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College Athletes: Degree Completion vs Preparation for Professional Athletics

by

Erika N. LeFlore

A Doctoral Project Submitted to,
the College of Education and Human Sciences
and the School of Education
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

May 2022

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May 2022

Published by the School of Education



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ABSTRACT

According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (2014), there are currently 460,000 student-athletes at US colleges and universities. At a young age, many males interested in basketball aspire to be professional athletes. However, very few understand that professional basketball players have short careers and that they will soon need educational credentials and life skills beyond their professional playing. Moreover, the alarming statistics show that a clear majority do not have college degrees, although many have been enrolled in college at some point prior to their basketball career. Therefore, it is critical to educate young athletes on how important it is to have an alternative option for their future. The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of male basketball athletes attending a Division I institution in the Southeast toward the completion of a college degree versus pursuing professional athletics. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to explore the role of students' academic performance, motivation, and parental involvement on their attitudes toward professional preparation versus pursuing their undergraduate degree. These findings illustrate that while many Division I athletes have dreams of becoming professional athletes, they collectively agree that a college degree is imperative for pursuing alternative goals upon completing their tenure as a college athlete. The study concludes with the discussion of implication for higher education research and practice.

Keywords: student-athletes, professional basketball, degree completion, academic performance, motivation, parental involvement

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge everyone that played a pivotal role in my academic success. To Dr. Masha Krsmanovic, you went above and beyond to provide any information needed to be successful in this program. I appreciate the constant meetings and edits to help provide great material for academic success. To my parents, thank you for pushing me to be the best I can be no matter what. You all set a high standard and I am ecstatic that I have met and exceeded your expectations. To my sisters, both of you have served as examples in every aspect of my life. You have been my motivators and encouragers. Without you, I would not have had the confidence needed to reach this extreme goal of becoming a Doctor of Higher Education Administration. To my friends and associates, thank you for your wavering support.

DEDICATION

This capstone project is dedicated to my grandparents, Dr. Rev. Tom Bailey Jr. and Candaise Bailey. Unfortunately, you are not physically here to witness this accomplishment, but I thank you for being with me spiritually every step of the way.

In addition, this capstone project is dedicated to my uncle, Dr. Larry LeFlore. From day one you have been an advocate for my successes in secondary school, undergraduate, graduate, and now doctorate. I look forward to becoming another Doctor in the LeFlore family.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
DEDICATION	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	vii
CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II - LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
CHAPTER III - METHODS.....	19
CHAPTER IV - FINDINGS.....	23
CHAPTER V - DISCUSSION.....	30
REFERENCES	36
APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FORM.....	42
APPENDIX B: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	43
APPENDIX C: IRB LETTER	45

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Parental Education and Athletic Participation28

LIST OF ACRONYMS

APR	Academic Progress Rate
APA	American Psychological Association
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
HBCU	Historically Black College & University
NBA	National Basketball Association
NJCAA	National Junior College Athletic Association
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Athletics was introduced to Higher Education in 1852, at Harvard and Yale University (Barr, 1999). Due to faculty concerns about the importance of education being overridden by athletics, they began to express their desire to become involved in the operation of the athletic department. As college athletics began to grow rapidly, in 1881, Princeton faculty gained control over the department by presenting the problems athletics had caused for academics and offered solutions to balance both. The following year, Harvard faculty also gained control of their athletic department (Barr, 1999). The faculty-lead athletic committee at Princeton, Harvard, and Yale, was formed to maintain the academic side, and professional coaches were hired to help guide the physical aspect of each sport provided (Barr, 1999).

Background

According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA] (2014) fact sheet, there are currently 460,000 student-athletes in the NCAA. Athletics seems to serve as one of the main funding sources for these institutions. Every year, most NCAA institutions accumulate billions of dollars through ticket and merchandise sales, TV contracts, and other revenue sources. It has been confirmed that the bulk of this money is generated from both football and basketball. Unfortunately, less than 7% of these funds have been invested in the athletes who participate in these sports. Consequently, most of the funds are used to fund other sports that have a decreasing revenue every year. In addition, much of this revenue is given to the institutions to help function and provide scholarships to students (Ordway, 2020). Due to the consistent revenue athletics brings into institutions, athletics has potentially served as a vital asset to the overall financial success of Division I institutions.

Although athletics serves as revenue, degree completion is of critical importance for the continuation of recruiting top athletes to help influence a fan base that will continue to support the programs. To retain these students and continue the overwhelming influx of revenue, the institution's Academic Progress Rate (APR) must be fulfilled annually (NCAA, 2014). Each sport is graded yearly on its APR. The Academic Progress Rate is calculated through a point system. Each student-athlete receiving athletic financial aid earns a point for staying in school and one point for being academically eligible (NCAA, 2014). Once each point is calculated, it is then divided by points possible and multiplied by 1,000 to equal the overall APR (NCAA, 2014). The 4-year APR is also considered for accountability. Each team must earn a 4-year APR of 930 to compete in championships (NCAA, 2014). This rule forces students to maintain a certain academic standard and graduation rate to play in the most important games of their lives. As a result of these standards, adhering to these rules will play a pivotal role in students determining degree completion versus professional athletics.

Problem Statement

Professional basketball players have short professional careers and will need basic life skills beyond their professional ball playing. Yet, a clear majority do not have college degrees, although many have been enrolled in college at some point prior to their basketball career. Many people wonder if professional athletes are maintaining a financial plan to sustain a productive lifestyle after their athletic careers. Moreover, financial plans appear to be more appropriate for college basketball players who were drafted and failed to secure a college degree.

At a young age, many males who are interested in basketball aspire to be professional athletes. Given professional rules and regulations, athletes can pursue their dream post high school graduation. The National Basketball Association (NBA) indicates that eligibility for the

draft requires that an amateur player of American origin be at least 19 years old on December 31st of the draft year and at least one NBA season must pass from when the prospect graduated from high school (McCann & Rosen, 2006). This requirement results in many athletes opting out of attending college. In contrast, many decide to play college basketball for the required year, then enter the NBA draft. Whether they are in college for one year or four years to satisfy *the age and year removed from high school rule*, it appears many athletes are more focused on becoming a professional athlete than obtaining a college degree. The professional basketball community reports an estimated 21% of players possess college degrees (Abrams, 2009), which leaves an overwhelming 79% of players without degrees.

