

Identity Changes, Social Support and Dual Career Attitude in Adolescent Student-Athletes

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Abstract

Objectives: The pursuit of a sporting career alongside education commonly begins during adolescence, a phase in which personal identity takes shape. Research on student-athletes' identities has predominantly focused on recognizing the concurrent existence of both student and athletic identities in this population. Following this perspective, it is recommended to compare within-individual differences in student and athletic identity and investigate the antecedents and outcomes associated with these differences. Using a person-centered approach, this study examined the identity profiles that high school student-athletes exhibited and the extent to which these profiles were associated with sport social support, academic social support, and dual career attitude.

Methods: In the first stage, 415 high school student-athletes were invited to provide data on athletic identity and student identity. Following a six-month interval, the same participants completed questionnaires covering athletic identity, student identity, sport social support, academic social support, and dual career attitude. A total of 367 valid samples were identified.

Results: The results revealed three distinct profiles: maintaining high dual identity, athletic identity, and decreasing dual identity. The profiles of maintaining high dual identity and athletic identity showed stable levels of high athletic identity over time, whereas the student and athletic levels decreased in the decreasing dual identity profile. Student-athletes exhibiting the maintaining high dual identity profile reported higher levels of sport social support, academic social support, and dual career attitude than the other two profiles.

Conclusion: The findings demonstrate that it is possible for student-athletes to sustain a high level of identification with the athlete and student roles simultaneously. Social support in sport and academic domains can contribute to maintaining more balanced and higher levels of athletic and student identities, which may improve a positive attitude toward dual career development.