The Effect of Fitness Consequences as an Intervention on the Academic Appointment Attendance Rates of Division III College Athletes

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Abstract

The main purpose of this quasi-experimental design study was to determine the effect of a fitness consequence as a measure of accountability on the academic appointment attendance rates of Division III college athletes. Forty-four Division III college athletes participated in the study which spanned over a twelve week period. The null hypothesis is that there will be no significant difference in unexcused academic appointment attendance units missed during the six-week baseline period in which there are no consequences for missing appointments and during the six-week intervention period in which there were fitness consequences for missing academic appointments. The six-week baseline phase did not contain any consequence for a missed academic appointment. The six-week period following the intervention being implemented included the student athletes facing a fitness consequence for missing an academic appointment. Initial analysis for this study did not yield any significant results however a supplementary analysis conducted with only student athletes who had missed one or more academic appointments during the baseline period resulted in significant outcomes. Further research should be conducted to explore how various intervention methods can be used most effectively to improve the academic appointment attendance rates of Division III college athletes.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this action research project was to examine the importance of accountability on attendance rates for collegiate student-athletes and to investigate interventions to increase academic appointment attendance. There was significant research conducted over the first decade of the twenty-first century which observed the correlation between attendance of academic classes and appointments with academic advisers. Under consideration were attendance rates as well as grade point averages of collegiate student-athletes of all levels. Issues considered when studying class attendance for collegiate student-athletes were divided into the following components: expectations, attendance, and accountability. Although the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has minimum requirements pertaining to grade point averages and course credits, there is no requirement for class or academic appointment attendance.

Two studies in particular address the issues of academic attendance and accountability. The discontinuity classroom experiment conducted in 2010 by Dobkin, Gil, and Marion appears to show that regular class attendance significantly improves student academic performance. In 2007, an experiment in the athletics department of the University of Georgia correlated class attendance with graduation rates. After being near the bottom of the Southeastern Conference in graduation rates for student-athletes, an intervention strategy was implemented that fined student athletes $10 for missing a tutoring session. There were also suspensions from athletic contests for missing classes. This intervention strategy proved to be extremely effective as over fifty percent of the University of Georgia's student-athletes had over a 3.0 GPA in the spring semester of 2008 for the first time in the school's history ("Associated Press," 2007, June 7). The University of Georgia study motivated this researcher, an assistant coach for the men's soccer

team at a Division III college, to implement a similar intervention with student-athletes at his school to see if it would improve academic meeting attendance rates.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of a fitness consequence intervention on Division III college student-athletes' academic appointment attendance rates.

Statement of Research Hypothesis

The null hypothesis is that there will be no significant difference in unexcused academic appointment attendance units missed during the six-week baseline period in which there are no consequences for missing appointments and during the six-week intervention period in which there were fitness consequences for missing academic appointments.

After the initial null hypothesis was tested, the researcher conducted a supplementary analysis of the unexcused absences under the two conditions for student athletes at high risk for unexcused absences. The null hypothesis for this supplementary analysis is that there will be no significant difference in unexcused academic appointment attendance units missed during the six-week baseline period in which there are no consequences for missing appointments and during the six-week intervention period in which there were fitness consequences for missing academic appointments for student athletes at high risk from unexcused absences.

Operational Definitions

Academic Attendance Tracker **–** The instrument used for the academic integration coordinator to monitor the student-athlete's attendance at each academic meeting throughout the baseline and intervention periods.

Academic Appointment – The scheduled meeting with the academic integration coordinator that took place on either a weekly or biweekly basis throughout the academic semester.

Attendance – Attendance was measured by attending the given academic appointment. Whether or not the student-athlete arrived on-time, or left early was not taken into consideration. Academic appointment attendance was measured based on reports provided by the academic integration coordinator.

Fitness Consequence – The consequences athletes faced if they missed a class during the intervention period was the fitness consequence. Athletes were required to run a certain distance at 7:00 a.m. on Monday mornings as a consequence. The number of 7:00 a.m. runs required was based upon the number of academic meetings missed.