The salary league-median for NBA players is \$12.67 million (Global Financial Literacy Excellence Center [GFLEC], 2020). The maximum amount of salary a player can receive is based on their years played in the NBA and the team salary cap (GFLEC, 2020). For a season that begins in October and ends in June, the salary cap in the NBA provides a significant amount of money to retain athletes for a specific number of years. As of 2018, the minimum pay for zero years of experience to ten plus years is between \$815,615 to \$2,328,652 (Sigler & Compton, 2018). Each year, the average salary increases due to players' athletic abilities increasing and becoming valuable to a team that is in search of being the number one team in the NBA league. Although it appears athletes live a lavish life, many financial hardships can prevent players from being successful in the future. Injuries and retirement are two of many reasons athletes can become a victim of financial distress and personal bankruptcy.

When departing the NBA, athletes are declaring bankruptcy as early as seven years after retirement (GFLEC, 2020). In addition, 6.1% of all NBA players will go bankrupt within 15 years of retirement (GFLEC, 2020). It is perceived that to combat the realities associated with a

short professional career and acquire other career skills after basketball, some athletes, such as Russell Westbrook, Chris Paul, and Kevin Durant, are all attending their previous institutions in the off-season to complete their degrees. Shaquille O’Neal also continued to attend Louisiana State University and the University of Phoenix through online learning to complete two bachelor’s degrees and an MBA, all while playing in the NBA (Sports and Study, 2017). This information has not been presented adequately to the public. Identifying former athletes' educational achievements should be highlighted to educate young athletes on how important it is to have an alternative option for their future. Being aware of athletes' positive future outcomes supports the idea that education is the key to lifelong success.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to describe the attitudes of male basketball athletes attending a Division I institution in the Southeast toward the completion of a four-year undergraduate degree. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to explore the role of students' academic performance, motivation, and parental involvement on students’ attitudes toward professional preparation versus pursuing their undergraduate degree. The data collected will potentially provide useful information regarding students’ preparation for future success after their professional basketball careers. Additionally, this study sought to provide insights into the prospects of students’ future career success when they attended college with hopes of a professional career but were not drafted and left college without a degree.

Research Questions

This research study was guided by the following research questions.

RQ1: How does academic performance influence male Division I basketball student-athletes attitude toward degree completion versus preparation for professional athletics?

RQ2: How do motivational factors influence male Division I basketball student-athletes attitude toward degree completion versus preparing for professional athletics?

RQ3: How does parental involvement influence male Division I basketball student-athletes attitude toward degree completion versus preparing for professional athletics?

Significance

Findings from this study intend to provide significant implications related to student-athlete academic performance, motivational factors, and parental involvement. In many cases, students ignore the importance of obtaining a degree due to their aspirations of becoming a professional athlete. Providing insights into the students' attitudes toward degree completion will help understand the value that student-athletes place on their educational attainment. The exploration of motivational factors will help investigate if and what driving forces encourage athletes to decide between continuing their education or deciding to play a sport professionally. Additionally, this study could potentially illustrate the role of parental involvement in student-athletes outlook on how to proceed with their future endeavors.

Regardless of the students' attitudes that emerge in this study, this research has the potential to directly impact young athletes that aspire to be a professional athlete and/or continue their success outside of athletics. First, student-athletes can benefit from these findings by taking heed to the experiences many other athletes have endured throughout their athletic careers. Second, academic support offices can use this research to help their institutions' athletic department understand the factors that guide students' persistence and help them explore potential areas of study that will best fit students current and future career needs. Third, colleges and universities can apply this knowledge as they explore why their turnover ratio is lower or higher than expected. Other institutions with a high enrollment of student-athletes can benefit

from the evidence presented in this project by applying the obtained information to not only athletes but the traditional student as well. This evidence can provide an in-depth indication of how important it is to know the backgrounds and intentions of the students entering their institutions.

In addition, this research is intended to be valuable to parents, student counseling programs, advisors, and those mentoring college athletes. Information gathered from this research may help assist current professional athletes with their choices and provide accurate mentorship to amateur players on securing the relevant resources needed to maintain a successful academic and personal trajectory.

Definition of Terms

Academic Performance: The measurement of student academic achievement in their academic or scholarship area (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020).

Degree Completion: For the purpose of this study, degree completion is perceived through the lenses of students' graduation rates or the percentage of first-time, first-year undergraduate student-athletes who complete their academic programs within 150% of the designated program time (Free Application for Federal Student Aid [FAFSA], n.d.).

Intercollegiate Sports: A sport played on the college level where there are eligibility requirements for participation that coincide with the rules and regulations for the National Association (Oregon Laws, 2007)

Financial Hardships: A difficult situation in which an individual cannot complete or provide payments for their accrued debt and bills. The debt and bills due are significantly more than the individuals' monthly amount earned, due to a lack of monetary funds that is beyond their control (East, 2019).

Motivational Factors: The primary reason someone decides to achieve their goals. These factors encourage an individual to achieve anything in life and encourage them to invest the efforts needed to be successful (Solak, 2012).

Parental Involvement: A merge between commitment and active participation from a parent, within the life of their child (Labahn, 1995).

Student-Athlete: “An individual who engages in, is eligible to engage in, or maybe eligible in the future to engage in, any intercollegiate sport”. (Legal Information Institute, 2020, para 9).

Assumptions and Delimitations

Assumptions are facts that have been experienced, seen, and understood to be true but not valuably supported or verified. The researcher’s assumptions conclude that male basketball student-athletes enter college with the idea they will become a part of a professional league team. With this idea, students fail to realize the probability of becoming a professional athlete is debatable. In addition, obtaining an undergraduate degree essentially becomes obsolete to their future endeavors, and individuals are eventually faced with many challenges after their college career. This assumption is made based on noticeable experiences of current and former athletes in the collegiate and professional realm.

Other assumptions include a person’s academic performance, motivational factors, and parental involvement. Academic performance plays a significant role in a student-athlete's decision on degree completion or professional athletics. Students' grades can suffer notably due to the time and effort commitment needed in athletics. As a result, students may be forced to rethink their academic career by moving forward with professional athletics. Many individuals have goals to make a family member, friend, or significant other proud of their successes.

Delimitations are decisions made by the researcher. These choices provide boundaries set for the study and can help the researcher complete the research successfully. The delimitations of this study consist of primarily using college basketball male student-athletes. Focusing the investigation on only male basketball undergraduate students allowed the researcher to gather vital information such as percentages of athletes that get drafted out of college early. This percentage is commonly higher than other sports. The study will take place at an NCAA Division I institution located in the Southeast region of the United States. Using a Division I institution is important because, from past knowledge, these students are often drafted within their four years of college.

