Grit on Student-Athletes’ Psychological Factors and Perceived Academic Success

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Grit, as a personality trait, can be defined as “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007, p. 1087). Since Duckworth explained why some people outperform others in achievement settings, the term, grit, has received considerable attention from various disciplines and contexts (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth, Quinn, & Seligman, 2009; Eskreis-winkler, Shulman, Beal, & Duckworth, 2014). In organization settings, there is a growing popularity of grit as an important trait in the organization and its performance (e.g., Bradberry, 2016; Hamilton, 2014). Although grit draws a lot of attention as one of the great characteristics among student-athletes, the real impact and the relationship between grit and student-athletes’ psychological factors have not been examined in the field of sport management. In an effort to fill the aforementioned gaps in the sport management literature, the present study will examine the relationship between student-athlete grit and psychological factors (self-efficacy, stress, anxiety, and life satisfaction) and perceived academic performance.

Literature Review and Current Study

According to the NCAA.org website, more than 460,000 NCAA students are currently participating in athletic programs and student-athletes have been deemed as an integral part of schools in the United States (NCAA, 2017). Participating in intercollegiate athletic programs requires a considerable commitment of time and energy. Although the NCAA regulates the amount of time allowed for a team traveling, competition, and practices, athletic programs interpret these rules liberally (Simons, Van Rheenen, & Covington, 1997). Due to the heavy obligations, student-athletes are more likely to experience negative psychological symptoms such as stress, anxiety, lack of concentration, depression, fear of re-injury, burn-out, and so on (Etzel, Watson, Visek, & Maniar, 2006; Pinkerton, Hinz, & Barrow, 1989). Given that it is crucial to understand what factors influence student-athletes’ psychological well-being and intervene negative psychological symptoms. Therefore, we will examine the relationship between student-athlete grit and their psychological factors such as self-efficacy, level of stress, and level anxiety. Thus, we hypothesized that student-athletes with higher grit score would be more likely to have higher (h1) self-efficacy, (h2) lower stress level, and lower (h3) anxiety level

H1. Grit score will be significantly related to self-efficacy among student-athletes

H2. Grit score will be significantly related to level of stress among student-athletes

H3. Grit score will be significantly related to level of anxiety among student-athletes

In addition, life satisfaction is one of the positive indicators which are influenced by the stressful lives of college students. Life satisfaction is among three parts of subjective well-being which is the equivalent of happiness. According to Diener and Suh (1997), perceived life satisfaction is highly correlated with the quality of lives such as health, freedom, and so on. Therefore, it is possible that student-athletes who are grittier are more likely to be satisfied with their lifestyle as a college student than those who have a lower gritty score. Thus, we hypothesized that grit will be significantly related to life satisfaction.

H4. Grit score will be significantly related to life satisfaction

In addition, Duckworth and her colleagues (2007) explored individuals with higher education were higher in grit than those with less education. In a similar way, they also found that higher grit scores were associated with higher cumulative GPA (Duckworth et al., 2009). Student-athletes are busier with their practice, games, and traveling than other students. Thus, it would be difficult for them to put their effort into academic performance. However, studies have shown that student-athletes tend to attain better grades during the off-season (Schultz, 2015). Therefore, it is also possible that student-athletes who have a higher grit score are more likely to have higher perceived academic
performance. Given that, we hypothesized:

H5. Grit score will be significantly correlated with perceived academic performance.

Method Participants will be student-athletes (n= 300) who are participating intercollegiate athletic programs in the United States. Participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire in which they provide their demographic information and respond to the 12-item Grit scale developed by Duckworth and her colleagues (2007). We will measure self-efficacy with Schwarzer and Jerusalem’s (1995) General Self-Efficacy scale, level of stress using the adjusted Student Stress scale developed by DeMeuse (1985), and level of anxiety with Nist and Dielhl’s (1990) Anxiety scale. Similar to Martin and his colleagues (2005), we will implement the perceived academic performance (PAP) in which asks students how they would rate their overall academic performance. All items will be measured on a 7-point scale.

Results We are currently collecting the data and will guarantee that we present the results and implications at the 2018 NASSM conference.

Contributions This study examines the relationship student-athlete grit and psychological factors (self-efficacy, stress, anxiety, and life satisfaction) and perceived academic performance. This current study will advance the literature in two ways. First, by understanding the effect of grit on student-athletes’ psychological factors, the study advances the grit and sport management literature. Second, understanding the relationship between grit and student-athletes’ perceived academic performance will help faculty members advance their pedagogical approaches and allow athletic programs to better understand how to manage and deal with student-athletes and pursue their well-being.