Unexcused Missed Attendance Unit – The weighted amount of value given to each academic appointment was equal regardless of whether the student-athlete had a weekly or biweekly meeting.

Student-Athletes at High Risk for Unexcused Absences - The student athletes with one or more unexcused absences during the baseline.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review examines the effect of motivation and commitment to class attendance on the grade point average of a collegiate athletic team. The first section provides an overview of the following areas regarding class attendance: expectations, how attendance is measured, and the impact of the attendance rate. The second section provides further insight into the challenges that are presented to class attendance for collegiate student-athletes. In the third section, motivation for student-athletes is discussed. In the final section of this literature review, interventions for improving classroom attendance are described.

Class Attendance

In order to best explore the correlation between class attendance and grade point average, it is useful to discuss how class attendance is defined and the other aspects associated with it. Class attendance for collegiate student-athletes can be divided into the following components: expectations, ways of measuring class attendance, and the impact of class attendance. This section will begin by examining the expectations regarding class attendance for a collegiate student-athlete.

These academic expectations are generally defined as follows by Carodine, Almond, and Gratto (2001), “As students they are responsible for fulfilling their academic responsibilities (attending classes, studying, and passing exams). In addition, they must achieve and maintain NCAA eligibility standards” (p. 19). “Intercollegiate athletes and effective education practices: Winning combination or losing effort?” a paper presented by Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, and Hannah (n.d.) contains the following statement on intercollegiate academic expectations:

> Scrutiny of intercollegiate athletics has intensified in recent years. This study compares the engagement of student-athletes with those of non-athletes in effective academic practices. Contrary to many reports in the popular media, the findings from this study indicate that, on balance, student-athletes across a large number of colleges and universities do not differ greatly from their peers in terms of their participation in effective education practices. In most instances, when differences do exist, they favor athletes. (p. 2)

Although the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) requires student-athletes to maintain minimum grade point averages and course credit amounts, they do not mandate a specific percentage of class attendance in order to remain academically eligible. There have been many studies and experiments investigating the reasoning for not having an NCAA class attendance policy. It should be noted that the different divisions of the NCAA vary as far as the opportunity for students to attend all classes due to the amount of required travel and out-of-season regulations. The study by Carodine et al. also shows that there are significant variables in the requirements of each institution as well as the expectations concerning class attendance that are monitored by the coach of each student-athlete. As the expectations of class attendance are established by each institution and coach, they are then monitored and measured using varying techniques.

The expectations that are established and provided to the student-athletes at the beginning of each academic year are monitored by an array of tools to track their academic results. The size of the institution and athletic department more often than not determine which method of academic monitoring is used. For example, many Division I and Division II institutions use student-athlete services to track their specific student-athletes. As studied by Figler and Figler

(1984) three decades ago, effective models of student-athlete advising programs provide counselors to aid in the following areas of course selection: study hall, assessment of skills deficiencies, and eligibility monitoring. On the other hand, in the majority of Division III institutions, class attendance and academic progress are monitored by coaches tracking their team members and establishing working relationships with professors in order to acquire such information as class attendance rates and exam results. These responsibilities are often delegated to the coaches and athletic directors due to a lack of funding for specific monitors that is present at larger more prominent institutions. The results of the varied academic monitoring tools are quite frequently the basis for studies that examine the impact on the overall academic progress.

On the topic of the impact of class attendance on grade point average, there have been varying results in studies similar to this one. It was revealed by a meta-analysis reviewed by Crede, Roch, and Kieszczynka (2010) that there is a strong relationship between class attendance in college and college grades. In another regression discontinuity classroom experiment, as conducted by Dobkin et al. (2010), further evidence is shown that class attendance significantly improves student performance. Although these studies suggest evidence of positive correlation between class attendance and higher student academic performance, there are considerable challenges facing collegiate athletes and their ability to attend all classes.