Summary

This chapter explained the problems student-athletes encounter when deciding between completing a degree and playing professional athletics. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to explain the reasons why the need for obtaining a degree is becoming obsolete to young athletes that aspire to play sports on a professional level. Additionally, this research sought to identify male basketball student-athletes' attitudes and decisions through academic performance, motivational factors, and parental involvement. The definitions section outlined important terms and phrases that will be used throughout the research study. The delimitations, limitations, and assumptions section provided an in-depth account of the internal and external factors guiding the researcher's decision-making process. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive overview of the research that served as a foundation for conducting this study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

At a young age, males potentially become determined to be a part of a professional athletic team. Previous analysis indicates that in the 2017-18 academic year, nearly half a million students competed on more than 19,000 teams in the National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA] (Schwarb, 2018). As a result of the multiple students involved in athletics during the 2017-2018 year, the number of men's teams nationwide increased by 62 and made up 56% of the student-athlete population (Schwarb, 2018). The increase in men's teams was simultaneously compared to the 64 female teams, which also made up 44 % of the NCAA population (Schwarb, 2018). Due to NCAA rules and regulations, academic performance serves a significant role in maintaining student-athlete eligibility.

Moreover, motivational factors can positively influence athletes when making their degree completion or professional athletic decisions (Crawford, 2016). Furthermore, parental involvement is also vital to the athlete's success due to the importance of transportation, finances, and support (Coles et al., 2017). Academic performance, parental involvement, and motivational factors can provide the necessary benefits and unforeseen drawbacks when deciding between degree completion and professional athletics.

Academic Performance

Pursuing a degree and playing collegiate sports can be difficult for student-athletes who lack time management. Students must obtain the ability to understand the importance of academic performance and prepare for their future successes. While in such preparation, however, student-athletes are also obligated to adhere to their athletic duties. As illustrated by the synthesis of research presented in this chapter, family environmental obstacles, educational factors, ecological struggles, and mental illness are all general aspects of academic performance

issues within athletics. Furthermore, athletes who excel academically can provide institutions with federal funding incentives and generous donations from those who have moved forward successfully.

Family environmental obstacles can contribute to the future of many athletes' education or professional sports opportunity. Moon and Singh (2015) documented that select athletes find it hard to ignore the dismal realities of their day-to-day existence and enter school focused on academics. In addition to some athletes' environmental surroundings, a lack of financial and educational resources has made it challenging to excel in a positive direction academically (Moon & Singh, 2015). Compared to their peers from high-income families, students from low-income households have the same collegiate opportunities. Still, their financial inequities have hindered most from being academically successful. Within these households, Reynolds et al. (2012) found that 20% of 206 student-athlete parents' annual income was less than \$20,000, and 27% were \$50,000 and above. Of the 206 student-athletes, 52% came from one-parent families, and 48% came from two-parent families. The numbers provided explain that multiple family households lack the financial ability to send their children to schools that offer many educational resources. These numbers also illustrate that a portion of students must depend on one parent to help them through the challenges faced throughout their lives while providing for their families. This can be hard on one individual and explains why some students cannot excel academically.

Various academic factors have been simultaneously identified as barriers and support of student success. Students have expressed how low expectations and stereotypes formed by faculty have served as a significant barrier to academic performance, specifically for athletes (Hall, 2017). Previous studies revealed that when students are identified as athletes, professors naturally assumed negative characteristics before getting to know them (Hall, 2017). The

perceived notion of most athletes by college professors is lazy and incompetent. Within this research, a student-athlete expressed they were often ignored during instruction compared to those not involved in athletics. In the classroom atmosphere, professors felt athletes were not in attendance to learn but instead received a free grade (Hall, 2017). With this mentality, athletes have a more difficult time excelling in the classroom than traditional students. The stereotypes posed on athletes potentially bestow additional struggles within their environment and ability to succeed academically (Hall, 2017).

The academic environmental climate may contribute to athletes' struggles when coping with their new surroundings and to meeting new expectations that come with enrolling at a university (Musser et al., 2017). New teammates, new peers, new teachers, and new learning ways can be overwhelming and detrimental to students' academic performance. In athletics, a new environment means a new form of acceptance. Past research indicates that most male students believe males were rewarded for being outgoing and dominant in their demeanor (Musser et al., 2017). With the mindset of being accepted by their peers, it was also difficult for males to set priorities, balance demands, or focus on goals. After leaving an educational environment that is well organized and provides multiple educational incentives and resources, student-athletes can become dependent on that academic lifestyle. The college transition to operating independently and maintaining getting to class, resisting distractions, and handling pressure has been considered the most significant challenge when balancing the college experience (Musser et al., 2017).

Environmental struggles can trigger mental health illnesses and potentially provide athletes with alternatives to negatively handle their problems. The extreme psychological and physical request placed on student-athletes is common within their sporting career. As a result,

the strain provides specific mental health problems and risk-taking behaviors (Rice et al., 2016). A study suggests that 50% of athletes were found to have suffered from the emergence or intensification of mental health issues. With the potential social anxiety, alcoholism, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders mental illness can produce, an athlete's academic performance has suffered tremendously (Musser et al., 2017). Understanding this knowledge can provide institutions with the necessary information to enroll and graduate students successfully.

Students that entered and graduated from college during the President Obama era helped institutions receive \$7 million over ten years to create the College Opportunity and Graduation Bonus program (Burd, 2015). To receive and allocate these funds, the institution must enroll and graduate low-income and moderate-income students on time (Burd, 2015). In addition to these federal funds, graduating athletes would be a substantial asset due to 86% of scholarship athletes being pulled from low-income homes (DeWitt, 2019). Literature further reports that athletes wanted their alma mater and athletic department to be more successful than when they were students (Tesar, 2019). Due to this desire, monetary giving became consistent. In exchange, alumni were given tickets or other athletic benefits. Those alumni who were on scholarship felt as if they were in debt to the school because of the opportunity given to receive education from the institution.

Overall, household environmental obstacles, academic factors, ecological struggles, and mental health issues play an essential role in athletes' academic performance. Environmental barriers have administered a strain on athletes academically. Student-athletes depend on others to help them with the many aspects of their lives outside of athletics. Without remarkable resources, such as financial stability, it can be challenging to sustain or improve their academic performance. Academic factors such as stereotypes by professors have knowingly prevented

athletes from prevailing academically. Environmental struggles regarding new atmospheres and high expectations from peers have created a notable athletic performance role. Mental illness includes many factors that impede an athlete's academic success. These educational performance aspects have effortlessly propelled student-athletes into the salient decision of choosing professional athletics over pursuing a degree. Furthermore, graduating student-athletes serve as a stimulus toward financing institutions through grants and alumni donations.

