athletes.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Athletic departments across the country emphasize just how important it is for student athletes to perform well in the classroom as well as the field. Athletic departments emphasize this by creating mandated study hall hours for athletes, access to tutors, and create schedules that can help them do better. There are research studies focusing on aspects like perception, lack of sleep, campus climate, mental health, and financial anxiety (Geiger, 2015). This research study fills a gap by exposing another avenue that could affect their academic success. Athletes balance a lot on their plate and hold many roles in their lives. These roles can range from being a student, to being a caregiver, an employee, a friend, a roommate, etc. These roles play a massive part in their ever-busy schedules (Scott et al., 2008). On top of all of that they must be an athlete as well. Although all of these roles coexist and these student athletes have to work through them, it can be difficult to manage. Yet time and time again they seem to show that they can manage these roles because there are student athletes who win athletic and academic accolades not only from their conference and institution but also nationally (Rankin et al., 2016). This research study investigates whether there are certain nuances that could potentially aid, or hinder, student athletes' academic success.

Statement of Research Problem

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether or not college student athletes at a Mid-Atlantic university perform better academically during their respective competitive season. This will be done by doing a quantitative study that looks closer at the potential relationship between having a more structured schedule during a student

athlete's competitive season and performing well academically. Conducting this study will allow professionals to understand how and when student athletes do better or worse academically. Findings will allow for them to figure out what steps need to be taken to ensure the student's academics are put before athletics. The research questions for this specific research study allows for there to be an outline of what I am looking to discover.

Significance of Research Problem

Student athletes are constantly faced with hectic schedules and often times have to play a lot of roles. These roles can cause the student athlete to struggle or thrive in these respective roles depending on the individual (Hextrum, 2019). This research study will reflect what current student athletes' GPAs are during their respective competitive season versus their off season. Once all the data is collected, colleges and universities will be able to have a better understanding of when student athletes perform better academically and can implement targeted programs during certain times of the year to help improve academic performance. This is the significance of the research.

Assumptions and Limitations

This research study will take a closer look at when college student athletes do better academically at Rowan University. Although this research will attempt to make a basic understanding on when student athletes could potentially perform better academically, it cannot be generalized about all student athletes who participate in NCAA sponsored institutions. This research study will also have a convenience sample of Rowan University student athletes so this sample once again cannot be generalized about all student athletes. I also want to acknowledge that the results could be affected by other outside factors, like Covid-19. I will be collecting the student athletes' GPAs from

Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 when the Covid-19 virus was still prominent. The results could be affected by this because students were given the option in the Fall of 2021 semester to choose a Pass/No Credit option for courses that they did not want to affect their GPA. Therefore, some of the student athlete GPAs could not show the full picture of how they did academically. Another limitation is that I am unable to use the current Freshman class that is enrolled at Rowan University because they have not completed two semesters at the institution. There is also a chance the results are skewed because participants may not put in their actual GPA for a variety of reasons. I do expect the responses to be accurate but it is possible that students could misrepresent their GPA. Finally, the results of this study could be skewed due to some of the participants being multi-sport athletes so there would be no considered off season. I still want multi-sport athletes to participate in the survey because I am curious to see if these participants are able to maintain the same GPA through both semesters that they compete in or if their GPA is lower in one of the two semesters.

Operational Definitions

1. NCAA: The acronym for National Collegiate Athletic Association
2. NCAA Sponsored Sports: The NCAA sponsors 24 sports across all three divisions
3. GPA: Grade Point Average

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. Is the GPA range of a student athlete higher or lower during their competitive season? My hypothesis for this question is that it is higher.

2. Which gender is more likely to have a better GPA during their competitive season? My hypothesis is females will perform better academically.

The beginning research question is looking closer about whether student athletes perform better academically in their respective competitive season. My first hypothesis is that the outcome of this study will result in findings that there is a means difference for student athletes to perform better academically in their respective competitive season rather than in their respective off season. My second hypothesis is that the overall reason as to why these student athletes presume that they perform better academically in their respective competitive season is due to having a more structured/time consumer daily schedule. With the use of the research questions, the data I collect will give me the ability to confirm or deny my hypotheses.

