An Analysis of Sport Participation Motivations of NCAA Division I Student-Athletes: An International Focus

Sarah Stokowski, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Landon Huffman, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Lars Dzikus (Advisor), University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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The global community is becoming increasingly interrelated as American universities aim to prepare students to live and work in a mutually dependent world. In order to meet the demands of a global community, institutions of higher education have found it to be beneficial to recruit international students to American universities (Chepyator-Thomson, 1995; Rose-Redwood, 2010). Furthermore, American universities value integrating international students within the campus community because the presence of international perspectives enhance diversity, cultivate international exposure, and develop all students’ multicultural competence (Brustein, 2007). One strategy that universities are utilizing to attract some international students to study in the United States is by providing them with the opportunity to participate in intercollegiate athletics (Chepyator-Thomson, 1995; Ridinger & Pastore, 2001; Rose-Redwood, 2010). Additionally, the success that international student-athletes have had on the playing field has lead coaches to seek and recruit international talent (Berry, 1999; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Stidwill, 1984). By 2009, there were more than 16,000 international student-athletes competing within National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) member institutions (DeHass, 2009).

Despite the significant amount of international student-athletes participating in college sport, little research has been conducted on this population. Previous literature has examined the reasons why international student-athletes chose to study in the United States, but there is limited research that addresses the issue regarding the specific motivations of international student-athletes to participate in their respective college sport. In order to gain a better understanding about how to more efficiently attract, recruit, serve, holistically develop, and retain international student-athletes, it is important to understand the sport participation motivations of international student-athletes. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to (a) examine the various forms of motivations of current NCAA Division I international student-athletes to participate in their college sport and (b) to compare the sport participation motivations of international student-athletes with the sport participation motivations of domestic NCAA Division I student-athletes.

The population for this study included NCAA Division I student-athletes (N = 169,664) (NCAA Student-Athlete Participation, 2010). Due to the large population of eligible participants, the researchers enlisted the assistance of the National Association for Academic Advisors in Athletics (N4A) in distributing the link to the online survey to NCAA Division I student-athletes.

The data for this study was collected through online survey instrumentation. The Sport Motivation Scale (SMS) was the instrument utilized to collect data for this study (Brière, Vallerand, Blais, & Pelletier, 1995; Pelletier, Fortier, Vallerand, Tuson, & Brière, 1995). The SMS consists of 28 items that “measure seven subscales of motivation: Intrinsic Motivation (IM; IM to Know, IM to Accomplish Things, IM to Experience Stimulation), three forms of regulation for Extrinsic Motivation (Identified, Introjected, and External), and Amotivation” (Pelletier et al., 1995, p. 35). At the time of the abstract submission, the survey distribution procedures had just begun.

To address the research questions, descriptive statistics will be calculated for each of the seven subscales of the SMS. Due to the fact that seven subscales of motivation will be measured, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) will be utilized to analyze the differences in group means based on the independent variable of international/domestic status. The results of the study will be discussed during the presentation.