Motivational Factors

Comparable to the research on students' academic performance, motivational factors were also found to be crucial to the final decision between degree completion and professional athletics. Contemporary studies document that family and financial distress served as motivational factors contributing to degree completion or professional athletics (Crawford, 2016). In addition, research participants characterized participation in college sports as a personal investment. Within the individual asset, athletes expected a return from opportunity cost and risk (Horner et al., 2016)

Past research reported that when asking athletes about their athletic success motivations, 70% credited their family (Crawford, 2016). Other scholars, such as Bailey and Fuller (2019) investigated what motivates athletes to decide between degree completion and professional athletics by asking participants to bring in an artifact representing their motivation. Three of the participants brought pictures of a deceased relative. Deceased relatives encourage a motivational aspect that inspires athletes to succeed in everything they want to accomplish. Tributes to family members who instilled the idea of college in them as a child served as motivation to make the family member proud by continuing education (Crawford, 2016). Ideally, the family is an important aspect that influences athletes to triumph in their collegiate careers.

Financial distress has become an essential topic within college athletics. College programs make millions in profit through athletics. Unfortunately, college athletes do not receive any compensation from the programs they help (Gardella, 2019). Although student-athletes do not receive compensation for their athletic abilities, one may believe that receiving a scholarship to the university instead of families being responsible for their education is more than enough to compensate for the athletic duties required. There can, at times be, a financial strain for the lack of funds obtained on the collegiate level and potentially at home. Financial stress can motivate athletes to push themselves harder in hopes of entering the draft instead of completing their degree (Gardella, 2019). Though many male athletes have this financial dilemma, not all of them get the opportunity to be drafted into the professional league. As an illustration, in 2019 there were 60 spots available in the NBA draft (NCAA, 2020). In 2019, 52 of those spots were NCAA players, seven were international players, and one was from a preparatory school. Though there are thousands of athletes in the NCAA, of the 4,181 Division I NCAA student-athletes, only 1.2% of these individuals went to the NBA. Also, 41 of the 52 players drafted were from power five institutions, which are colleges within five conferences that are considered more competitive than others (NCAA, 2020). Overall, there were 21% professional athletic opportunities available to college athletes for the 2018-2019 athletic year, including the international professional league play (NCAA, 2020).

While very few students continue their careers in a professional league, many students use college athletics as a suitable investment. Word of mouth from family, coaches, and administration, while hearing that college can be free or at a reduced cost, has encouraged many to choose to play the sport they enjoy (Horner et al., 2016). Studies have shown that many athletes expect a return on their investment. Their research explains many athletes' thought

processes before agreeing to play collegiate sports. Most participants vocalized a combination of socio-economic need and competitive desire to invest in the college athlete experience. Some students utilized college athletics as a tool for securing college scholarships and reported coming from a single-parent home. Attaining a scholarship would help these students stay out of debt and refrain from seeing their parents experiencing financial struggles (Horner et al., 2016).

Motivation through Academic Support

Potential motivational factors can also be delivered through the institution's academic support staff. Educational support professionals provide a valuable motivational role to student-athletes. The academic requirements needed to continue to participate in college athletics throughout the four years allotted to each student-athlete are essential to individual future endeavors. Norfolk State University's learning specialist, Ivana Rich, identified "4 M's of motivation" to help guide student-athletes through their academic careers. Mission, Move, Momentum and Mindset are four stages that require collaboration between the educational support professionals and student-athletes to help monitor academic progress (Rich, 2021). Consequently, the 4 M's of motivation are envisioned to help student-athletes successfully navigate their rigorous academic schedules and athletic obligations.

Still, many institutions lack academic support incentives, potentially forcing some athletes to choose professional athletics over degree completion. Throughout the Mission stage of the "4 M's", it is perceived that the mission stage could help the student-athlete develop and set goals to support their mission. Students would communicate their values, aspirations, actions, and goals (Rich, 2021). As a result, the first M or Motivation would help athletes identify their purpose and future desires.

Family, financial distress, academic support staff, and investments all serve as motivational factors for student-athletes throughout their academic and athletic careers. Although self-motivation is potentially expected, the family gives athletes additional support to encourage them to want to be successful, whether academically or athletically, to support themselves and others. Financial distress can motivate athletes to provide for their future financially. As institutions continue to profit from athletes' abilities, students continue to lack funds to take care of themselves throughout their time as part of the athletic department. The academic support staff at these institutions can provide the academic direction needed to help students succeed while completing their degree. Likewise, investing in college athletics has been used to fund students' education or provide athletes with the motivation needed to succeed.

Parental Involvement

Financially, parental involvement starts during youth sports. Mantle's (2020) survey showed that 40% of parents would be willing to go into credit-card debt, delay retirement, and cut back on spending to help finance their children's athletic careers. As a result of these decisions, parents potentially spend thousands of dollars on their children's athletics, hoping that their children will receive an athletic scholarship (Mantle, 2020). Earlier research documents that families have invested 1.22% of their gross income in their child's sports participation. This number has increased to 1.84% when factoring in all children participating in sports in the household (Dunn et al., 2016). Overall, 22.7% of families invested between 2% of their yearly gross income, 14.7% of families spent between 2% and 5%, and 3.2 % of families invested 5% or more (Dunn et al., 2016).

Parental involvement has the capability of serving as a vital aspect of student-athlete success, somewhat academically or athletically. Parents' participation can be described as time,

energy, and money. Parents invest in their child's youth participation and collegiate career (Coles, 2017). Many parents are not afraid to extensively motivate their children regarding athletics and emphasize the connection between hard work and athletic achievement (Perry, 2017). Parent involvement is necessary but a potentially problematic aspect of college athlete transition due to the time spent and vocal encouragement (Dorsch et al., 2014). In 2014, the National College Athletic Association produced independent research on coaches and administrators at two Division I institutions. The report included interviews of 30 individuals focusing on the important information regarding parental involvement. The results indicated that although parental involvement was considered essential, most participants were concerned that negative physical and verbal parental involvement has become more prevalent in collegiate athletics (Dorsch et al., 2014).

Over-involved parents are parents who provide too much support and, in return, inhibit student-athletes' growth. It is commonly known that over-involved parents are present in youth sports at all levels. The problems this phenomenon may cause can be far-reaching and long-lasting when relating to the four common themes of over-involved parental behavior (Bach, 2019). The four classic pillars of over-involved parents have been defined as coaching from the sidelines, producing an emotional overload, seeing a child's experience as their own, and not having meaningful conversations to determine genuine commitment to athletics (Bach, 2019). The negative impact of over-involved parents was vividly illustrated by a research participant sharing, "Him [parent] constantly telling me to practice made me not want to practice. Any suggestion he made; I would become defensive" (Bach, 2019, para. 9). Some studies, on the other hand, have focused on coaches who observed the athletes when parental support became suffocating. Once the athlete realized how overbearing the support was, it became noticeably

undesirable due to the coaches' lack of respect (Dorsch, 2014). Parents need to understand that their involvement is critical in helping their children develop coping strategies to deal with the competition and losing (True Sport, 2019).