Organization of Remaining Chapters of Study

There will be four additional chapters for this research study. Chapter two takes a deep dive into the review of the literature that explains the importance of this topic. It will also highlight what previous research has found so far regarding this topic and where the research can be taken. This chapter also includes the research regarding reasons why student athletes become athletes and how their grades could be affected. Chapter three gives an overview of the methodology that will be used in this research study. In Chapter three there is information regarding the study, its purpose, the method, the samples, data collection instrument and process, and the data analysis. Chapter four will discuss the findings of the statistical analyses that will be performed. This chapter will also include the analysis of the data in reference to the research questions. Finally, chapter five will have the overall summary of this study, a breakdown of the findings, a concluding

statement regarding the study, and the recommendations of how the research can be taken further.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

Student athletes have been in the higher education system dating back to 1852 (Geiger, 2015). From that point forward there has been a lot of studies focusing on the experience and academic performance that collegiate student athletes have had (Hextrum, 2019). This chapter will cover the prior research regarding student athletes in higher education and the history surrounding them.

History of Higher Education

It is important to look at how student athletes become student athletes. Critical sports scholars have looked at various upbringings of how youth athletes grow to become student athletes. Previous scholars have focused on some social forces that can potentially influence young athletes to become high level collegiate athletes (Gaston-Gayles, 2004; Hextrum, 2019). Several research studies have discussed that collegiate student athletes are frequently facing different daily tasks than the regular college student (Rankin et al., 2016). Other research surrounding the different pressures that could potentially affect a college student athlete's daily tasks discovered various influences. Previous research on this topic can be divided into different categories. These categories can range from mental health, financial strain, internal perceptions, external perceptions, and stereotypes (Beron & Piquero, 2016; Edwards & Froehle, 2021; Geiger, 2015, Levine, 2014; McCoy, White & Love, 2019; Rankin et al., 2016; Turner et al, 2021). Yet these categories would not exist without college athletics existing in the first place. Historically, the need and desire for education has always been in the forefront. When

North America began to become colonized, there was a desire to continue the education that the colonizers were receiving back in Great Britain (Geiger, 2015). In 1636, Harvard University, originally named the New College, was founded (Geiger, 2015). Once Harvard University was created, a slew of other institutions began to be built across the nation (Geiger, 2015). Colleges and universities since then have become more than just an educational institution (Geiger, 2015). They have become a place for communities to come together, a place for students to join clubs and find new friends, a place to network, a place for people to advance their careers, and even a place for people to pursue athletic careers (Geiger, 2015).

History of Sports in Higher Education

In 1852, collegiate athletics were born when a local railroad wanted to promote a resort on Lake Winnepesaukee, New Hampshire, and asked Harvard University and Yale University to participate in a crew race (Geiger, 2015). This original race led to the birth of collegiate athletics and their place infinitely throughout history (Geiger, 2015). This is important because this original reasoning kickstarted this massive money-making industry that now is a staple piece in a lot of people's lives (Geiger, 2015). According to the Associated Press, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, otherwise known as the NCAA, made approximately \$1.15 billion dollars in revenue for the year 2021 (Associated Press, 2022). With the NCAA having this much money to have access to, along with colleges/universities making more and more money each year from their athletic programs, it has become something a lot of the youth across the world want to become a part of (Hextrum, 2019).

Potential Reasons Why College Athletes Become Athletes

It has been proven by countless examples that athletics can benefit an individual in more ways than one (Geiger, 2015). There are a multitude of reasons including health benefits, job opportunities, as well as simply bringing a community together (Hextrum, 2019). Other reasons individuals may want to pursue athletics could be because of the potential opportunity of going pro in their respective sport, getting to play the sport they love at a higher level, and pursuing a degree at a college and or university of their choice, which can be enticing (Ervin et al., 1985; Hextrum, 2019). It is also important to note that the NCAA division the institution is affiliated with can affect the possibility for an athletic scholarship (ESPN.com, 2022). If a student athlete attends a Division I or Division II NCAA sponsored institution they can receive an athletic scholarship (ESPN.com, 2022). This is another factor that can drive youth athletes to want to become a part of collegiate athletics (ESPN.com, 2022).

