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Title

Academic Impact of COVID-19 in Collegiate Athletes

Priority 1 (Research Category)

COVID-19

Presenters

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Abstract

Introduction: The COVID-19 pandemic caused a pause to nearly all sporting activities in the spring of 2020, and collegiate athletes at the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)-affiliated universities whose sporting seasons were affected by the pandemic were granted an extra year of athletic eligibility. This study was conducted to determine how collegiate athletes planned to use an additional year of eligibility granted by the NCAA.

Methods: The authors conducted a cross-sectional survey of 632 athletes from two universities in the Midwestern United States, between August and September 2021. The athletes completed an anonymous, nine-item survey to assess the effect of the pandemic on the athletic season, athletic eligibility, and potential change in an academic or professional career. Chi-square tests, generalized linear mixed models, and adjusted odds ratio were used for the analyses.

Results: The participation rate was 74.5% (471 of 632). Nearly 63% (290 of 461) of the athletes received an additional year of eligibility because of the pandemic, with 193 (66.6%) planned to use their extra year for scholastic development. Male athletes (65.3% vs. 34.7%; $\chi^2[1, n = 290] = 11.66, p < 0.001, \Phi = 0.20$), Division II athletes (59.6% vs. 40.4%; $\chi^2[1, n = 290] = 13.93, p < 0.001, \Phi = 0.22$), and athletes who had not previously used redshirt (73.1% vs. 26.9%; $\chi^2[1, n = 290] = 4.79, p = 0.029, \Phi = 0.32$) were more likely to use their extra year of eligibility academically.

Conclusions: Our findings suggested that most of the athletes planned to use their extra year of eligibility to pursue further scholastic or professional development, highlighting the positive part of the COVID-19 pandemic. Future studies should investigate how these findings relate to athletes from universities in different geographical locations and intra-division schools.