Undoubtedly, parents who are over-involved in their child's athletics tend to serve as a distraction and can hinder students' future decisions to continue playing a sport. In contrast, parents involved financially are vital to the future of student-athlete developmental skills and knowledge of their desired sport. Generally, over-involved parents and a parent's financial state in athletics encourage students to likely move forward with professional athletics or possibly complete their degree.

Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to elaborate on the experiences of student-athletes pursuing an undergraduate degree. Additionally, this chapter sought to understand the different aspects of students' experiences as influenced by academic performance, motivational factors, and parental involvement. This knowledge is important because many athletes desire to accomplish the same athletic goals while in college but are not prepared for an alternative route after graduating. From the presented research, it is clear that student-athletes have many factors contributing to their future endeavors, whether athletic or academic. Therefore, to truly understand how these individuals steer through their decision-making while in college, it is critical to obtain an accurate account of their academic progress, motivations, and parent participation.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This chapter provides the details of the methodology for the conducted study. The three research questions guided the design of this study. To grasp the concept of how students' academic progress affects their future, research question one asked how academic performance influences male Division I basketball student-athletes' attitudes toward degree completion compared to the preparation for professional athletics. Research question two asked how motivational factors influence male Division I basketball student-athletes' attitude toward degree completion compared to the preparation for professional athletics. Lastly, research question three asked how parental involvement influences male Division I basketball student-athletes toward degree completion in contrast to preparation for professional athletics.

Research Design

This research was designed as a qualitative study with a phenomenological approach implemented through semi-structured individual interviews with participants. Qualitative research is most commonly implemented with the goal of understanding people and their social-cultural contexts (Palmer & Bolderston, 2006). In this study, qualitative research has helped explain the thoughts and feelings of student-athletes regarding their future in sports or academics. The phenomenological approach explains the realities in an individual's life experiences (Gill, 2020). This qualitative method was particularly helpful in answering the research questions of this study because it allowed the participants to deeply explore their personal opinions and experiences. This knowledge, in turn, helped the researcher to collect the data needed to determine student-athletes' attitudes toward their future endeavors.

The themes explored in this study included student-athlete academic performance, motivational factors, and parental involvement. To gather information on these constructs,

individual, semi-structured interviews were performed with questions created by the researcher. Each question was tailored in line with the study objectives and revealed important insights into the experiences of each participant.

Setting, Population, and Participants

This study took place at a Division I NCAA Institution located in the Southeast region of the United States. The four-year public university is a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and a medium-sized institution with student enrollment between 5,000 and 10,000 students. According to the institutional data, this total includes more than 5,000 undergraduate students, nearly 2,000 graduate students, and approximately 300 active student-athletes. Within the nearly 8,000-total enrollment, 33% are males, and 67% are females. The institution is one of the highly ranked six HBCUs in the South. In addition, 82% are Black or African American, 10% are White, and the remaining 8% are Asian or non-resident Alien.

Participation in this study was open to all male basketball student-athletes and the recruitment document is included in Appendix A. All participants were undergraduate students and 18 years old or older. The researcher aimed to interview up to 20 individuals through Zoom. Face-to-face interviews were preferred but, due to the ongoing effects of the pandemic, virtual interviews were the safest option for each participant and the researcher. Conversations with these participants helped the researcher understand the initial thought process of basketball student-athletes upon entering their collegiate academic and athletic careers.

Instrument

The interview guide (Appendix B) consisted of 24 open-ended questions and occasional follow-up questions designed to help explore the phenomenon in relation to the three main themes. To answer research question one, nine interview questions pertained to student-athlete

academic performances in relation to their past, present, and future goals. To gain insights into research question two, five open-ended questions were used to provide an account of students' motivational influences. Finally, research question three was answered through ten interview questions that helped understand the impact parental involvement may have on student-athletes' decisions for their future. Personal interviews were used to help obtain an accurate, in-depth response from the student-athletes on their experiences.

Data Collection

Upon obtaining the approval of the Institutional Review Board (Appendix C), the data collection was implemented in several stages. First, the researcher contacted the Athletic Director and Head Basketball Coach of the institution via email. Next, the coach invited each athlete to participate in the study by sharing the researcher's invitation for the interview. Athletes were not obligated to participate in the study and their participation was voluntary. The student-athletes that chose to participate in the interview contacted the researcher via email to share their interest. All, interviews were conducted through Zoom and lasted no longer than an hour. Finally, each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data collected for this study, the researcher used thematic coding. While the analytic function of a theme varies, for the purpose of this data analysis, a theme was defined as an extended-phrase or a sentence that identifies what data means (Saldana, 2012). Thus, the main purpose of thematic coding was to successfully categorize and organize the data obtained from participants. The first step in the analysis was to transcribe each interview with a voice recorder connected to Microsoft Word. Due to the transcription not being fully interpreted word for word, the researcher listened to each interview to carefully correct anything inaccurate. In

many cases, the wording was slightly misinterpreted. Once all interviews were transcribed, the researcher highlighted each response that was identified as similar to the other participants' responses. Each highlighted response was then placed with its respective theme in a single document of categorized responses. During the process of thematic coding, the researcher gained the opportunity to know and understand the attitudes that participants have towards completing a degree versus professional athletics.

Summary

This chapter reintroduced the research questions, presented the research design of this study, and explained why the chosen methodology was the most suitable for investigating these questions. Moreover, background information in this section introduced the institution and participants in this study. Finally, this chapter described the data collection and data analysis procedures. The following chapter highlights the results of this research.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter presents findings from interviews with student-athletes who volunteered to share their academic and athletic experiences as well as future aspirations. The interview participants represented a Division I Historically Black College and University (HBCU) affiliated with the Men's Basketball team. The sample consisted of 10 student-athletes. Each athlete identified as African American male. In addition, each student-athlete was in the undergraduate stage of their academic and athletic ventures. Four participants were classified as seniors, two were juniors, and four were sophomores. Interview participants represented seven different majors: Social Science, Criminal Justice, Physical Education, Therapeutic Recreation, Business Administration, Computer Science, and Disciplinary Studies. The age range amongst the group of participants was between 18 and 22.

The findings of this study revealed the following themes in connection to student-athletes' perspectives on degree completion versus preparation for professional athletics: (1) Academics First and Degree Importance, (2) College Preparation, (3) Personal Motivations and Future Stability, (4) Parental Education and Athletic Parents, and (5) Professional Sports. Even though participants' experiences were characterized by multifold and complex themes, the five overarching themes presented in the following sections were most instrumental for understanding their student-athlete experience.