Challenges to Attendance for Athletes

The challenges that present themselves to today's collegiate student-athletes can be extremely physically and mentally taxing. As described by Carodine et al. (2001), "student athletes are a diverse special population because of their roles on campus, their atypical lifestyles, and their special needs" (p. 19). These atypical lifestyles require particular time

management skills, commitment to their academic and athletic endeavors, and also a discipline throughout their daily life to complete all of their school work and required athletic participation. One of the most time-consuming challenges that collegiate student-athletes face is the required travel for specific athletic events and the class time that is missed.

The travel time that is incurred by student-athletes to and from away games or matches is a significant challenge as it requires classes to be missed and valuable time that could be spent on academics exchanged for time on the road. The time that is required for travel often varies with the size of the institution and whether they compete in Division I, II, or III. For the fact that there is a greater emphasis on athletic success and much larger athletic budgets in Division's I and II schools, there is often more travel time required because they have the funding to travel further distances in order to play against more competitive opponents. Many Division I and II athletic conferences have institutions spanning over numerous states and a particular region of the country, whereas Division III has a greater emphasis on academics and therefore their athletic conferences are planned around this academic emphasis. The stress that is put on participation and academic achievement in Division III causes athletic conferences to limit institutions to those which are within acceptable driving distances; therefore, student-athletes miss less time in the classroom. The student-athletes who must contend with lost class time due to athletic travel are often compensated by having tutors and academic services on the trip with them. The argument that is used to justify the missing of significant class time and the funding of these student services is the tremendous amounts of revenue and attention that major collegiate sports bring to an institution. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of Division III institutions reiterate their emphasis on academic achievement over athletic success by minimizing travel for weekday contests and arranging for any contest that requires more

substantial travel time to be played on a weekend. Rhatigan (1984) discusses this reality in a study conducted several decades ago. He found that travel requirements may cause student-athletes to miss up to 26 percent of their classes.

Student-athletes can also be presented with the issue of balancing lives outside of athletics which can be greatly affected by the necessary travel requirements. This commitment by athletics can often lead to emotional strain and a feeling of isolation. The time demands that are associated with participating in an intercollegiate tournament can create a disconnect with the rest of the campus and negatively affect the overall college experience. “Loneliness affects academic and athletic performance, poor athletic performance affects academic performance, and so on” (Hurley & Cunningham, 1984, p. 55). The breach in connection to the rest of the active student body and college environment can be alleviated by providing collaborative programs between student-athletes and the non-athlete student body. The overall academic performance of intercollegiate student-athletes is not only greatly affected by such factors as time management and travel requirements, but their academic success is also contingent on the motivation of the students, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Motivation for Attendance by Athletes

The motivation of student-athletes to perform well both on the field and in the classroom is an important factor in the extent of student success. The motivation to succeed both in the classroom and on the field can come from any number of factors. These motives can be separated into two definitive categories: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the ability to motivate oneself from within in order to reach the full potential in all aspects of life. Extrinsic motivation includes outside factors that motivate oneself to reach a certain goal, such

as a decrease in a grade for missing classes or having to participate in extra fitness sessions if a fitness test is failed. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be directly related to the desire to attend class or not. “Skipping class in college and exam performance: Evidence from a regression discontinuity classroom experiment,” a paper presented by Dobkin et al. (2010) contains the following statement on endogenous effort:

> We have presented evidence that immutable characteristics such as gender and year in school vary smoothly across the threshold. Student incentives, however, may change discontinuously as a direct result of the policy’s implementation. Unobserved factors such as effort outside the class could as a result be discontinuous across the policy threshold. (p. 573)

The desire and ability to self-motivate is a crucial dynamic in the outcome of the overall success of a collegiate student-athlete. In a qualitative study conducted by Adler and Adler (1987), 40 Division I men’s college basketball players were studied. The results of this four-year study show that college student-athletes in their freshman and sophomore years are more academically motivated than their teammates who are juniors and seniors. Students who are able to inspire themselves to attend all classes and fully utilize their time outside of the class setting to complete all required assignments to the best of the ability will reap their benefits of seeing maximum academic progress. The transition from high school to a college environment often proves to be a challenging test for freshman students. Students who choose to attend all of their classes and fully embrace the benefits that a college education provides will have a greater chance at academic success than students who see attending class as a chore or unnecessary task.