Student Athlete Academic Pressures

The academic pressures that student athletes face can potentially play a larger role in these student athletes' lives (Rankin et al., 2016). A specific area that can potentially be affected by these various pressures can be a student athlete's academic performance. A lot of research studies have looked at the relationship between collegiate student athletes and their relationship with their academic performance. Beron and Piquero (2016) speak upon the academic performance of collegiate student athletes through all NCAA sponsored divisions. An NCAA sponsored division is a division that is governed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association. The potential pressure that can cause student athletes to become overwhelmed and perform poorly academically can be the high expectations they

are faced with from not only others but themselves (Beron & Piquero, 2016). These outside factors can cause an array of issues or provide the right motivation towards a student athlete's academic performance at the collegiate level (Kane et al., 2008). Some examples of these pressures can vary from a parent expecting their student athlete to perform well their first semester even though this is typically when student athletes struggle the most academically (Beron & Piquero, 2016). Another example is when coaches are expecting an athlete to practice/train up to three times a day while attending class and doing assignments (Beron & Piquero, 2016). These high expectations can also be tied into what NCAA sanctioned divisions the athlete is participating in.

Certain student athletes' GPAs could drop or rise depending on their academic and athletic identity and potentially their sex (Beron & Piquero, 2016). An athlete's academic identity can range in several different areas. For starters, a student athlete can view themselves as the stereotypical jock that is portrayed in media where being excellent academically is unimportant (Levine, 2014). Their academic identity could also be shown through the idea that they cannot be intelligent because they are only at the institution to participate in their respective sport and their respective sport only (Levine, 2014). This particular academic identity can lead student athletes to not put forth the effort into their academic work therefore resulting in poor grades (Levine, 2014; Stansbury, 2003). Also, this thought process can lead to the potential drop in academic performance for student athletes because they believe they are just doing what society believes they should be like (Levine, 2014). Joshua Levine's (2014) study dives into the thought process a collegiate student athlete goes through when viewing academic achievement compared to what others perceive of that academic performance. These

outside influences that were stated earlier could potentially be why some student athletes perform poorly academically if these perceptions are forced upon them (Levine, 2014). On the opposite end of this spectrum are the student athletes who perceive their academic performance to be important and have a strong identity regarding this aspect in their collegiate career (Beron & Piquero, 2016; Levine, 2014). Typically, these student athletes performed better academically because although they had pressures, they had a support system that was there to assist them (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Levine, 2014).

Other studies have found that for student athletes it became apparent that individuals cared more about academic achievement than they thought the average student involved in their activity did (Levine, 2014). Levine continues on to say that this pluralistic ignorance relies heavily on perceived norms in these groups and can be considered a heavy factor in why student-athletes potentially underperform academically (Levine, 2014). After Beron and Piquero's (2016) study, the researchers reported that their findings were that the GPA of student athletes *are* influenced by their athletic versus academic identity and that there are no statistical differences regarding sex or division. There are previous research studies that are comparative with their findings regarding student athletes and their academic performance.

Student Athletes and Other Pressures

Student athletes face an enormous amount of pressure whether those pressures are from family members, fans, coaches, professors, friends, themselves, money, and many other factors (Aries et al., 2004; Rankin et al., 2016). Some other studies have mentioned that mental health potentially plays an even bigger factor than all other factors that could affect the academic performance of a college student athlete (Edwards & Frohele, 2021).

Until recently, the mental health of student athletes has been often forgotten about. Mental health issues are something that can affect anyone regardless of age, sex, or income (Edwards & Frohele, 2021). Student athletes can also be affected by mental health issues regardless of their difference to regular students. In fact, it was reported on athletesforhope.org that 33% of student athletes face mental health issues (athletesforhope.org, 2021). Student athletes also tend to juggle a lot of responsibilities in their lives. These mental illnesses can affect their ability to juggle their daily responsibilities including academic performance. However, there are other studies that have looked into this and have found that student athletes appear to have better mental health than regular students (Edwards & Frohele, 2021). Yet it is still possible that a student athlete's academic performance is affected by their mental health. Different mental health issues like Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Attention Hyper Deficit Disorder (ADHD), and anxiety could affect a student athlete's academic performance. It should be noted that these different mental health issues do not only affect student athletes and are something anyone can be affected by. However, these disorders are something that can cause issues and really impact a student athlete's ability to perform well inside the classroom.