Academics First and Degree Importance

Before explaining their perception of professional athletics, each athlete described their viewpoints on academics and the importance of retaining a degree. Overall, each student-athlete believed academics was essential to their future success of obtaining a degree. As Participant 2 explained:

I was really dedicated to learning. I'm really about academics anyway, 'cause basketball is really just my second option. I love academics. And where I want to go in life, basketball is just getting me there. It's paying my degree and stuff. I don't have to pay for college and won't be in debt when I get out of college. Receiving this degree will be really important because I'm trying to start a business, and the only way I can start the business is if I get my degree. It's really important that I graduate.

For many of the participants, having an academics-first mentality was key to getting into college. Throughout many of the interviews, persisting with academic tasks and staying in school was portrayed to be vital to completing a degree. Although each has had dreams of playing basketball professionally, all participants understand that there is a life after sports and completing a degree is vital to their future goals.

Despite the overwhelming participants' preference toward degree completion versus professional athletic careers, their perceptions in this regard were not unanimous. Of the 10 students, Participant 7 explained his contrasting thoughts on the theme of academics being first. He felt as though academics was not necessary, which made him do enough to get by in college so that he can play sports.

I wasn't really dedicated to academics, you know, I'm not gonna lie, I was more focused on basketball, you know, just because it was my passion. I was usually the one that struggled academically, just because I would skip class and go to the gym and things of that nature. But I know when it came down to it, I had to get the GPA or degree requirement to be eligible to play during the season. So, I mean, my focus is more on basketball because that was just my passion. That was my escape.

Overall, students agreed that being dedicated to their academics played a considerable role in attending college. Due to the test scores and grades being a prerequisite for playing on the college level, it is noticeably important for these students to excel academically to help fulfill their future goals of playing professional sports. Also, each shared that obtaining a degree, in itself, is very important. There was unanimous understanding that maintaining a degree would be instrumental for securing a job in the future if athletics does not present the expected opportunities.

College Preparation

The second theme that emerged as significant in participants' experiences is student-athletes' college preparation. Many may argue that student-athletes are not prepared to excel on the college level academically, which forces the assumption that college basketball athletes' main responsibility is to train and prepare for professional athletics. However, of the 10 participants, nine explained that their former high schools prepared them in several ways to be successful in college.

As Participant 2 shared, "We did have dual credit classes, so we were actually able to go to a college campus and take classes, uh, if you were eligible for it. We had multiple college fairs. And they also always brought in a college representative every week." On this note, Participant 9 added, "It prepared us a lot mentally to focus. We were provided with study skills and identifying priorities."

Taken together, these narratives provide important insights into the significant role of high school preparation in college success. Whether being focused on the development of personal, academics, or social skills, proactiveness within secondary education is crucial to the

pre-college experience. These critical experiences helped the student-athletes identify their future priorities effectively and become mentally prepared for the rigor of college.

Personal Motivations and Future Stability

The importance of personal motivations and future stability emerged as a significant factor in student-athlete decision-making processes. Participant 6 used athletics to get to and through school. His statement warranted his success in playing sports and plans to continue his accomplishments professionally to be financially stable: "I probably would not have gone to college if it was not for basketball. In the future, I want to be playing ball somewhere professionally. I want to be somewhere financially stable."

Overall, most participants explained that they had personal and professional plans outside of athletics. Although they desired to be a professional athlete at some point in their life, other plans have been established as a backup plan. As Participant 2 stated, "I just know where I want to be in life. I know I want to be a successful business owner, and I know the only way I can do that is if I get my four-year degree in business." Similarly, Participant 9 revealed, "I plan to be in the NBA, but I already have my hands tied up in a homeless shelter; I also have the skill of investing in cryptocurrencies and other things." Participant 10 also added, "I want to be at a Division I institution coaching for a basketball program."

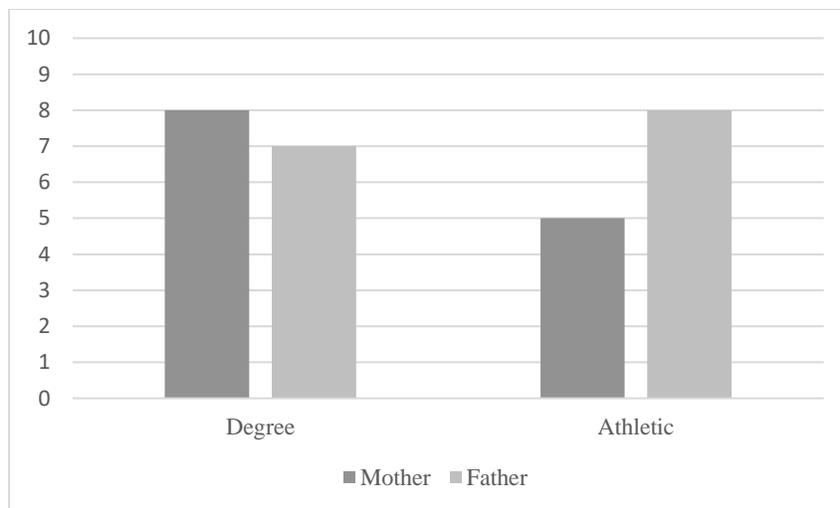
Overall, these findings indicate that not all Division I athletes focus on becoming professional athletes. Many of these athletes know and understand that there must be a backup plan to their future successes. Being financially stable and having positive personal motivations is notable and encouraging.

Parental Education and Athletic Parents

Parental education and athletic abilities can motivate student-athletes to pursue specific educational and athletic career paths. Figure 1 illustrates the number of participants' parents or guardians who have completed a degree and participated in athletics while in college. The purpose of this graph is to understand how and why the mindsets of student-athletes in this study are similar. Many of the athletes have one or more parent that has played sports in college and completed a degree in the process. Upon interviews, it has been established that each student-athlete had professional athlete dreams. Due to their parent's path of succeeding athletically and academically, most participants adopted their parent's mentality to aspire to be successful in sports and complete their college degree.

Figure 1

Parental Education and Athletic Participation



A comparison of the two bar graphs reveals that most participants lived in households that took pride in both their athletic abilities and education. As illustrated, 80% of those interviewed indicated their mother has a college degree, and 50% that their mother was a college

athlete. In addition, of the 10 participants who completed the interview, 70% reported that their fathers completed a college degree, and 80% that their fathers were college athletes.

Professional Sports

The final question asked of students was if their ultimate goal was to become a professional athlete. The assumption that Division I athletes attend college solely to play sports and get to a professional league was proven inaccurate when completing the interview process. In this regard, nine out of 10 participants had similar answers. As Participant 1 stated: “Uh, I used to, but now it's, uh... if the opportunity presents itself, I'll take it, but it's not, it's not the number one option; it's more of a backup plan to my education.” In comparison, Participant 2 shared:

“I'm gonna say I got a desire to play professional sport, but if it don't work out, I ain't one of them players that had hoop dreams. At the end of the day, I got a plan B. I'll have my degree if it doesn't work out. I'd love to be in the pros, but chances to make the pros is so slim. I got my degree; I'll be fine.”