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is also a contributing factor to the desire to attend class and reach maximum academic achievement. Dobkin et al.'s (2010) results suggest that class attendance significantly improves student performance and also suggest that attendance can be improved by instituting a mandatory attendance policy. Extrinsic motivation is the incentive to complete a set task because there is an outside influence driving the actions of the student-athletes. These outside incentives could include mandated class attendance by a professor or coach, or the reward of not having to attend study hall any longer if the student-athletes attend all of their classes for the semester. Conard (2004) observed in her study which examined the differences in class attendance and levels of conscientiousness and incentives that conscientiousness has a greater influence on class attendance than incentive programs did. The results of this study showed that conscientiousness accounted for 14% of variance in attendance compared to 1% for incentives.

Interventions for Improving Classroom Attendance

The review of the literature has identified the issue of intercollegiate student-athletes missing classes for various reasons. Student athletes who lack the desire to motivate themselves intrinsically require outside influences and intervention strategies in order to make them aware of the educational value of attending a maximum number of classes. Denson (1994) suggests that it is necessary for institutions and faculty to work in a cohesive manner in order to request and monitor current grades and attendance records of student athletes. He states, "Information regarding a student athlete's grade in a course is vital to the implementation of appropriate intervention strategies, such as assigning a tutor if needed" (p. 247). Assigning tutors to provide academic support to student-athletes is one of many intervention strategies also to include

mandating class attendance, providing other academic support services, and establishing consequences for missed classes.

Assigning Tutors for Academic Support

"In January 1991, the NCAA Division I membership adopted a proposal mandating academic counseling and tutoring services for all Division I student-athletes. The supported premise was that an institution that recruits student-athletes should give them an opportunity to receive a full educational experience, not solely an athletics one" (Meyer, 2005, p. 15). The assignment of a program tutor requires the student athlete to be held accountable for learning the material that is being taught in the classroom setting for that particular class as well as attending classes because the program tutor is also responsible for attending the designated classes in order to learn the program material.

Repercussions for Classroom Absence

It is widely known that student athletes can be motivated by extrinsic motives including incentive programs for completing all necessary requirements or fear of consequences for failing to meet designated requirements. Professional sports established a framework for handing out monetary fines for specific violations in order to persuade the athlete from becoming a repeat offender of the violation. Schad, college football analyst, made the following statement in his 2010 article, "Financial Penalties for Players Possible"

"Players who lose their college eligibility for receiving improper benefits from agents could face financial penalties upon entering the NFL draft under a proposal being considered by a panel of college and pro officials seeking solutions to the problem" (par. 1).

This intervention strategy has also been implemented in several NCAA institutions. This strategy was introduced at the University of Georgia beginning with the spring semester in 2007 ("Associated Press," 2007, June 7). The idea to enforce fines and suspensions for missed academic requirements emerged from the University because of its ranking near the bottom of the Southeastern Conference for student-athlete graduation rates in a number of sports. Ted White, the Director of Academic Services at the University of Georgia, said the idea is this simple ("Associated Press," 2007, June 7): "we want our individuals going to class and getting a quality education" (par. 9). The new intervention strategy saw a student-athlete receive a $10 fine for missing any tutoring session after they were allowed one absence. The consequences for missing class time carried an even harsher penalty: if student-athletes accumulated three absences in any specific course, then they are penalized by being suspended for ten percent of their team's athletic contests ("Associated Press," 2007, June 7). It should be noted that all fines collected by this intervention strategy were donated to the United Way. The study resulted in drastic improvements that included more than 50 percent of Georgia's student-athletes recording a 3.0 or higher grade point average during the Spring semester for the first time in the institution's history ("Associated Press," 2007, June 7).

