

**Finding the Balance Between Academic and Sport Motivation:
A Study of NCAA Division I Student-Athletes
By: Dr. Keith Adams, President, CKA SAVE Project**

Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational research was to assess the relationship between academic motivation and sports motivation among NCAA Division I student-athletes enrolled at colleges and universities in the southern and western regions of the United States.

Problem

Educational researchers noted the need for a greater understanding of student-athlete motivational factors which could result in improving college graduation rates (Beamon, 2014; Henderson, 2013; Reynolds et al., 2012).

Research Gap

1. There is a lack of overall understanding of college student-athletes' motivation needed to be investigated (Harrison et al., 2015).
2. There is a gap between student-athletes academic and sports motivation (Beamon, 2014).

Significance of Research

1. Student-athletes must find both academic and sports motivation to reach their full academic and sports potential as student-athletes (Henderson, 2013).
2. Student-athletes must be motivated academically and athletically to achieve and maintain college sport scholarship opportunities (Reynolds et al., 2012).
3. It is important to develop an increased understanding of student-athlete motivational factors (Schweinle & Helming, 2011).

Methodology

The research surveyed a total of 91 NCAA Division I student-athletes from colleges and universities in the southern and western portions of the United States using the Academic Motivation Scale to assess academic motivation and the Sport Motivation Scale to assess sports motivation to help educators better understand student-athlete academic and sport motivational factors (Pelletier et al., 1995; Pelletier et al., 2013; Chemolli & Gagne, 2014)

Research Questions

1. Is there a statistically significant relationship between the academic and sport intrinsic motivation among NCAA Division I student-athletes, if so to what extent?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship between the academic and sport extrinsic motivation among NCAA Division I student-athletes, if so to what extent?
3. Is there a statistically significant relationship between the academic and sport amotivation among NCAA Division I student-athletes, if so to what extent?

Results

The findings indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between academic and sport intrinsic motivation among NCAA Division I student-athletes. In addition, this study found that there was no statistically significant, relationship between extrinsic motivation and amotivation among NCAA Division I student-athletes.

Theoretical Significance

This research study connects to self-determination theory which focuses on many motivational factors; with regards to student-athletes both intrinsic and extrinsic factors guide academic and athletic motivation (Teixeira et al., 2012). Student-athletes struggle to maintain academic and sports motivation and thus continued research on student-athlete was needed to improve student-athlete academic and sports motivation. The findings of this study further support the need for continued research on student-athlete academic and sports motivation.

Practical implications

The practical use of the findings of this study can serve as the starting point for more in-depth research opportunities with student-athletes. Further research on student-athlete motivation could delve deeper into the question of finding a more statistically significant relationship between student-athlete academic and sports motivation. Secondary and post-secondary institutions across the country can use this study to better understand the current motivational factors of student-athletes, as well as the need for further research into student-athlete motivation.

Future implications

This study identified a statistically significant relationship between academic and sport intrinsic motivation among NCAA Division I student-athletes. The study also identified a small, but statistically insignificant, relationship between academic and sport extrinsic motivation and amotivation among NCAA Division I student-athletes. The mixed results of this study fall in line with previous research on the topic of student-athlete motivation. Considering the amount of literature that supports the continued research of student-athlete motivation, it is essential for secondary and post-secondary institutions to support future researcher on student-athlete motivation.

Suggested recommendations for future research include:

1. A more extensive study of all levels of NCAA student-athletes.
2. Accomplishing this same study utilizing Junior College student-athletes.
3. Replicating this study to include high school student-athletes.
4. Accomplishing a replicated study comparing gender and race.
5. Accomplishing a replicated study comparing revenue and non-revenue generating sports.

Suggested recommendations for future practice:

1. High Schools should create tiered eligibility requirements for student-athletes.
2. Colleges and universities should have student-athletes adhere to the same admission requirements as their general student population.
3. Colleges and universities should institute mandatory support classes for all second-year student-athletes.
4. College sports departments should place an increased focus on recruiting student-athletes who show an interest in finding a balance between academics and sports.
5. Colleges and universities should increase the amount of surveying they do on student-athlete academic and sports motivation.

Dr. Keith Adams has over 25 years of experience as an educational leader and coach. In 2009, he founded the CKA SAVE Project, a nonprofit organization designed to assist student-athletes and the people who work with them through educational and professional development. For more information about working with the CKA SAVE Project, please contact Dr. Adams at cka@ckasaveproject.org. Follow Dr. Adams on Twitter @ckasaveproject.

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