As Participant 7 concluded: “Yes, I want to play professional sports but, if not, I'll be a college coach.”

While most participants argued that professional sports are not a priority, one student had contrasting thoughts. Participant 9 is determined to make it to professional athletics. Even though he shared having other interests as well, there is no specific plan for his future other than athletics: “The plan is to use my gift to get to the highest level, nothing else. There's no other plan. If I don't do that, then I think I'll be successful at anything I want to do.”

Summary

The participants' narratives portrayed in this chapter show that many Division I male athletes have dreams of becoming professional athletes. Although this dream is common, there is also an understanding that if they are not considered to fulfill this dream, alternative goals must be set for their future. In that regard, the athletes who volunteered to share their experiences for this research study collectively agreed that a college degree is required within these goals and will be received upon completing their tenure as a college athlete.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

After reviewing the data collected, this research revealed that each theme has had a significant impact on the decisions participants made in choosing between professional athletics and completing a degree. As mentioned in Chapter Two of this study, there are currently 460,000 student-athletes at US colleges and universities and many of these are males that aspire to be professional athletes (NCAA, 2014). However, very few understand that professional players have short careers and without an alternative plan for the future, their successes can be limited. This study set out with the aim of assessing students' perceptions regarding this phenomenon and discovered that these perceptions are characterized by the themes of degree importance, college preparation, personal motivations and future stability, and parental education or athletic parents.

This study seemingly contradicts the evidence from previous observations (e.g., Moon & Singh, 2015) who indicated that athletes may find difficulty in focusing on academics and have a problem with adjusting to their environment due to the lack of educational resources at their former or current institutions. Contrary to this evidence, the findings of this study indicated that many of the participants were prepared for academics on the college level through a plethora of external resources. For instance, school counselors extended the students' experiences by creating college tour trips. These trips included visits to different colleges and universities. In addition, opportunities were created for students to take dual enrollment courses at neighboring junior colleges. Providing this aspect of preparedness to the athletes and others helped them navigate through their new college environments effectively.

In accordance with the present results, previous studies demonstrated that when athletes are asked about their motivations to be successful in academics and athletics, they many have credited their family (Crawford, 2016). This evidence strongly aligns with the findings from this

study. More than half of the participants' parents, whether mother or father, have graduated from college with a bachelor's degree or higher. Additionally, many of their parents participated in a sport while in grade school or college. With the notion that parents are considered potential role models, the participants' parents played a role in the way each person perceived obtaining a degree or deciding to play in a professional league. It has been suggested through prior research that parental involvement was potentially problematic due to their vocal engagement and consistent visibility when in practice or competition (Dorsch et al., 2014). In contrast, this does not appear to be the case when gathering and elaborating on the findings of this study.

Contrary to expectations presented in the contemporary literature, there were unanticipated findings regarding the participants' ultimate thought process pertaining to professional athletics. As presented in Honer et al.'s (2016) research, many athletes characterized participation in college sports as a personal investment. In this study, however, each participant expected something out of playing sports, but surprisingly professional athletics was not a need base outcome. All but one participant had intentions of pursuing a career outside of college sports. The majority had primary intentions of completing their degree and establishing a career for future stability.

Implications

As a result of this study, the researcher found that the initial thoughts of Division I male basketball student-athletes are that athletes attend school to play sports as an avenue to a professional league. In addition, the need to obtain a degree is inconsistent with their future goals. Once the research was conducted, much of the findings contradicted what many may think about college athletics.

Subsequently, the results of this study provide insight and direction to many stakeholders some of which are discussed in this section. These include student-athlete parents or guardians, college athletes, coaches, college sport administrators, and professors. When interviewing participants, they referenced multiple aspects of being a student-athlete much of which the traditional student may not experience or understand before reviewing this research.

Participants reported that having an academic first mindset early in their academic careers was vital to how they engaged in pursuing a degree. In contrast, having role models in their household who have excelled academically was important to their decision. Many parents may not realize how important it is to serve as an academic example for their children. This research can help parents understand the importance of how they lead their households regarding this research subject.

Several participants also referenced the importance of being prepared by their secondary educational institutions to attend college. The fact that multiple resources were provided to majority of the participants seemingly made a positive difference when making their educational decisions for the future. Whether an administrator, teacher, or professor, each play a significant role in guiding student-athletes throughout their college career. These individuals also serve as positive role models away from home. Therefore, this research can be used by all these stakeholders to help them lead student-athletes effectively.

Coaches and student-athletes can relate to many aspects of this research as well. To a coach, these findings can help understand how some athletes feel about their future. Due to their initial commitment made to participate in collegiate athletics, it is understood a student-athlete is potentially invested in playing sports. After reviewing this research, coaches will understand that the student in student-athlete is just as valuable as their commitment to athletics. Student-athletes

will also find significant use in this research because it will help them understand there is more to athletics than competing in games. These findings will inform student-athletes that it is important to excel in academics. Ultimately, this knowledge will help provide insight into the many resources that can potentially help with their student's current and future endeavors.

Limitations

Limitations are factors within a research design that the researcher cannot control. These factors can limit the generalizability and applicability of the research results and conclusions. A limitation of this study is using a low major Division I institution whose student-athletes have limited opportunity to reach the NBA but direct opportunity to play overseas. When participating as a low major institution, consequently, the institution does not have the same promotional or media exposure opportunities for student-athletes to be viewed or considered as a potential NBA prospect.

Next, due to the ongoing pandemic, the researcher was limited to interviewing the participants on Zoom. The interview process could have been more effective if there was an in-person conversation. This approach would have given the participant a more comfortable environment to speak instead of speaking in front of a camera.

The institution used in this study was also limited to undergraduate student-athletes participating in their sport. Due to many governing bodies such as the NCAA, National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), and National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) canceling their sport seasons because of the pandemic, all athletes currently playing basketball and other qualifying sports were given a year of playing eligibility. The given eligibility year was used to compensate for the competition lost during the rise in Covid-19 infection numbers. Many of the athletes from this research institution remained at the

university to claim their extra year of competition. This in return hindered the undergraduate quantity of players that could be interviewed.