Summary

The review of the literature suggests that having a high rate of class attendance is integral to the learning environment and academic achievement of intercollegiate student-athletes. It also proposes that expectations and academic measurements vary depending on specific institution requirements as well as in which division of the NCAA that each particular institution participates. Furthermore, the review suggests that there are significant challenges facing intercollegiate student-athletes who do not present themselves to typical college students. These

challenges include extensive travel requirements and considerable learning that takes place with academic support services while traveling. The considerable research that has been done on the impact of class attendance on grade point averages implies that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of these atypical students are crucial variables in the pursuit of academic and athletic excellence. In conclusion, the research that has been conducted on the impact of class attendance on grade point averages among intercollegiate student-athletes suggests a positive correlation between the two variables.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This study utilized a quasi-experimental design with a convenience sample in which academic meeting attendance during a six-week baseline was compared to class attendance during the six-week intervention period. Academic appointment attendance was weighted to compensate with the frequencies of meetings. The independent variable was whether or not athletes received fitness consequences for missing meetings. The dependent variable was the number of missed meeting attendance units.

Participants

The 44 participants in this action research project were all members of a varsity athletic program in Division III at a college in the mid-Atlantic region. All subjects were required by their respective coaches to meet with the academic integration coordinator. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 21. Both underclassmen and upperclassmen participated in this autumn-conducted study. The 44 student-athlete participants were required by their respective coaches to meet with the academic integration coordinator due to poor academic performance the previous semester. The supplementary analysis included 14 participants. This group of participants included eight males and six females.

Instrument

The instrument that was used to measure the data was the academic attendance tracker. This attendance tracker is the document on which the academic integration coordinator charted the attendance of student-athletes for every scheduled meeting. In most cases, the reliability and validity of the data depended only on the accuracy of the academic integration coordinator. For

these students, there was no reliability or validity data as to the accuracy of their class attendance calendar entries.

Procedure

The method of measuring the academic meeting attendance rates of each subject involved was a weekly or biweekly attendance tracker of each meeting. Each subject was given a specific 15-minute slot based on their class schedules which indicated when the student-athletes were to meet with the academic integration coordinator. The frequency of attendance was determined by the academic integration coordinator. If the student-athletes attended their scheduled meeting, they received an "x" in the attendance tracker. If the student-athletes missed any meetings, they received an "AB" on the attendance tracker. The attendance tracker was collected from the academic integration coordinator at the end of the fall semester.

The academic meetings typically lasted 15 minutes depending on whether the meeting was weekly or bi-weekly. The meetings consisted of the academic integration coordinator reviewing previous tests and academic assignments as well as preparing the student for upcoming tests or assignments by reviewing the syllabus of each course.

The baseline data for this research consisted of the academic meeting attendance rates of the student-athletes six weeks prior to the intervention being implemented. There were no consequences for missing meetings during the baseline. The attendance baseline was compared to the attendance during the six weeks of meetings during the final six weeks of the fall semester after the intervention technique had been instituted.

The fitness consequence intervention was initiated after the six-week baseline period and at the beginning of the second half of the fall semester. In the meeting prior to the

intervention being implemented, each participant was sent an email and a printed document outlining the intervention and the consequences for each missed academic appointment. The student-athletes had to attend one 7:00 a.m. Monday morning run if they missed one meeting. The attendance tracker was reviewed at the end of each week and the student-athletes performed their consequence the following week. If the student-athletes missed a meeting for a second time, their fitness consequence resulted in three additional 7:00 a.m. Monday morning runs. For example, if student-athletes missed a required scheduled meeting in Week One and then missed one again in Week Two, they would be held accountable for four 7:00 a.m. Monday morning runs. The consequence for the third missed meeting was the most severe. In addition to attending three more 7:00 a.m. Monday morning runs the student-athletes were not allowed to attend their next practice. In lieu of practice, they spent two hours working with a tutor in the Learning Resource Center.

The following excuses were the only valid ones for an excused absence: illness, family emergency, class conflict, or athletic commitment. In order for the absence to be excused, student-athletes were required to either call or email the academic integration coordinator before their upcoming meeting to notify her of their forthcoming absence. If they contacted the academic integration coordinator after their scheduled meeting time, the meeting was marked as an absence on the attendance tracker. Regardless of whether or not absences were approved, student-athletes were required to make up the meeting with the academic integration coordinator within 48 hours of their missed appointment.

