

Examining Stressors Affecting Academic and Athletic Performance in Collegiate Student-Athletes

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ABSTRACT

Collegiate student-athletes are uniquely positioned at the intersection of academic and athletic responsibilities, often leading to heightened levels of stress that can impact their performance and well-being. This quantitative study investigates the academic and athletic stressors experienced by collegiate student-athletes, focusing on five key dimensions: time management, academic pressure, financial concerns, teacher-related stress, and social expectations. Using a structured survey administered to a purposively selected sample of student-athletes from various sports disciplines, the study measures the prevalence and intensity of these stressors and analyzes their relationships with academic standing and athletic involvement.

Findings reveal that while student-athletes do not consistently struggle with time management, they encounter recurring difficulties in balancing academic, athletic, and personal responsibilities. Academically, many reported emotional dissatisfactions despite few overt behavioral issues, indicating a disconnect between academic self-perception and performance. Financial stress emerged as a frequent concern, with inadequate allowances and limited income opportunities impacting well-being and academic focus. Teacher-related challenges included insufficient support and flexibility, contributing to heightened stress and academic strain. Social expectations from coaches, peers, and family further intensified psychological pressure, often leading to emotional exhaustion. The study underscores the need for targeted interventions such as structured time management workshops, academic support programs, Increase financial support & financial literacy initiatives, and flexible academic policies. Mental health support systems are also crucial in addressing performance pressures and fostering resilience. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of holistic institutional support to enhance the academic and athletic experiences of student-athletes and promote their overall well-being.

Introduction

Balancing academics and athletics present a unique challenge for collegiate student-athletes, often leading to significant stress that impacts both their academic and athletic performance. Academic stress, defined as the mental distress resulting from academic demands that exceed an individual's ability to cope, has been widely studied in this context (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Key stressors include time conflicts, excessive workload, and performance pressure, all of which can negatively affect student-athletes' overall success.

Missed classes due to athletic commitments further exacerbate academic stress, often resulting in lower academic achievement and heightened anxiety (Humphrey, Yow, & Bowden, 2013). Research suggests

that structured academic support programs can mitigate these challenges by providing student-athletes with resources to balance their dual responsibilities. Al-Sagarat et al. (2017) also found that high academic workloads contribute to increased anxiety and burnout, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions such as counseling and academic assistance.

To cope with these stressors, student-athletes rely on strategies like effective time management and institutional support, both of which play crucial roles in reducing stress and enhancing performance (Cosh & Tully, 2014). Programs that integrate these strategies not only improve student-athletes' well-being but also foster better academic and athletic outcomes (Fletcher, Sarkar, & Weston, 2009).

The primary aim of this study is to identify and analyze the key stressors that significantly impact the academic and athletic performance of collegiate student-athletes. This includes examining various internal and external factors such as time management difficulties, academic workload, training and competition demands, performance expectations, social pressures, and limited access to mental health support. By understanding these stressors in depth, the study seeks to uncover the underlying causes of stress and how they manifest in both academic and athletic contexts.

Furthermore, the study aims to utilize its findings to formulate evidence-based recommendations that will guide student-athletes, coaches, athletic staff, academic advisers, and institutional leaders. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to the holistic development and well-being of student-athletes, enabling them to thrive both on the field and in the classroom.

Materials and Methods

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive research design to collect and analyze data on academic and athletic stressors experienced by collegiate student-athletes. This method was chosen to obtain an objective summary of the participants' responses through numerical data without determining relationships between variables.

Participants and Sampling

The participants consisted of 115 collegiate student-athletes from Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, Cabanatuan City. A convenience sampling was used to identify individuals who met specific criteria relevant to the study, such as being actively enrolled and participated in recent sports competition-State Colleges and Universities Athletic Association (SCUAA III) during the academic year 2024-2025.

Research Instrument

Survey Design. A survey instrument utilized to measure sources of academic stress. The questionnaire used in this study was adopted from a previously developed instrument by the researchers in an earlier study conducted in 2024. The tool was originally designed to assess academic stress among student-athletes and was found to be appropriate for the current research objectives. The questionnaire has undergone prior validation for content and reliability.

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was administered through Google Forms, and participants were given clear instructions and ample time to respond. The researcher ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of responses.

Data Analysis

Data gathered from the questionnaire were tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mean. These statistical tools were used to summarize their responses to the questionnaire items.

