

# P8158 Final Project

## Investigating the Effect of Athletic Identity on Overall Well-Being during COVID-19

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### Introduction

The onset of COVID-19 affected almost every sphere of work and leisure. Certain industries and the people in them were affected by the pandemic in interesting ways, as they exist between both work and leisure. In this project, we focused in on one of these industries, athletics, to investigate how one's athletic identity may have impacted their overall well-being, as one's experience of playing a sport and being an athlete may have undergone dramatic changes over the past few years.

### Dataset

The dataset we selected contains demographic information and responses for five surveys for athletes and non-athletes in the UK. This data was collected after the country's first COVID-19 lockdown. In total, 753 individuals were interviewed – we will focus our analysis on the 363 athletes represented in this study (reserving the 390 non-athletes for a comparison analysis).

- Athletic Identity Scale (AIMS)
- The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)
- Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF)

### Methodology

1. Conduct PCA to estimate number of components ( $n$ ) underlying observed variables.
2. Run EFA models on  $n$  and  $n \pm 1$  components, compare fit statistics and interpretability to select structure to move forward with.
3. Perform CFA to evaluate fit of latent structure.
4. Evaluate reliability of the determined latent variables with Chronbach's alpha.
5. Construct SEM(s) to quantify the relationship between our constructed latent variables and mental health score.

### Variables of Interest

Latent:

- Athletic Identity
- Resilience (potential mediator)
- Healthy Lifestyle (potential mediator)

Observed Outcome:

- MHC-SF Sum Score

## **Results**

## **Conclusion**

## **Discussion**

Given the context of this survey, a lack of access to one's sport is a possible explanation for the negative effect athletic identity seems to have produced on overall well-being.

The differences in direct effects between athletic identity and overall well-being between athletes and non-athletes is difficult to account for. Perhaps one possible explanation for the well-being of non-athletes being affected far more than the well-being of athletes by one's reported athletic identity is that though COVID-19 made playing a sport different/difficult universally, athletes may have had more resources at their disposal (i.e., support from coaches, other athletic professionals, etc.)

Our findings for resilience as a trait that is positively associated with mental health and overall well-being agrees with previous research.

## **Limitations and Recommendations for Further Study**

The results of this study should be applied with caution – while making efforts to bolster one's resilience may be something to consider, some exercises to do so may be dangerous.

More variables may exist between the causal pathways we have defined (between athletic identity and overall well-being and perhaps even between athletic identity and resilience).

Treating the `healthy_lifestyle` latent variable as a formative (rather than a reflective) construct might more accurately reflect its nature and allow this construct to be used in SEM.

Demographic characteristics, such as sex, age group, and type of sport, are recommended to be included in future analysis.

## References

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## Appendix