More research has focused on the potential effects on academic performance of participating in featured sports. Featured sports are sports that are well known across a country or globally that are considered the most popular sports (Rankin et al., 2016). These sports are often televised or live streamed and allows for a large viewership (Rankin et al., 2016). Examples of featured sports are football, baseball, ice hockey, and golf to name a few (Rankin et al., 2016). A research study examined the possible effects a

campus' climate may have on student athletes who attend college (Rankin et al., 2016). This study exposed that student athletes who did partake in featured sports said that they would feel a higher sense of athletic identity but a lower feeling of athletic success (Rankin et al., 2016). They also found that the academic success for these student athletes had no significant difference (Rankin et al., 2016). This study compared featured sports student athletes versus non-featured sport student athletes (Rankin et al., 2016). More research exposed another reason that a student athlete could potentially perform negatively (Shuman, 2009; Turner et al., 2021). The research concluded that sleep difficulties could affect a student athlete's academic performance. Student-athletes who have sleep problems had an increased probability of grade averages of B/C and D/F (Turner et al., 2021). These sleep difficulties really can affect a student athlete's grade point average and these sleep difficulties can be amplified by having a packed schedule (Turner et al., 2021). It is no secret that student athletes have very busy schedules. They often have early lifts, classes, afternoon practice, study hall, and somewhere eating falls in that schedule as well. This can leave student athletes not having a lot of time to sleep. They also could struggle to sleep from the stress they develop from their hectic schedules (Edwards & Frohele, 2021). Researchers have offered varying solutions that could possibly resolve the sleeping difficulties, and what people can do that can better assist student athletes while they are participating in college athletics (Thompson, 1986; Turner et al., 2021).

Overall, current studies analyzing the aspect of academic performance for student athletes suggest students can be affected by the potential of knowing there is a pipeline to professional sports. Some scholars analyze the starting point for student athletes, which is

often in their youth, and how access to these colleges/universities can play a role in the academic performance of the student athlete (Hextrum, 2019). Some scholars even say that athletes struggle even more academically because they only want to be collegiate student athletes (Hextrum, 2019). Other scholars have pointed out that several student athletes could unfortunately encounter difficulties academically or the opposite and can do well academically regarding their social class standing (Beron & Piquero, 2016; Hextrum, 2019). Oftentimes the need for money can affect an athlete's academic performance. The financial stress that some student athletes experience during their collegiate career can cause a lot of poor performances academically. Some athletes will work jobs on top of their hectic schedule which can leave little time for academics. Other findings revolving around these different social classes from other research studies agree with other findings regarding that financial stress can cause academic performance to drop in student athletes (Hextrum, 2019; Rankin, 2016). A student athlete's social class can play a very large role in their lives other than their academic performance. One thing that can relieve a student athlete's financial stress is receiving either merit or athletic scholarships. However, these scholarships are only available if they are attending an NCAA sponsored institution in the Division I or Division II (Hextrum, 2019). Different research studies mention that several student athletes who are unable to obtain academic or athletic scholarships also face mental health issues (McCoy et al., 2019). This constant worry can cause an athlete to have to spend more time working and less time focusing on their academics (Robst & Keil, 2000). Overall, this literature acknowledges that student athletes who are in college have several different influences on their academic performance. Although I hypothesized they perform better academically during their

season, other studies have found that student athletes do tend to perform poorly academically (Beron & Piquero, 2016; Levine, 2014). The next chapter describes my research design to study student athletes' academic performance at a single Mid-Atlantic University, which will allow me to compare my research findings with previous research findings.

Chapter III

Methodology

The overall purpose of this study is to research whether student athletes who are in college perform better academically during their respective competitive seasons. Therefore, this research study used a quantitative methodology to examine the academic performance of student athletes at Rowan University. Specifically, I conducted a means study and the instrument that was used is a survey. A quantitative method, particularly a survey, was the best approach for the research and overall purpose of my study because it allowed for the best response rate and allowed for more data to be collected (McMillian, 2016). There are several different reasons for this type of method. To begin, the data that was needed to be collected for this exact research study were numerical. The aim of this research study was to gain potential understanding about collegiate student athletes' academic performance and if they perform better under a more structured and time filled daily schedule or when they have more “free” time in their daily schedule. The research question that was analyzed was seeing if there was a means to student athletes performing better academically during their respective competitive seasons. I chose to use SPSS to assist in helping process the data and to run this means difference study.