Results

Table 1 Time Management

	Time management	Weighted Me	Verbal Description
1.	I fail to create a daily schedule to balance my academic and athletic commitments.	2.23	Seldom
2.	I fail to prioritize my tasks, leaving important academic or athletic responsibilities incomplete.	2.02	Seldom
3.	I struggle to balance my academic, athletic, and personal activities effectively.	2.33	Seldom
4.	I fail to stick to the time limits I set for both my academic tasks and athletic training.	2.31	Seldom
5.	I fail to adjust my plans when unexpected events, like competitions or travel, interfere with my schedule.	2.24	Seldom
6.	I miss deadlines or finish assignments feeling stressed due to juggling academic and athletic demands.	2.29	Seldom
	Grand mean	2.24	Seldom

Legend: 3.25-4.00: always; 2.50-3.24: often; 1.75-2.49: seldom; 1.00-1.74: never

The results indicate that collegiate student-athletes seldom experience significant challenges in time management, as reflected by the grand mean of 2.24. All six indicators yielded weighted means ranging from 2.02 to 2.33, with corresponding verbal descriptions of “Seldom.” This suggests that while student-athletes occasionally face difficulties in balancing their academic and athletic responsibilities, these issues do not occur frequently. The highest mean (2.33) was associated with struggles in balancing academic, athletic, and personal activities, indicating this as the most common concern. Conversely, the lowest mean (2.02) pertained to the failure to prioritize tasks, suggesting that most student-athletes are relatively capable of setting priorities.

Overall, while time management is not a major issue for the majority, there is still room for improvement, particularly in areas such as balancing multiple roles and adhering to set schedules. Providing additional support, such as time management workshops or personalized coaching, could help student-athletes enhance their productivity and reduce stress.

	Academic Performance	Weighed Mean	Verbal Description
1.	I fail to participate actively in class discussions because of fatigue from sports activities.	2.15	Seldom
2.	I struggle to balance my athletic and academic commitments,		

	resulting in poor grades.	2.14	Seldom
3.	I neglect to seek extra help or resources to improve my academic performance.	2.19	Seldom
4.	I find it hard to stay focused in class after intense practices or games.	2.28	Seldom
5.	I ignore academic weaknesses, prioritizing my athletic goals instead.	1.77	Seldom
6.	I avoid asking teachers or peers for help when I don't understand a topic.	2.13	Seldom
7.	I often feel dissatisfied with my academic achievements due to competing priorities.	2.54	Often
		2.19	Seldom

Table 2 Academic Performance

Legend: 3.25-4.00: always; 2.50-3.24: often; 1.75-2.49: seldom; 1.00-1.74: never

The overall weighted mean of 2.19 falls under the “Seldom” verbal interpretation, suggesting that student-athletes rarely encounter significant academic issues due to their athletic involvement. Most indicators reflect only occasional challenges, such as fatigue, difficulty focusing, or hesitation in seeking academic help. Notably, the only item rated as "Often" (2.54) is the statement, "I often feel dissatisfied with my academic achievements due to competing priorities," which points to a noticeable emotional or psychological impact among student-athletes, even though their academic behaviors are not consistently compromised. Meanwhile, the lowest mean score (1.77), which pertains to prioritizing athletics over academics, indicates that student-athletes do not typically ignore their academic weaknesses in favor of athletic pursuits.

Table 3 Financial Matters

	Financial Matters	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1.	I worry about not having enough money to cover my basic needs and expenses.	2.85	Often
2.	I feel overwhelmed by the pressure to find ways to support myself financially while balancing my studies and training.	2.77	Often
3.	I find it difficult to participate in social activities because I cannot afford them.	2.44	Seldom
4.	I feel uncertain about my future financial stability due to limited income opportunities as a student-athlete.	2.58	Often
5.	I am often stressed by the need to constantly budget and save, leaving me with little flexibility for unexpected expenses.	2.62	Often
6.	My allowance as athlete is not enough to cover all my expenses, which adds to my financial stress.	2.43	Seldom
	Grand mean	2.62	Often

Legend: 3.25-4.00: always; 2.50-3.24: often; 1.75-2.49: seldom; 1.00-1.74: never

The grand mean of 2.62 under the “Often” verbal description indicates that financial matters are a frequent concern among student-athletes. Several items reflect consistent stress related to managing finances, with the highest mean (2.85) indicating that many student-athletes often worry about not having enough money to cover their basic needs and expenses. Likewise, they frequently feel overwhelmed by the pressure of supporting themselves financially while juggling academic and athletic commitments (2.77), and express concern about their future financial stability due to limited income opportunities as students (2.58). Additionally, the need to constantly budget and save, with little room for unexpected expenses (2.62), contributes significantly to their financial stress. Although two items—difficulty participating in social activities (2.44) and insufficient athletic allowance (2.43)—are rated as “Seldom,” the overall trend shows that financial strain is a recurring and significant issue for student-athletes, potentially affecting their well-being and academic-athletic balance.