Recommendations

Future research should involve power five institutions due to their exposure to media and professional league officials more often than other institutions. This approach would help identify more experiences and opinions on the students' decision between obtaining a degree and professional sports. Using other institutional sports would also be effective for this research topic. It is known that Football players could go to the National Football League (NFL) after three years of college play and baseball players can enter Major League Baseball (MLB) or Minor League Baseball at any point of their college career. Researching other sports would provide valuable insights into students' decisions and the value athletes have in retaining a degree.

In addition, to help maximize research findings on more than just the male gender, employing female athletes as research participants is highly recommended for future studies. There are plethora of professional sports for female athletes but none of these sports have a noticeable opportunity to leave college early. Of the many sports, gymnastics is a great example to research in the future due to the Olympics noticeably having younger participants. Using this qualitative research will help readers understand the true attitudes and feelings student-athletes have toward their preferences of academics and professional sports.

The main goal of this study was to determine whether male Division I basketball student-athletes preferred to continue education and obtain a degree or move forward with professional athletics. This novel evidence should help improve predictions of how the impact of student academic performance, motivation, and parental involvement affects an individual's decision-

making. It is recommended that further research be conducted to determine additional attitudes toward degree completion versus professional athletics.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Email

Dear Student-Athlete,

I am conducting a study that is to describe the attitudes of male basketball athletes attending Division I institutions toward the completion of a four-year undergraduate degree vs preparing for professional athletics. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of students' academic performance, motivation, and parental involvement on students' attitudes toward professional preparation versus pursuing their undergraduate degree. I would like to ask you to consider participating in my study because I value your opinion and experience as a college athlete. This study has been approved by the USM's Institutional Review Board (protocol number IRB-21-39).

This research has the potential to directly impact young athletes that aspire to be a professional athlete and/or continue their success outside of athletics. In addition, this research is intended to be valuable to parents, student counseling programs, advisors, and those mentoring college athletes. Participation in this study involves no more than minimal risk.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in one Zoom interview. The interview will last no longer than an hour, while gathering information through audio recording. I will be the only person who will have access to this recording. If you do not want to be audio-recorded, you cannot participate in the interview. When transcribing the recording, I will remove any personal information you or other participants may share. The data collected will be securely kept for five (5) years after completion of the study, in case of any unanticipated issues or complaints, after which they will be permanently destroyed. Participation in this study is voluntary. Please feel free to decline participation or discontinue participation in this study at any time.

You will receive a \$25 Nike Gift Card for your participation in this study. I would also be happy to share my results with you once the study is completed.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns by email at Erika.LeFlore@usm.edu.

Thank you in advance for your consideration for this request.
Sincerely,
Erika LeFlore, MSA

APPENDIX B

Research Instrument (Interview Questions)

The below interview questions were developed to gain insights into the main research questions.

RQ1: How does academic performance influence male Division 1 basketball student-athletes attitude toward degree completion versus preparation for professional athletics?

RQ2: How do motivational factors influence male Division 1 basketball student-athletes attitude toward degree completion versus preparing for professional athletics?

RQ3: How does parental involvement influence male Division 1 basketball student-athletes attitude toward degree completion versus preparing for professional athletics?

RQ1:

1. How dedicated were you to learning during your secondary education?
 - What goals did you set to help you succeed during your secondary school?
2. Did you have other priorities over school? If so, who assisted you most and in what ways?
3. Did you go to private school or public school?
 - How would you describe your academic experience in this school?
 - To what extent do you feel that this school supported you to excel as a student?
 - What type of college preparation did this school provide to you and how?
4. How would you describe your academic experience and progress in college so far?
 - How satisfied are you with your academic experience and progress in college so far?
 - How is your college experience different from your expectations?
5. How are you being assessed to excel in school?
 - Are you receiving financial help, mental help, physical help? If yes, how have you progressed since entering college?
6. How satisfied are you with your college GPA?
 - How are you planning to maintain or improve it?
 - Are you are currently taking any progressive steps to improvement?
 - What has helped and what has not helped in this process?
7. Is receiving a degree important to you? Why or why not?
 - Are you on track to graduate in the traditional four-year span? If not, how do you plan to get on track or when do you plan to graduate?
8. What is your major?
 - Do you plan to receive a degree before leaving college?
 - How does your academic plan parallel with your dream job?
9. What are your occupational goals?
 - How are you planning to accomplish these goals?
 - To what extent are you relying on your college degree to complete these goals?

RQ2:

1. As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
 - How were these aspirations formed and who guided these aspirations?
 - Have these aspirations changed? Why or why not?
2. When did you start playing sports?
 - Why did you start playing sports?
 - What motivates you to continue to play sports?
3. What motivates you to do well in school?
 - Why did you decide to go to college?
 - What motivates you to persist in college?
 - What motivates you to do well in your classes?
4. If you do not go to a professional league, what are your plans after sports?
 - How do you plan to accomplish these plans?
 - What motivates you to have a successful athletic future?
 - What motivates you to have successful future outside athletics?
5. Where do you want to be 7 years from now?
 - How are you planning to accomplish that?

RQ3:

1. Do you live in a two-parent home?
 - If not, how would you describe your home?
2. How would you describe your parent(s) financial class? Poor, lower middle class, middle class, higher middle class, rich.
3. Were your parent(s)/guardian(s) involved in your academics?
 - What level of education did your parent(s) /guardian(s) obtain?
4. Were your parent(s)/guardian(s) involved in athletics?
 - What sport did they play?
 - What skills and techniques did you receive from them?
5. Were you forced to be successful in academics? Why or why not?
6. Were you forced to be successful in athletics? Why or why not?
7. In what ways did your parent(s)/ guardian(s) help fund your athletic desires?
 - What types of things did they pay for?
 - About how much you believe was spent on you playing sports?
 - If your parents did not help fund athletics, why do you believe they could not help?
8. What are some things you wish you could change about your childhood?
9. Do you wish that your parents supported you more in your decisions to be an athlete? Why?
10. Do you wish that your parents supported you more in your decision to go to college? Why?

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval Letter

Friday, September 3, 2021 at 15:32:23 Central Daylight Time

Subject: IRB-21-39 - Initial: Sacco Committee Letter - Expedited and Full
Date: Friday, April 16, 2021 at 3:19:24 PM Central Daylight Time
From: do-not-reply@cayuse.com
To: Masha Krsmanovic, Erika LeFlore
Attachments: ATT00001.png, ATT00002.png

Office of
Research Integrity



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NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.
- Face-to-Face data collection may not commence without prior approval from the Vice President for Research's Office.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-21-39

PROJECT TITLE: College Athletes: Degree Completion vs Preparation for Professional Athletics

SCHOOL/PROGRAM: Educational Research and Admin

RESEARCHER(S): Erika LeFlore, Masha Krsmanovic

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved

CATEGORY: Expedited

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: April 16, 2021

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donald Sacco".

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson