

The importance of life skills for sports degree students: How they contribute to students' academic performance, health-related quality of life and flourishing

Introduction

- **Life skills** are important for preparing adolescents for the future and ensuring their healthy development (World Health Organisation, 1999). They include teamwork, goal setting and time management.
- **Life skills or employability skills** are essential for success in today's jobs market (Hanbury and Malti, 2011). This is particularly the case in sports careers which often require teamwork, communication and leadership skills (BASES, 2016).
- **Research and theory** would suggest that life skills impact upon students' academic performance, health and well-being (Benson and Saito, 2001).
- **Aim of this study:** explore the relationships between university sports degree students' life skills (teamwork, goal setting, time management, emotional skills, interpersonal communication, social skills, leadership, problem solving & decision making) and their academic self-efficacy, predicted academic performance, health-related quality of life (physical, emotional, social, work/school functioning), and flourishing.



Method

Participants



N = 423 sports degree students

Yr. 1 (n = 150), Yr. 2 (n = 110),

Yr. 3 (n = 112), Yr. 4 (n = 48).



Age = 20.42 ± 2.56 years

Females = 187, males = 236



87.7% played sport

67.6% worked part-time

17.5% volunteered

Measures

Life Skills Ability Scale (Cronin et al., in prep.) – 43 items

I... "work well within a group" (teamwork), "speak clearly to others" (communication), "organise group members to work together" (leadership). Response format: 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Chemers et al., 2001) – 8 items

"I am a very good student". Response format: 1 (*very untrue*) to 7 (*very true*).

Predicted Academic Performance – 1 item

"In percentage terms, what do you believe your overall grade will be at the end of the current academic year?"

Pediatrics Quality of Life Inventory – Young Adult Version (Varni and Limbers, 2009) – 23 items

"It is hard for me to run" (physical functioning), "I feel sad or blue" (emotional functioning), "I have trouble getting along with other adults" (social functioning), and "I have trouble keeping up with my work or studies" (work/school functioning). Response format: 1 (*never*) to 5 (*almost always*).

Flourishing Scale (Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2009) – 8 items

"I am optimistic about the future". Response format: 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

All subscales displayed adequate internal consistency reliability (α coefficient range = .70 to .89)

Results

Mean Scores

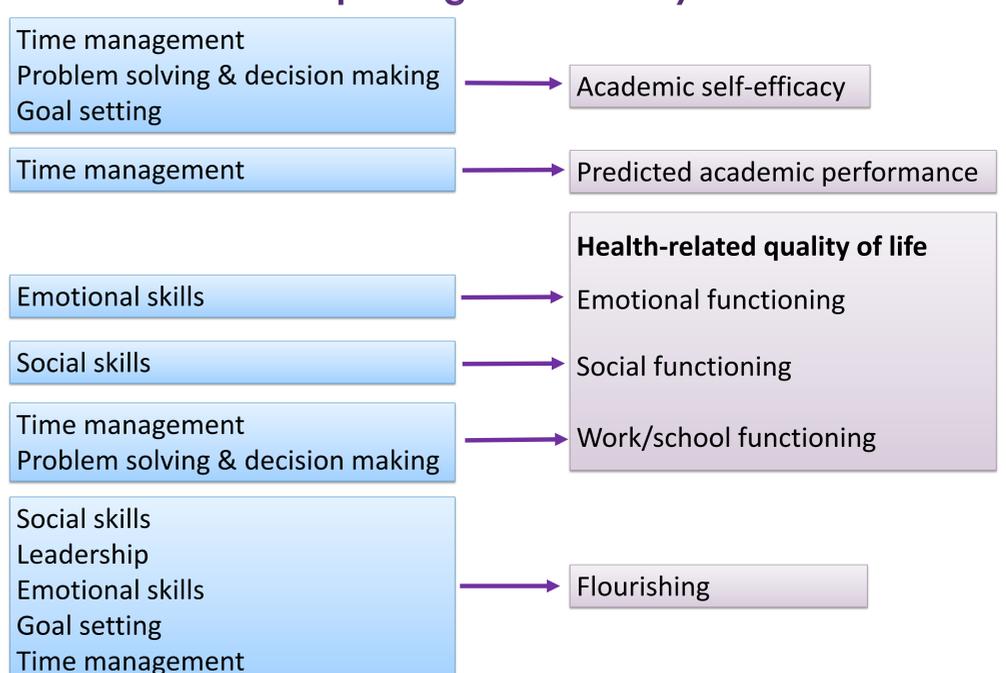
Life Skills	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Teamwork	1	2	3	4 X	5
Goal setting	1	2	3	X 4	5
Time management	1	2	3	X 4	5
Emotional skills	1	2	3	X 4	5
Communication	1	2	3	4 X	5
Social skills	1	2	3	4 X	5
Leadership	1	2	3	X 4	5
Problem solving & decision	1	2	3	X 4	5
Total life skills	1	2	3	X 4	5

	Very untrue	Very true
Academic Self-Efficacy	1 2 3 4 X 5 6 7	
Predicted Academic Performance	61.34%	

Health-Related Quality of Life	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
Physical functioning	1	2	3	4 X	5
Emotional functioning	1	2	3	X 4	5
Social functioning	1	2	3	4 X	5
Work/school functioning	1	2	3	X 4	5

	Strongly disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Strongly agree
Psychological well-being	1 2 3 4 5 X 6 7		

Multiple Regression Analyses



Discussion

Students' life skills contribute to their academic self-efficacy & performance, health-related quality of life, and flourishing.

Key Findings

In practice, teaching staff should seek to develop students' life skills during their degree programme.

Practical Application

This was a cross-sectional study, so causal relationships could not be determined.

Main Limitation

Future research should seek to corroborate students' ratings of their life skills and assess life skills development longitudinally.

Future Research