The morning runs were to be completed as assigned. The action research designer met the student-athletes at the indoor track at 7:00 a.m. each Monday morning to give them details of their required run. The duration of the run correlated with the number of missed meetings and

increased by a half mile for each additional missed academic appointment. For example, the first missed meeting resulted in a single one mile run. A second missed meeting resulted in each of the following three runs increasing by a half mile each week. The student-athletes were to complete the run without stopping. This fitness consequence was completed Monday morning following the missed meeting.

The members of athletic department were made aware of the study during a staff meeting in August, 2014, before the fall semester began. The director of athletics, as well as the head coaches of each of the nineteen varsity programs, agreed to have their student-athletes participate and abide by the given consequences. As an important aside, not a single head coach had previously held their student-athletes accountable in any way for missing a meeting with the academic integration coordinator before this study was performed. All of the participating student-athletes were made aware of the study after the baseline period and understood and agreed to the fitness consequence intervention. Although the head coaches were made aware of the study before the baseline period began, the student-athletes were not informed of the fitness consequences until the week prior to the intervention being initiated. Non-independent sample t-tests were used to compare the number of meeting attendance units missed during the baseline to the number of academic attendance units missed during the intervention.

After the action research designer concluded the original analysis and received no significant results, a supplemental analysis was conducted. This supplemental analysis included student athlete participants that had an unexcused absence on their academic attendance tracker during the initial baseline period.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the importance of accountability on attendance rates for collegiate student-athletes and to investigate interventions to increase academic appointment attendance. The null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference in unexcused academic appointment attendance units missed during the six-week baseline period in which there are no consequences for missing appointments and during the six-week intervention period in which there were fitness consequences for missing academic appointments failed to be rejected. Please refer to Table 1 which shows no significant difference between the mean number of unexcused absences; this means those absences did not differ significantly between the baseline period (Mean = .49, SD = .80) and the intervention period (Mean = 0.35, SD = .69) [t(42) = .97,p = .34] among the total subject group.

After the initial null hypothesis was tested, the researcher conducted a supplementary analysis of the unexcused absences under the two conditions for student-athletes at high risk for unexcused absences. This supplementary analysis displayed in Table 2 produced significant results and rejected the null hypothesis as the mean number of unexcused absences was significantly higher during the baseline period (Mean = 1.50, SD = .65) than during the intervention period (Mean = 0.57, SD = .76) [t(13) = 3.48, p = .004] among the students who had had absences during the baseline period.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and t-test Results for Unexcused Absences during Baseline and Intervention Conditions for All Subjects

Conditions		Mean	Std. Deviation	t
Pair 1	baseline	.49	.80	.97 (NS)
	intervention	.35	.69	

NS = non-significant at $p < .05$

N = 43

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and t-test Results for Unexcused Absences during Baseline and Intervention Conditions for Students with Absences during Baseline

Condition	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Significance
baseline	1.50	.65		
intervention	.57	.76	3.48	.004*

* Significant at $p < .01$

N = 14

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The results of the study failed to reject the initial null hypothesis that there would be no significant difference in unexcused academic appointment attendance units missed during the six-week baseline period in which there are no consequences for missing appointments and during the six-week intervention period in which there were fitness consequences for missing academic appointments. However, a supplementary analysis presented results that showed a significant difference among student athletes that had absences during the baseline period. This additional analysis examined only the participants who had at least one unexcused absence during the baseline period. The initial study resulted in the null hypothesis failing to be rejected whereas the supplementary analysis yielded results that rejected the null hypothesis.

Implications of the Results

The value of class and academic appointment attendance has been a long standing issue at all levels of collegiate athletics. As the popularity of collegiate athletics continues to rise and the expectations of the student athletes involved becomes ever more demanding, the issue of the academic attendance needs to be addressed. Due to the drastically different travel schedules and emphasis placed on athletics at the Division I, II, and III levels, there is a significant difference in the opportunities for student-athletes to attend classes and academic appointments. By looking at the motives of student-athletes when they are held accountable for missing academic appointments, the results could disclose some of the underlying factors that motivate student-athletes to ensure their attendance to expected academic meetings.

The implications of this study are that athletic programs should have fitness consequences for missed academic appointments. The implementation of this intervention strategy shows the significance of fitness consequences as a method of holding collegiate student-athletes accountable for academic appointment attendance.

Threats to Validity

The outcomes of the research present several different threats to validity. There were multiple threats to internal validity.

First, the study did not take into consideration the academic meetings that the academic integration coordinator canceled due to scheduling conflicts. There were a number of days and times in which the academic integration coordinator had scheduling conflicts as she also served as the head women's volleyball coach. Although most of the meetings were rescheduled for a later time, not every canceled meeting by the academic coordinator was confirmed to have actually taken place.

Second, the study also did not consider an excused absence from the participant and whether or not that was confirmed to have been completed at a later date. A third threat to validity would be the fact the consequences were not consistent all the way through the intervention period. There were fitness consequences for the first two missed academic appointments but the third missed appointment resulted in a missed practice and study hall hours.

Connections to Previous Studies/Existing Literature

Every year there is research conducted to examine the correlation between collegiate student-athletes and their attendance rates with class requirements and academic appointments and the effect on graduation rates and grade point averages. Although this study focused solely on the effect of on accountability for required academic appointments, the results could be used for future research to determine how accountability on student-athletes in Division III correlates to graduation rates and grade point averages.

This particular study was inspired by the research that was conducted in the University of Georgia's athletic department in 2007 that was discussed in Chapter I. In that study, an intervention was implemented that fined student-athletes $10 for missing a tutoring session and suspended student-athletes from athletic contests for missing classes. As reported in the Associated Press article from June, 2007, the intervention method proved tremendously effective as the University of Georgia's student-athletes had over a 3.0 GPA for the first time in the school's history. Consistent with the University of Georgia study, the current study found that an intervention that provides penalties for missing academic obligations to be successful.

The research conducted at this Division III institution could use the results yielded from this study in conjunction with the intervention and analysis from the University of Georgia in order to implement new athletic department policies with the goal of increasing grade point averages and graduation rates. In addition, the results of showing that regular class attendance significantly improves academic performance yielded in the 2010 discontinuity classroom experience by Dobkin et al. (2010) could be used to supplement this particular study for future research in examining accountability in class attendance.

Implications for Future Research

To account for this validity issue related to students being included in the study based on the criteria of individual coaches, the future research could set a threshold for all student-athletes, whether it would be a set amount of unexcused absences from classes and academic appointments from the previous semester or a specific minimum grade point average. Future research in this particular area should seek to implement other intervention techniques to see which interventions serve as the most effective with collegiate student-athletes.

Conclusions and Summary

The findings of this research appear to support the position that accountability is important in Division III student-athletes attending mandatory academic appointments. The study aimed to measure the effectiveness of an intervention in which athletes received fitness consequences for missing academic appointments. The data collected from the initial study that included all athletes that were required to attend academic appointments, showed that students did not miss significantly less meetings when there was a consequence.

However, when subsequent analysis included only high-risk athletes who missed academic appointments during baseline, the null hypothesis was rejected. This data demonstrated that for high risk athletes, fitness consequences improved appointment attendance.

Several questions from this study may be applicable: Does accountability really make a difference in academic attendance? Would a different intervention strategy prove to be more effective? What are the over-riding motivational factors when it comes to collegiate student-athletes and attending academic appointments?

In order to improve maximum academic performance and engagement among athletes, it will be important to examine a multitude of intervention techniques implemented at Division III institutions to see which strategies provide the most effective results. There is a significant challenge that lies in trying to determine the intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors for student-athletes and to know which evaluation process would serve as the most useful to yield relevant results. However, the current results indicate providing a fitness consequence for missed academic appointments can be an inexpensive and effective component of academic interventions.

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