Context of Study

The context of this study is in relation to the population I chose to survey. I surveyed student athletes that currently participate in an NCAA sponsored sport at Rowan University. Rowan University is a Mid-Atlantic University located in Glassboro, New Jersey and is a public institution. Rowan University has a total undergraduate enrollment of a little over 15,000 students and about 3,000 graduate students. It is

important to note the graduate student population includes students who attend Rowan through different satellite campuses. This study was only focusing on undergraduate student athletes who attend the main campus of this institution, as this is the only Rowan campus where NCAA sponsored sports are offered. Rowan University has 18 NCAA sponsored sports, eight male sports and ten female sports. Rowan offers Men's and Women's Soccer, Men's and Women's Swimming and Diving, Men's and Women's Basketball, Men's and Women's Cross Country, Men's and Women's Indoor Track and Field, Men's and Women's Outdoor Track and Field, Women's Volleyball, Women's Field Hockey, Women's Lacrosse, Women's Softball, Men's Football and Men's Baseball. There is a NCAA student athlete population of 468 in total. Based on a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, my targeted sample size was 211 survey responses.

Population of the Study

First, my research had participants who are specific to the topic I wanted to study. Oftentimes quantitative sampling can be random or nonrandom depending on how the study is conducted and if there is a desire for specific participants (McMillan, 2016). These participants were not randomly selected because of the specific requirement to play an NCAA sport. This specific choice of sampling is purposeful because my research question was only searching to analyze participants that participate in NCAA sanctioned college sports (Hextrum, 2019). The first category consists of a specific age range of 18–25-year-olds who are sophomore through senior year students. The reasoning behind ending the age range at 25 was because some student athletes attend college or universities later on in their life but can still participate in this study because they are

within the academic year range. The second category will be that the participant must have completed their first academic year, typically their freshman year, at their respective college and or university. Finally, the most specific category that these participants had to have fallen under is that they must play at Rowan University. Although multi-sport student athletes may impact my findings, I still found it important to allow them to take the survey because it allows for a fuller picture and potential insight. The survey had two questions that would automatically filter out participants that did not meet the criteria to take the survey for my study. As stated earlier, I was looking for student athletes who attend a specific institution, are of a certain age, are of a certain academic level, and participate in NCAA sanctioned sports. In order to help students understand their academic level for purposes of participating in the survey, an example was provided to them. As part of the survey, participants were informed about my research process and consented to participating so they were able to understand exactly what I was going to do with their information and how it could benefit them and others in the future.

Data Collection Strategies

After IRB approval, I asked the Athletic Director to send an email to the student athletes with my survey link and instructions. I had the Athletic Director send this survey on four separate occasions to maximize participants. I requested that the Athletic Director filter out sending any of these emails containing my survey to student athletes who are considered a freshman academically. This meant that any student athlete who had not completed at least 24 credits were not eligible to participant in the survey. The survey filtered out participants by age so that all the participants were above the age of 18. This was extremely important for them to do because it allowed me to lessen the likelihood of

someone, who does not fit the research study criteria, accidentally filling out the survey and skewing the results. I also acknowledged that this would be more work for my gatekeeper, the Athletic Director, and that there was room for the potential for human error. With this in mind, I chose to use specific filter questions that I used at the beginning of my survey that allowed me to be able to filter out anyone who should not be participating in my survey. These emails that the gatekeepers ushered out were drafted by myself and had explicit instructions for the student athletes to use to complete this survey. I used language that was easily understood by the participants. It was important to make the survey easy to understand because then it allowed for the optimal amount of responses from participants (McMillan, 2016). Participants are more likely to respond when the information being asked of them is simple and easy to respond to (McMillan, 2016). I hoped that the gatekeeper would follow through and send out the survey out four different times so that I could maximize the number of participants. I gave my gatekeeper the exact dates of when I wanted the surveys to be released. I also had an end date to my survey so that late responses would not interfere with data analysis already in progress.

Approach and Design of Study

The methodological approach, as stated earlier, was a survey. Qualtrics was the preferred technological application that allowed me to create and export my survey. The questions that were asked were the following: ‘How old are you?’, ‘What gender do you identify as?’, ‘What Undergraduate Academic year are you currently in?’, ‘What NCAA sponsored sport(s) do you play? (Please select all that apply)’, ‘What was your GPA in the Fall 2021 semester?’, ‘What was your GPA in the Spring 2022 semester?’. This survey

consisted of basic information questions on the first page and the more in-depth research geared questions appeared on the second page. This survey had one multiple choice question and the rest were single choice multiple choice questions. If a participant did not fit the research study criteria they were redirected to a page that said thank you and ended the survey.

