

Academics or athletics? Motivation levels of Division II student-athletes

Jeongwon Choi, Georgian Court University

Jong-Chae Kim, Fairleigh Dickinson University

Hongyoung Kim, University of New Mexico

Abstract

“NCAA Division II and its member institutions hold a unique position in the dynamics of college athletics. With over 300 colleges and universities in NCAA Division II, their mission is to provide student-athletes “the opportunity to compete at a high level of scholarship athletics while excelling in the classroom and fully engaging in the broader campus experience (NCAA, 2020).” To achieve this division-wide mission, student-athletes participating in NCAA Division II sport programs dedicate approximately 38.5 hours per week to academics and 32 hours to athletics, on average (NCAA, 2016). While student-athletes put in multiple hours and effort juggling academics and athletics every week, NCAA Division II member institutions confront financial challenges in supporting their student-athletes. These institutions have a shortage of financial resources to hire staff dedicated to providing academic support to student-athletes (Nite, 2012). Moreover, they provide a relatively smaller number of scholarships and fewer benefits than NCAA Division I institutions. In turn, these administrative challenges become obstacles for student-athletes balancing academics and athletics. Despite having many member institutions and more than 122,000 student-athletes involved, limited studies have explored the challenges faced by student-athletes participating in NCAA Division II. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the dynamic interplay between athletic and academic motivation among NCAA Division II student-athletes.

Among various motivation theories, self-determination theory (SDT) was adopted as the main theoretical framework to identify the motivation levels of Division II student-athletes' academics and athletics. SDT posits three dimensions explaining individuals' motivation: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. In other words, one's behavior can be intrinsically motivated, extrinsically motivated, or amotivated. Intrinsic motivation is characterized by engaging in an activity for its inherent satisfaction, driven by factors like interest and challenge. In contrast, extrinsic motivation suggests that an activity is pursued to obtain external rewards. While intrinsic motivation is rooted in the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself, extrinsic motivation centers around the external incentives associated with the activity. Lastly, when a person is amotivated, that person acts without intent or does not act at all (Ryan & Deci, 1985).

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the authors examined the athletic and academic motivation of NCAA Division II student-athletes. Utilizing the non-probability convenience sampling method, a total of 208 NCAA Division II student-athletes participated in this study. The Academic Motivation Scale (AMS; Vallerand et al., 1992) was adopted to examine student-athletes' academic motivation. For athletic motivation, the Sport Motivation Scale II (SMS-II; Pelletier et al., 2013) was applied. Pearson's correlation coefficient was utilized to analyze the dynamic interplay between academic and athletic motivation.

The findings revealed significant correlations among various factors in academic and athletic motivation. Notably, intrinsic motivation factors for academics showed a strong positive correlation

with intrinsic motivation for athletics. Also, amotivation for both academics and athletics was highly correlated. Additional findings and implications will be presented and discussed in-depth at the conference.”