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Mediating role of academic attitude on sports participation and academic performance

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Abstract

This study examines the mediating effect of academic attitude on the relationship between sport participation and academic achievement of student athletes in Saudi Arabia. A total of 102 subjects comprising of undergraduate student athletes from Saudi Arabia were randomly selected as the sample of this study. Participation in competitive sport is measured as frequency of the students' participation in sports activities in a week (Wicker, Hallmann, Breuer, 2013) and whether the students are active members of sport university teams (Lindner & Kerr, 2000) or sport clubs (Dollman & Lewis, 2010). Academic achievement is measured by the formal academic report from the student athletes' respective university. Survey of Study Habits & Attitudes (SSHA) by Brown and Holtzman (1956) was adapted to measure academic attitude. Result indicates a positive significant relationship between participation in competitive sport and academic achievement. Results also showed a partial mediation of academic attitude on the relationship between sport participation and academic achievement. It was concluded that when a student athlete developed a positive attitude towards academic achievements, the level of their participation in the sport competition will positively affect their academic scores.

Keywords: Sports participation, competitive sports, attitude, academic achievement

1. Introduction

Around the globe, including Middle East, university sports are becoming the common part of students' life ^[1]. The government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, represented by Saudi University Sports Federation (SUSF) is working hard to improve the number of students' participation in competitive sports (PCS), without jeopardizing the academic achievement (AA) of the student athletes. Nevertheless, university students in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia showed inconsequential percentage of participation in competitive sports events ^[2]. With the aim of maintaining a balance between academic achievement and participation in competitive sport, SUSF produced a policy that a student athlete has to maintain good academic achievement in order to participate in competitive sport events ^[2]. Studies on the relationship between academic achievement and participation in competitive reported inconsistent results; for instance, some studies reported negative influence of participation in competitive sport on the students' academic achievement ^[3, 4, 5]. On the other hand, other studies also reported that participation in competitive sport positively influenced the students' academic achievement ^[6, 7, 8]. It was even been reported that there is no significant correlation between competitive sport participation and academic achievement among student athletes ^[9]. It is important to note that none of those studies have been done in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In order to determine whether the SUSF's policy can help achieve the balance between participation in competitive sport and academic achievement, it is important to study the two variables that might play some mediating roles on the relationship between participation in competitive sport and academic achievement among student athletes in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Specifically, it is important to pay attention to the factors that affects participation in competitive sport and academic achievement. The literature suggests that competitive sports participation at the university level is significantly affected by several factors such as the availability of sports facility in the university ^[10], motivation ^[11], and attitude ^[12]. Some studies suggest that attitude can be a common element between academic performance and competitive sports participation. Attitude has been reported ^[13] as an important factor in college students' utilization of sport facilities and is one of the elements of competitive sports

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participation. Similarly, attitude is also reported to be a significant factor for academic performance [14]. The possibility of having a balanced participation in competitive sport and academic achievement might be achieved by altering the academic attitude; hence it is important to determine the mediating role of academic attitude in the relationship between participation in competitive sport and academic achievement. The obtained knowledge can serve as a foundation for further research in improving academic attitude in order to keep participation in competitive sport and academic achievement in balance.

Consistent with the theory of attitudinal base [15], and studies which reported that academic attitude (or can also be called attitude towards academic achievements) is a common element between academic achievement and participation in competitive sport, the aim of this present study is to investigate the mediating effect of academic attitude on the influence of participation in competitive sport on academic achievement. This study seeks to test the hypotheses “There is no mediation effect of academic attitude on the relationship between participation in competitive sport and academic achievement.”

2. Material & methods

A hundred and two (102) undergraduate student athletes were randomly selected from 3 government universities, 2 private universities and 1 private college from the eastern region of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Data collection was done during the fourth season of competitive sports, organized and supervised by the SUSF in 2013-2014. Data were collected using a questionnaire to measure participation in competitive sport,

defined as frequency of the students’ participation in sports activities in a week [16] and whether the students are active members of sport university teams [17] or sport clubs [18]. Academic achievement is measured by the formal academic record provided by the student athletes’ respective university. Finally, Survey of Study Habits & Attitudes (SSHA) by Brown and Holtzman [19] was adapted to measure academic attitude in this current study. This scale is used to measure some of the studying habits and attitudes toward study among the students of colleges and institutes of higher education, and high school students. In addition, the scale consists of four dimensions; "delay avoidance, work methods, teacher approval, education acceptance" and consisted of 100 questions. Translations to Arabic have done by Jaber Abdul Hamid Jaber and Suleiman Khodari Al Sheikh in 1979 [20]. The instrument had been back-translated from English to Arabic. The reliability of the original SSHA was reported to be .93, .91, .88, and .90, respectively for the four week interval of test-retest coefficient. The scale has been adapted into Likert scale in order to fit the requirements of this current study.

3. Results and Discussion

In order to determine the mediation effect of a mediator, a relationship between the independent and dependent variable should be significant. Table 1 indicates the influence of participation in competitive sport on academic achievement. The influence is positive, which means that the more often the student athletes participated in competitive sports, the higher is the academic achievement.

Table 1: Influence of participation in competitive sport on academic achievement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.860	.273		3.153	.002*
	TOTAL participation in competitive sport	.255	.025	.717	10.273	.000*

a. Dependent Variable: AA

In order to determine the mediation effect of a mediator, there must be a significant relationship between the independent and the mediator variable. Table 2 indicates the relationship is

positive, which means that the more often the student athletes participated in competitive sports, the more positive his attitude towards it.

Table 2: Prediction of participation in competitive sport on academic attitude

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	67.432	16.729		4.031	.001*
	TOTAL participation in competitive sport	7.671	1.525	.449	5.031	.001*

a. Dependent Variable: academic attitude

The next step is to determine the mediation effect of a mediator where there must be a significant relationship between the mediator variable and the dependent variable.

Table 3 shows a positive relationship between attitude towards academic achievements and academic achievement.

Table 3: Prediction of academic attitude on academic achievement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	2.077	.276		7.530	.001*
	TOTAL academic attitude	.010	.002	.498	5.745	.001*

a. Dependent Variable: AA

The final step to determine the mediation effect of a mediator is through establishing a relationship between the mediator variable and the dependent variable. Table 4 indicates the β value of the participation in competitive sport with academic attitude (.617) is smaller than the one without (.717). In other words, without academic attitude, the participation in

competitive sport explained 71.7% of the AA variance; with academic attitude included, the proportion of explained variance decreased to 61.7%. Thus, because the β value in the equation 3 showed smaller value than in the equation 1, it can be considered that mediation does occur partially. Sobel Test indicates the test statistic = -10.452, the standard error is

0.0335, and the p-value is less than .001, which means that the indirect effect of the participation in competitive sport on academic achievement via academic attitude is significantly different from zero; the partial mediation is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Academic attitude

mediates the relationship between participation in competitive sport and academic achievement. In other words, when the student athletes develop positive attitude towards academic achievements, the level of their participation in the sport competition positively affect their academic performance.

Table 4: Influence of participation in competitive sport on academic achievement through academic attitude

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.860	.273		3.153	.002*
	participation in competitive sport	.255	.025	.717	10.273	.001*
2	(Constant)	.549	.284		1.937	.056
	participation in competitive sport	.220	.027	.617	8.201	.001*
	academic attitude	.005	.002	.221	2.931	.004*

a. Dependent Variable: AA

4. Conclusion

Finding of this current study indicates the mediating role of academic attitude on the influence of participation in competitive sport on academic achievement. In other words, the more the subjects participate in competitive sports, the higher their academic performance is; especially when they have positive attitude towards the academic achievements. Theoretically, this phenomenon might also be supported by the regulation from SUSF, where only students with high academic achievement can participate in the competitive sports. The results are consistent with Lipscomb [21] and the meta analysis study of Howie and Pate [6], that participation in competitive sport has positive influence on academic achievement. In the context of this current study, the student athletes’ willingness to study and to achieve higher academic achievement can be considered as positive academic attitude. Thus, it can be assumed that because they had already developed academic achievement and participation in competitive sport in the minds, hence they are ready to ‘pay the price’ in order to participate in competitive sports. When the SUSF released their regulations, this willingness to participate in competitive sports was connected to their effort in achieving high academic achievement (positive academic attitude). Nonetheless, because the mediation seemed to occur due to the SUSF regulation, it is worthwhile to question whether without the regulation, findings of this current study will support the finding of Eide and Ronan [9] that there is no correlation between participation in competitive sport and academic achievement.

Accordingly, it is imperative to bear in mind that the the data was only taken from several universities in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, hence different results might be obtained from larger sample within the population of student athletes in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is recommended to the future researchers to look into the variables which are not included in this current research, for instance, the involvement of female athletes, the participation in recreational sports, or even the attitude towards the academic achievement itself. Nevertheless, it is expected that the finding of this current study can be taken as a foundation for further researchers to improve the sport performances or academic achievement among student athletes in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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