Data Analysis

The choice of data analysis for my approach to this research study called for the usage of t-tests. A survey allowed for simple answers and hopefully encouraged more potential participants to answer because it was a short survey that only asked four questions. My chosen approach was to take the percentages of all of the GPAs offered by the participants from each semester and then compare the two. I also planned to take the percentages for every other question just so I was able to compare the results between each answer option. This math was done through the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. This allowed me to get a better understanding and picture of the results. These results allowed me to identify if my hypothesis is correct. I believed this statistical analysis I chose is the best approach and allowed me to easily and cleanly go through all the data. It also allowed for others who look at this work to better understand what I was looking for in a simpler analysis. It was uncomplicated because I looked to analyze one specific instance that occurs to student athletes.

The next chapter presents the findings of this study.

Chapter IV

Findings

Profile of the Sample

The target population for this study were student-athletes who were in their undergraduate program, who had completed their first year during the 2021-2022 academic year, who attended Rowan University. This population also had to be a participant in an NCAA sponsored sport that is offered at Rowan University. The survey was created through Qualtrics, a surveying tool used by Rowan University. The sample that was used was provided by Rowan University's Associate Athletic Director Mandy Jiang, who served as a gatekeeper for this study. The survey was launched January 26, 2023 and was sent out one more time to all the student-athletes who had yet to complete the survey. The survey was then subsequentially closed on February 14, 2023. A total of 121 responses had been started by the sample group and 74 responses were collected in total. Out of the 74 responses that were able to be collected there was a 57.3% response rate and a 66% completion rate.

Table 1 includes means responses from fall and spring student-athletes from Rowan University and their GPAs from the 2021 Fall Semester and the 2022 Spring Semester. The total number of responses was 74. The average 2021 Fall GPA for student athletes whose competitive season was in the Fall semester was 4.06 and their average 2022 Spring GPA was 4.13. The average 2021 Fall GPA for student athletes whose competitive season was in the Spring semester was 4.52 and their average 2022 Spring GPA was 4.47. Finally, the student athletes who were multi-sport athletes and therefore

have their competitive seasons in both semesters had an average 2021 Fall GPA of 4.22 and an average 2022 Spring GPA of 4.27. The overall average 2021 Fall GPA for all student athletes was 4.22 and the overall average for 2022 Spring GPA for all student athletes was 4.27.

Table 1

Fall vs Spring GPA vs Fall vs Spring Student Athletes

Season	GPA Fall	GPA Spring
Fall	4.06	4.13
Spring	4.52	4.47
Multi-Sport	4.44	4.55
Total	4.22	4.27

Table 2 contains responses from a crosstabulation from female identifying student athletes and their GPAs from the 2021 Fall semester. Fall sport female identifying student athletes were found to have a worse percentage of those that fell between the 3.5-4.0 GPA range compared to the Spring sport female identifying student athletes. However multi-sport female identifying student athletes were found to have the best percentage overall in the 3.5-4.0 range with a percentage of 83.3%

Table 2

Female Fall GPA

GPA Range	Fall Sport	Spring Sport	Multi-Sport	Total
0.0-2.0	0.0%	5.9%	0.0%	2.29%
2.1-2.4	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%
2.5-3.0	22.7%	0.0%	16.7%	13.3%
3.1-3.4	22.7%	17.6%	0.0%	17.8%
3.5-4.0	50.0%	76.4%	83.3%	64.4%

Table 3 contains crosstabulation responses from male identifying student athletes and their GPAs from the 2021 Fall semester. Fall sport male identifying student athletes were found to have a worse percentage of those that fell between the 3.5-4.0 GPA range compared to the Spring sport male identifying student athletes. However, multi-sport male identifying student athletes were found to have the best overall percentage in the 3.5-4.0 GPA range with 66.7%.

Table 3

Male Fall GPA

GPA Range	Fall Sport	Spring Sport	Multi-Sport	Total
0.0-2.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2.1-2.4	4.2%	0.0%	33.3%	6.9%
2.5-3.0	29.2%	50.0%	0.0%	27.6%
3.1-3.4	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	27.6%
3.5-4.0	33.3%	50.0%	66.7%	37.9%

Table 4 contains responses from female identifying student athletes and their GPAs from the 2022 Spring semester. Fall sport female identifying student athletes were found to have a worse percentage of those that fell between the 3.5-4.0 GPA range compared to the Spring sport female identifying student athletes. However multi-sport female identifying student athletes had the best percentage of 66.7% for those they landed in the 3.5-4.0 GPA range.