Table 4 Teacher Related Factor

	Teacher Related Factor	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1.	I feel stressed when teachers do not offer extensions for project submissions due to my participation in competitions.	2.83	Often
2.	My teachers do not provide any considerations for my athletic schedule when setting academic deadlines.	2.16	Seldom
3.	I struggle when my teachers do not offer make-up quizzes or alternative assessments when I miss class for athletic commitments.	2.35	Seldom
4.	My teachers do not acknowledge the impact of my sports schedule on my ability to complete academic work on time.	2.28	Seldom
5.	My teachers do not take into account the extra time I need for training and games when assigning coursework.	2.23	Seldom
6.	I feel overwhelmed when there is no option to make up missed lessons or assessments after missing class for athletic reasons.	2.60	Often
7.	The lack of flexibility from my teachers creates additional stress when I need to manage both academics and sports.	2.50	Often
	Grand mean	2.42	Seldom

The grand mean of 2.42, interpreted as “Seldom,” suggests that teacher-related factors are not consistently a major source of stress for student-athletes. However, a closer look reveals that certain teacher practices still pose occasional challenges, particularly when flexibility is lacking. The highest-rated item (2.83) indicates that student-athletes often feel stressed when teachers do not grant extensions for project submissions during competitions. Similarly, the lack of options for make-up lessons or assessments (2.60) and the overall inflexibility of teachers (2.50) are rated as “Often,” highlighting specific areas where improvements in support and understanding are needed. Despite these concerns, most items received “Seldom” ratings, such as teachers not providing considerations for athletic schedules (2.16), not acknowledging the impact of sports commitments (2.28), or not adjusting academic workload (2.23). These lower scores suggest that many teachers are at least occasionally accommodating, but inconsistencies in their level of support may still lead to significant stress for some student-athletes.

Overall, while teacher-related issues are not pervasive, they remain an important area for improvement in supporting the academic-athletic balance.

Table 5 Social Expectation

	Social Expectation	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1.	I feel pressured by others to perform at my best, even when I am exhausted.	2.72	Often
2.	I feel like people expect me to maintain a perfect balance between school, social life, and athletics without support.	2.81	Often
3.	I feel the weight of the high expectations from my family, coaches, and teammates.	2.71	Often
4.	I struggle with the social expectation that I should never show weakness or fatigue, even if I need a break.	2.71	Often
5.	I feel the pressure to perform well all the time to meet the expectations of my social circle.	2.72	Often
6.	I am often compared to other athletes, which makes me feel the need to constantly outdo my previous performances.	2.50	Often
	Grand mean	2.70	Often

Legend: 3.25-4.00: always; 2.50-3.24: often; 1.75-2.49: seldom; 1.00-1.74: never

The grand mean of 2.70, with a verbal description of “Often,” indicates that social expectations are a frequent source of stress for student-athletes. Across all six indicators, student-athletes consistently report feeling pressured by the expectations of others. The highest mean (2.81) reflects the strong perception that they are expected to flawlessly balance school, social life, and athletics without sufficient support. This pressure is compounded by feelings of being constantly expected to perform at their best (2.72), meet high expectations from family, coaches, and teammates (2.71), and avoid showing signs of weakness or fatigue (2.71).

Additionally, the need to meet the standards set by their social circle (2.72) and the experience of being compared to other athletes (2.50) further amplify the psychological burden. These findings suggest that social pressure is a persistent challenge for student-athletes, affecting not only their performance but also their emotional well-being. The consistently high ratings across all items underline the importance of fostering a supportive environment that recognizes the limits and needs of student-athletes.

Table 6 Stressor of Student-Athletes

Academic Stressor	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
Time management	2.24	Seldom
Academic Performance	2.19	Seldom
Financial Matters	2.62	Often
Teacher-related Factor	2.42	Seldom
Social Expectation	2.70	Often

Grand mean	2.43	Seldom
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Legend: 3.25-4.00: always; 2.50-3.24: often; 1.75-2.49: seldom; 1.00-1.74: never

The overall grand mean of 2.43 falls under the “Seldom” verbal description, suggesting that while student-athletes occasionally encounter academic stressors, these are not consistently overwhelming. Among the five categories assessed, Financial Matters (2.62) and Social Expectation (2.70) are rated as “Often,” indicating that student-athletes frequently experience stress related to managing limited financial resources and meeting high expectations from others, such as family, coaches, and peers.

In contrast, Time Management (2.24), Academic Performance (2.19), and Teacher-Related Factors (2.42) are all rated as “Seldom,” implying that while these areas present challenges, they are not persistent sources of stress for most student-athletes. These findings highlight that student-athletes generally manage their academic responsibilities reasonably well, but external pressures and financial constraints remain significant stressors that may affect their overall well-being and performance. Addressing these specific areas through supportive programs and flexible policies could help ease the burden on student-athletes and promote a healthier academic-athletic balance.

Discussion

Time Management

The collegiate student-athletes occasionally struggle with time management but do not experience these issues persistently. Notably, the most challenging areas identified were balancing academic, athletic, and personal activities; adhering to time limits; and adapting plans due to unforeseen events. This is consistent with Gaston-Gayles et al. (2020), who found that student-athletes often need structured tools like calendar blocking or peer planning systems to manage such recurring challenges. The lowest mean score was recorded in the area of prioritizing tasks. While this suggests fewer overt difficulties, prior research (Waldron & Krane, 2019) indicates that even occasional misprioritization can lead to cumulative stress, fatigue, or compromised performance.

Furthermore, the need for proactive strategies is emphasized by Davoren and Hwang (2022), who demonstrated a strong correlation between inadequate time management and mental health strain. Similarly, Lopez and Levy (2021) argued that athletes benefit significantly from time management guidance via mentorship or institutional support.

While the current data suggest that the time management issues are not critical, the recurring nature of these concerns calls for preventive and supportive interventions. Workshops on flexible scheduling, personalized time prioritization training, and mentorship programs may help student-athletes navigate competing responsibilities more effectively, ultimately contributing to reduced stress and better academic-athletic outcomes.

Academic Performance

The student-athletes' academic performance reveals that while challenges such as fatigue, balancing commitments, and reluctance to seek help are seldom reported, a significant number of student-athletes express dissatisfaction with their academic achievements. This emotional dissatisfaction, despite infrequent behavioral issues, highlights the complex relationship between athletic commitments and academic self-perception.

Yukhymenko-Lescroart (2023) found that student-athletes with a strong athletic identity often exhibit

a weaker academic identity, which leads to decreased academic motivation and performance. This suggests that the prioritization of athletic goals can negatively impact both academic self-concept and satisfaction. Agortey (2023) further supports this by reporting that competitive sports stressors significantly influence the academic performance of student-athletes, particularly among females. This indicates that the pressures of athletic participation can adversely affect academic outcomes. Additionally, O'Neil, Amorose, and Pierce (2020) identified distinct profiles of collegiate student-athletes who struggle with balancing dual commitments to school and sport. The study revealed that conflicts between these commitments could lead to academic burnout and diminished well-being. These studies underscore the need for support systems that specifically address the emotional and psychological aspects of student-athletes' academic experiences. Implementing strategies such as academic counseling, time management training, and programs designed to strengthen academic identity could help mitigate dissatisfaction and promote a more balanced student-athlete experience.

Financial Matters

The financial concerns of student-athletes highlight significant financial stress, suggesting that these concerns are felt "often." Many participants expressed frequent worries about not having enough money for basic needs and the pressure to support themselves financially while balancing both their academic and athletic responsibilities. Financial uncertainty about their future due to limited income opportunities and the constant need to budget and save, leaving little room for flexibility, were also common sources of stress. These results mirror the findings of Huma and Staurowsky (2012), who explored the financial hardships of student-athletes and found that many reports financial stress due to inadequate scholarships and allowances, which are often insufficient to cover living expenses. The study emphasized that student-athletes, particularly those from lower-income backgrounds, struggle to balance academic and athletic demands with financial pressures.

While fewer participants indicated difficulties in social participation due to financial limitations or insufficient allowances, these issues still contribute to the overall strain. This aligns with Paskus and Sabo (2016), who noted that student-athletes frequently experience financial pressure, which can lead to mental health challenges. Their study also highlighted that many student-athletes have to seek external jobs or additional financial aid, further complicating their academic and athletic pursuits. Similarly, **Comeaux (2010)** examined how financial strain negatively affects academic success, with student-athletes often distracted by the need to manage their finances or seek employment. This directly impacts their ability to excel both in their studies and on the field, much like the participants in this study who reported stress due to financial instability.

In conclusion, the results of this study highlight that financial strain is a pervasive issue for student-athletes, impacting their overall well-being, academic performance, and athletic commitment. These findings are consistent with existing research and suggest the need for enhanced financial support systems, such as stipends, or financial literacy programs, to help alleviate the stress and enable student-athletes to focus on their academic and athletic development without the added burden of financial insecurity.

Teacher Related Factor

The data indicate that student-athletes *seldom* receive adequate support from teachers in balancing academic and athletic commitments, as reflected by the overall findings. Notably, higher stress levels

are associated with the lack of make-up options and inflexibility in managing both academic and athletic responsibilities. This limited time accommodation contributes to increased stress and academic challenges for student-athletes.

Research underscores the importance of teacher support in mitigating such stress. A meta-analysis by Lei et al. (2018) found that teacher support positively correlates with students' positive academic emotions and negatively with negative academic emotions, suggesting that supportive teacher-student relationships can enhance academic experiences. Additionally, a study by Alice (2022) in Nigeria revealed a significant relationship between teacher support and students' academic performance, emphasizing the role of teachers in students' academic success.

In the context of student-athletes, a study conducted at Tarlac Agricultural University emphasized that school support—particularly in terms of adjusting academic expectations and schedules to accommodate athletic commitments—has a significant impact on academic performance. The findings suggest that when faculty members recognize and respond to the unique demands faced by student-athletes, it can lead to improved academic outcomes (Cuzzamu & Salcedo, 2022).

Therefore, fostering a supportive academic environment that considers the dual responsibilities of student-athletes is crucial. Implementing flexible policies and open communication channels between teachers and student-athletes can alleviate stress and promote academic success.

Social Expectation

The data reveals that the student-athlete, frequently experiences pressure from various sources, including family, coaches, and teammates. This aligns with previous research on the psychological toll of performance demands in sports. The highest pressure was related to balancing academics, social life, and athletics without adequate support, which echoes the findings of Gould and Dieffenbach (2022), who linked external expectations and perfectionism to burnout in athletes. This suggests that high demands without proper support can lead to emotional exhaustion and decreased performance.

The moderate pressure reported in the data regarding comparisons to peers is consistent with social comparison theory, which suggests that athletes are often motivated by peer comparisons but also experience performance anxiety. Smith and Clark (2019) found that constant comparisons can undermine self-efficacy and increase stress. Additionally, the data highlights the expectation to perform despite exhaustion and the societal stigma around showing weakness, which aligns with studies by Luu, Nguyen, and Vallerand (2022) on mental fatigue and Chiu and Hsu (2020) on emotional suppression in athletes. These pressures can impair both cognitive function and mental well-being.

In conclusion, the data confirms that athletes face significant social pressures that can impact their mental and physical health. The findings support the need for better support systems, mental health awareness, and a culture where vulnerability is accepted. Interventions that provide emotional support, reduce comparison culture, and encourage self-compassion can help alleviate these pressures, improving both athletes' well-being and performance.

Recommendations

It is recommended to conduct structured time management workshops for student-athletes that focus on flexible scheduling, task prioritization, and the use of digital tools such as calendar-blocking apps.

These workshops may be facilitated by academic mentors and reinforced through peer-led accountability groups. To support academic engagement, institutions should implement academic identity reinforcement programs like mentorship and tutoring groups that highlight role models who have successfully balanced sports and academics, helping boost students' academic self-worth and motivation. Additionally, establishing a financial literacy and assistance program— including budgeting education, access to emergency funds, additional financial support and regular financial wellness check-ins—can help alleviate the economic stress commonly experienced by student-athletes. A formal policy on academic flexibility is also essential; this should include provisions for make-up exams, extended deadlines, and teacher training to ensure consistent and compassionate support for dual-role students. Lastly, creating safe spaces for mental health support, such as athlete wellness circles or guided counseling sessions, is vital to normalize vulnerability, reduce performance pressure, and foster emotional resilience.

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