

Introduction

There is an increasing evidence that athletes who can successfully integrate their athletic careers with academic education will lead to better transition from sport into labour market later in their lives. Nevertheless, previous research suggested that committed participation in both areas is highly demanding. Student-athletes are always put into a situation where they have to choose either sports (training/competition) or school (study/examination) [1]. In most sports, athletes begin their junior-to-senior transition at ages 16-18 [2]. This is overlapping with the years when students enter their high school or senior secondary school in Hong Kong setting. One can easily imagine student-athletes at such transitioning period can experience high stress or possibly burnout in either aspects. Nevertheless, there were also studies showing that athletic and educational pursuits can be complementary, instead of compatible (e.g., Auquilina, 2013 [3]). It is worthwhile to examine the psychological process of high school student-athletes' dual career experience. As to Hong Kong context, recent studies have tapped into the relationship between mindfulness and burnout in student-athletes' career development [4], student-athletes' current supporting system [5], and social-ecological determinants of their dual career development [6]. Collaborating with the ongoing project in Finnish population [2], this article is the preliminary report of the longitudinal study examining the developmental trajectories of high school student-athletes in Hong Kong elite settings.

Methodology

Study participants

Ten adolescent participants are full time secondary Form four (first year of senior secondary school) student-athletes training in Hong Kong Sports Institute, including both male and female. The athletes are from the sports of athletics, sailing, karatedo, rowing and squash.

Data gathering and measures

Quantitative data was collected through both paper surveys and web surveys supported by Sojump (WJX). Measurements were taken place at both the beginning of the second semester of the Form four of secondary school and the first semester of the Form five grade.

Data analysis

The quantitative data are firstly grouped into 18 scales: Self-concept of ability, interest value, importance value, utility value, expectations, task-avoidance, burnout and identity, are investigated in the view of sport and school respectively, and the remaining two scales are self-esteem and career construction. Validation test was carried out in another sample (n = 168) previously. Acceptable level of reliability was found for all scales. Due to the small number of sample and only two time point of data is collected, descriptive analysis was implemented at this stage.

Appendix 1. Data for selected scales

Time point 1

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
self-concept of ability in sport	3.7	3.7	2.3	3.0	3.0	2.7	3.3	3.0	3.7	2.3
interest value in sport	4.8	3.8	4.8	4.4	3.0	3.4	4.4	4.0	5.0	3.8
importance value in sport	4.5	3.5	4.8	5.0	3.0	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.5	3.0
utility value in sport	4.0	4.0	5.0	4.5	3.0	3.0	3.3	3.0	3.5	3.8
identity in sport	6.4	3.7	4.7	5.8	4.0	5.1	5.9	4.8	6.0	4.8
task-avoidance in sport	1.5	2.5	2.5	1.5	2.3	2.3	1.8	1.8	1.3	2.0
self-concept of ability in school	2.0	3.9	3.0	2.9	5.0	2.3	3.1	2.6	3.0	2.5
interest value in school	2.5	3.3	3.0	3.2	5.0	2.0	3.0	3.5	2.2	2.2
importance value in school	4.0	4.3	3.5	4.7	5.0	3.8	3.5	4.3	2.5	4.3
utility value in school	3.0	4.2	3.7	4.2	5.0	3.8	3.2	4.3	2.3	3.2
task-avoidance in school	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.0	4.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	1.3	3.0
identity in school	5.1	5.8	4.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	5.1	4.0	3.8	4.0

Time point 2

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
self-concept of ability in sport	3.7	3.7	3.0	3.0	3.3	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.7	2.7
interest value in sport	4.8	4.0	4.0	4.6	3.4	4.0	4.8	4.6	5.0	3.8
importance value in sport	4.5	3.5	4.0	5.0	3.5	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.5	3.0
utility value in sport	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.5	3.5	3.8	3.5	4.3	3.5	3.8
identity in sport	6.4	3.8	4.8	5.8	4.1	5.3	4.9	5.7	6.1	4.8
task-avoidance in sport	1.5	2.5	2.0	1.3	2.0	2.3	2.0	2.3	1.3	1.5
self-concept of ability in school	2.0	3.9	3.0	2.9	5.0	1.8	3.0	2.6	3.0	2.5
interest value in school	2.5	3.3	2.8	3.2	5.0	1.7	3.5	3.0	2.2	2.2
importance value in school	4.2	4.3	3.8	4.7	5.0	3.3	4.0	4.0	2.5	4.3
utility value in school	3.5	4.2	3.5	4.2	5.0	3.0	3.8	3.7	2.3	3.2
task-avoidance in school	2.3	2.5	2.8	2.0	4.0	2.5	2.0	3.3	1.5	3.0
identity in school	4.9	5.8	4.8	4.9	3.9	3.2	5.1	3.0	3.7	4.0

Results

Based on descriptive and observational analysis, between two time points or after six months of school study and elite training, most participants showed increased or unchanged level in interest, perceived importance, perceived utility, self-concept of ability, and identity in sports. Regarding to school context, there are mixed trend across many variables. For self-concept of ability and identity in school, most participants showed unchanged while two to three indicated decrease. About half participants showed increased in task-avoidance.

Correlational analysis showed that participants' identity of sport is positively associated with their interest and perceived importance, but negatively associated with their task avoidance level. These relationships were found in both time points. Referring to school context, after six months of school study, positive association were found between interest and perceived importance of school ($r = .69$), as well as self-concept in ability and perceived utility of school ($r = .70$). (See Appendix 1 for selected scale data)

Discussion

Whereas it is still too preliminary to make any conclusion or interpretation, data up-to-now showed a possible situation that the first year of senior secondary school study is fairly heavy for some student-athletes. It explained the decrease or no change in self-concept in ability and increase in task-avoidance. Referring to identity in sport and school, it is possible that some participants chose to shift their personal identity further from academic to elite sport training. It could partly because they do not enjoy the workload from school, while they do not yet feel the needs nor pressure of public examination for university entrance, which will happen two years later. Correlational findings in sport context is fairly understandable, whereas those in school context may indicate that participants learn more about the senior secondary syllabus and its function. Their interest or motive to study was then related to their perceived importance more, instead of how much they enjoy the subjects. As Sum and colleagues (2017) [6] found student-athletes' dual career experience are affected by interrelated determinants at different levels (individual, micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chrono-level), further and more time-points investigation is necessary to understand the picture.

Reference

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