Table 4*Female Spring GPA*

GPA Range	Fall Sport	Spring Sport	Multi-Sport	Total
0.0-2.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2.1-2.4	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2.5-3.0	13.6%	11.8%	0.0%	11.1%
3.1-3.4	27.3%	23.5%	33.3%	26.7%
3.5-4.0	59.1%	64.7%	66.7%	62.2%

Table 5 contains responses from male identifying student athletes and their GPAs from the 2022 Spring semester. Fall sport male identifying student athletes were found to have a worse percentage of those that fell between the 3.5-4.0 GPA range compared to the Spring sport male identifying student athletes. Multi-sport athletes were found to have the best percentage with 66.7% of those that fell between the 3.5-4.0 GPA range.

Table 5

Male Spring GPA

GPA Range	Fall Sport	Spring Sport	Multi-Sport	Total
0.0-2.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2.1-2.4	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	10.3%
2.5-3.0	25.0%	50.0%	33.3%	27.6%
3.1-3.4	29.2%	0.0%	0.0%	24.1%
3.5-4.0	33.3%	50.0%	66.7%	37.9%

Chapter V

Summary, Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Summary of Study

This study took a deeper look at student-athletes grade point averages and the affect their competitive season plays on their GPAs. The research investigated whether student-athletes perform better academically in their competitive season. The survey was sent out through Qualtrics on January 26, 2023. The survey was then sent out one more time to remind the respondents to complete the survey on February 1, 2023. The survey was open for nineteen days and subsequently closed on February 14, 2023. The survey data was downloaded and saved to a password protected laptop. Then the data analysis began.

Discussion

Research Question 1

Is the GPA range of a student athlete higher or lower during their competitive season? After analyzing the data three questions assisted in answering this question. Question four asked student athletes what NCAA sponsored sport(s) they participated in and there were 112 responses. Respondents were able to choose more than one response for this question because there is the possibility of student athletes participating in up to three NCAA sponsored sports in one academic year.

Question five asked student athletes what was their GPA for the Fall 2021 Semester. There were 74 student athletes who answered this question. The overall GPA average for all student athletes from the 2021 Fall semester was 4.22.

Question six asked student athletes what was their GPA for the Spring 2022 Semester. There were 74 student athletes who responded to this question. The overall GPA average for all student athletes from the 2022 Spring semester was 4.27. Previous findings stated that student athletes have lower GPA ranges during their competitive seasons (Hextrum, 2019). This research study supports previous research findings.

Research Question 2

Which gender is more likely to have a better GPA during their competitive season?

Question three from the survey asked student athletes what gender they identify as. Out of the 74 collected completed responses 45 were female and 29 were male. After analyzing the data, the average number of females who had a fall GPA range of 3.5-4.0 was 64.4%. However, of females who played multiple sports 83.3% had a GPA range of 3.5-4.0 which is significantly higher than the average. Then after analyzing the data, the average number of males who had a GPA range of 3.5-4.0 was 37.9%. However, of males who played multiple sports, 66.7% had a GPA range of 3.5-4.0. Continuing, the average number of females who had a spring GPA range of 3.5-4.0 was 62.2%. However, of females who played multiple sports, 66.7% had a GPA range of 3.5-4.0. Finally, the average number of males who had a spring GPA range of 3.5-4.0 was 37.9%. However, of males who played multiple sports 66.7% had a GPA range of 3.5-4.0. This data analysis shows that multiple sport female athletes are more likely to have a better GPA during their competitive season. Previous findings have stated that overall student athletes do perform well academically than what previous biases have stated (Hextrum,

2019). This research supports previous findings because most of the student athletes in this study landed in the 3.0-4.0 GPA range.

Recommendations for Practice

Based upon the findings of previous research and this study, these are recommendations for Rowan University, the Athletic Department.

1. Rowan University should develop some sort of tutoring program and designate a tutoring space where student athletes can receive one on one tutoring in subjects they are struggling in.
2. Rowan University should implement study hall hours to help boost academic success for their student athletes.
3. Several student athletes struggled academically in the semesters that they did not participate in their competitive season. Rowan University should survey the student athletes to find a solution promote and accomplish academic success in their “off” season.

Recommendations for Future Research

Due to the findings of this study, these are the recommendations for future research:

1. Researchers should consider conducting a qualitative study and ask student athletes why they believe they are doing well or poorly in their competitive season.
2. Researchers should consider increasing the sample size and generalizability by surveying student athletes from multiple institutions.

Conclusion

Student athletes have been stereotyped to perform poorly academically. Often, they are referred to as dumb jocks who are unable to perform anywhere other than their respective sports facility (Beron & Piquero, 2016). The overall findings of this research study shows that student athletes do perform well academically with most respondents landing in the 3.5-4.0 GPA range. However, the findings from this research are evident that student athletes do not perform better academically in their respective competitive season. Although the difference is slight it is still evident that there is a decline. Multiple sport athletes were found to have the most academic success overall with a majority of the multiple sport respondents landing in the 3.5-4.0 range. The research found that female identifying multiple sport student athletes had the most respondents land in the 3.5-4.0 range.

The academic success that some of the student athletes are experiencing can continue to grow if Rowan University's Athletic Department creates programs and initiatives to promote academic success. The need for mandated study hall hours are evident and the implementation of this initiative could result in the greater academic success had by student athletes.

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Appendix A

IRB Letter



DHHS Federal Wide Assurance Identifier: FWA00007111

Rowan IORG/IRB: Glassboro/CMSRU

IRB Chair Person: Dr. Ane Johnson

IRB Director: Eric Gregory

Effective Date: January 18, 2023

Notice of Approval - Initial

Study ID: PRO-2022-283

Title: Do Student Athletes Perform Better Academically in their Respective Competitive Season

Principal Investigator: Stephanie Lezotte

Study Coordinator: Kristiina Castagnola

Co-Investigator(s): Kristiina Castagnola

Sponsor: Internal

Submission Type: Initial

Submission Status: Exempt

Approval Date: January 18, 2023

Review Type: Exempt

Exempt Category: Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Pregnant Women, Human Fetus, and Neonates Code: N/A

Pediatric/Children Code: N/A

ALL APPROVED INVESTIGATOR(S) MUST COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1. Conduct the research in accordance with the protocol, applicable laws and regulations, and the principles of research ethics as set forth in the Belmont Report.
- 2a. Continuing Review: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses in approval, submit a continuation application at least eight weeks before the study expiration date.

- 2b. Progress Report: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses, an annual progress report is required at least 21 days prior to the expiration date.
- 3a. Expiration of IRB Approval: If IRB approval expires, effective the date of expiration and until the continuing review approval is issued: All research activities must stop unless the IRB finds that it is in the best interest of individual subjects to continue. (This determination shall be based on a separate written request from the PI to the IRB.) No new subjects may be enrolled and no samples/charts/surveys may be collected, reviewed, and/or analyzed.
- 3b. Human Subjects Research Training: Proper training in the conduct of human subjects research must be current and not expired. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator and the investigator to complete training when expired. Any modifications and renewals will not be approved until training is not expired and current.
4. Amendments/Modifications/Revisions: If you wish to change any aspect of this study after the approval date mentioned in this letter, including but not limited to, study procedures, consent form(s), investigators, advertisements, the protocol document, investigator drug brochure, or accrual goals, you are required to obtain IRB review and approval prior to implementation of these changes unless necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects. This policy is also applicable to progress reports.
5. Unanticipated Problems: Unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at: <https://research.rowan.edu/officeofresearch/compliance/irb/index.html>
6. Protocol Deviations and Violations: Deviations from/violations of the approved study protocol must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at: <https://research.rowan.edu/officeofresearch/compliance/irb/index.html>
7. Consent/Assent: The IRB has reviewed and approved the consent and/or assent process, waiver and/or alteration described in this protocol as required by 45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50, 56, (if FDA regulated research). Only the versions of the documents included in the approved process may be used to document informed consent and/or assent of study subjects; each subject must receive a copy of the approved form(s); and a copy of each signed form must be filed in a secure place in the subject's medical/patient/research record.
8. Completion of Study: Notify the IRB when your study has been completed or stopped for any reason. Neither study closure by the sponsor nor the investigator removes the obligation for submission of timely continuing review application, progress report or final report.
9. The Investigator(s) did not participate in the review, discussion, or vote of this protocol.
10. Letter Comments: There are no additional comments.
11. **NJDOH Approved Studies:** IRB approval granted per the Data Use Agreement. Upon receipt of the fully executed Data Use Agreement (DUA) from NJDOH, the Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring an electronic, fully signed DUA is emailed to the Rowan University IRB.

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