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REVIEW

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The Athletic Identity and Level of Optimism of Selected University of Santo Tomas Institute Student-Athletes during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted sporting events, which led to the cancellation of games and student-athletes being isolated at home and conducting their training online. The study looked at how student-athletes view themselves and their levels of optimism before and during the pandemic.

Materials and methods. The study is a descriptive quantitative research that adapted the constructs of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) by Brewer & Cornelius (2001) and Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) by Scheier, Carver, & Bridges (1994). Slovin's formula and stratified random sampling were used to select the respondents. Google Form was used to gather data on the 154 UST-IPEA student-athletes. For data analysis, Microsoft Data Analysis ToolPak was used as statistical software.

Results. The results show that the factors of Level of Optimism, namely: Gender, Typology of Sports, and Competitive Level, do not affect the student-athletes Level of Optimism before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, the factors of Athletic Identity, namely: Gender, Year Level, and Socioeconomic Status, do not affect the student-athletes' Athletic Identity before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, one factor that affects the student-athletes' Athletic Identity during the COVID-19 pandemic is the Typology of Sports. To sum up, the Athletic Identity and Level of Optimism possess a weak correlation.

Conclusions. Based on the results of the study, it is concluded to regularly monitor the student-athletes' Athletic Identity and Level of Optimism by taking the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) by Brewer & Cornelius (2001) and Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) by Scheier, Carver, & Bridges (1994).

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INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is a fatal coronavirus pandemic that struck the world in 2020. The WHO recommended social distancing and discouraged human-to-human contact (Wong et al., 2020). The pandemic has affected numerous facets of everyday life, but it has also caused the cessation of sporting events worldwide. Sports competitions have been

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delayed and canceled at regional, national, and international levels in the sporting industry.

The Olympics and Paralympics have been delayed for the first time in recent times and will instead take place in 2021. The athletes have encountered confusion, fatigue, distress, and anger as a result of the resulting limitations on community training enforced by social distancing steps, the closed down of training centers, and the lack of face-to-face access to coaches and support staff (Liu et al., 2020). On any given day, every person on the planet has a million ideas, opinions, tasks, and so ongoing through their minds. Although we are all preoccupied with varying facets of life, one thing that stays consistent is time passing. In other words, work-life harmony is a term in which the work and personal life are stable. You must have good time management skills for the work-life relationship to be beneficial and healthy. When individuals use time management skills, they may recognize when they devote too much time to one aspect of their work or personal life (Sammarone, 2017).

Student-athletes, like the rest of us, sometimes woke up exhausted. Some athletes have realized that the "balance" our society needs in work, community, activities, joys, and challenges are sought by exercising a diverse mentality every day rather than constructing a rigid and deliberately designed fulcrum. It began with the need to get out of bed (Mills, 2019). As a distinct group continually faced with particular social and learning difficulties, student-athletes are at an elevated risk for developmental and psychiatric disorders that can lead to several stressors later in their sporting careers. With schools closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, sporting seasons being cut short or postponed, and professional preparation unclear, it is vital to consider some particular obstacles this demographic faces.

Therefore, it is important to consider student-athletes' emotional and physical status to ensure that their needs are fulfilled and that their health and well-being are safeguarded (Liu et al., 2020). As can be shown, there is a major break from the standard for a student-athlete's life. Aside from the interruption of routine, there are and maybe long-term physical and emotional consequences. To start, many athletes become deconditioned due to the widespread closure of gyms and on-field activity during the

early stages of the pandemic's reopening. Many athletes began or are beginning their seasons with less strength and agility than previous seasons due to a lack of exercise. Athletes' bodies are at a significantly greater risk of injuries due to this physical state associated with limited preparation and ramp-up time to train for full athletics activity.

Furthermore, fewer practices, tournaments, and ramp-up time can be detrimental to athletes competing for playing time. Coaches have been forced to rely on previous seasons' familiarity with players due to a shortage of funding, denying some of the ability to show their skills. Finally, high school athletes aiming to participate in college are at a disadvantage due to a lack of athletic experience in meets and games. Colleges will have one less season to focus on recruitment and scholarship opportunities due to the canceled seasons, which will, sadly, adversely impact those not guaranteed to participate (Bosjlie, 2020).

This study examines the athletic identity and level of optimism of selected study athletes of the University of Santo Tomas, Institute of Physical Education and Athletics and the factors that affect these two constructs before and during the Covid 19 pandemic. An athletic identity is a form of identity that is determined by how much one identifies with the athletic role (Brewer et al., 1993). According to the identity theory, to identify as an athlete, one must act like an athlete. Physical activity is a behavior that is consistent with an athlete's function, so it implies that having a well-established athletic identity is associated with physical activity behavior. Indeed, possessing a stronger athletic identity is correlated to more physical activity participation (Anderson, 2004). As a self-concept, athletic identity can define how individuals evaluate their competence or worth. The amount of worth and competence individuals place on self-concept may influence their self-esteem, affect, and motivation (Brewer et al., 1993). It is important to remember that athletic identity is not solely defined by physical activity. In addition, the type of physical activity associated with athletic identity may be different from the athletic environment. Athletic identity differs from exercise identity in that it is more complex. Many who consider themselves exercisers are more likely to engage in more beneficial physical activity (Anderson & Cychosz, 1995). Still, exercise activity may or may not be related

to athletics or athletic identity. Athletic identity is more intrinsically tied to competitive sports. As a result, engagement in particular modes or intensities of physical activity associated with competitive sport training can be connected to athletic identity.

Luthans, Luthans, and Luthans (2004) proposed that positive organizational behavior theory could be combined with positive psychology in a concept termed PsyCap, which comprises four components: self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. Self-efficacy is related to how individuals believe that their capacity to execute behaviors is sufficient to attain specific performance levels. Confidence in one's ability to control their motivation, behavior, and social environment also affects self-efficacy. According to Snyder, Irving, and Anderson (1991), hope is defined as a positive attitude reinforced by interactions among success, strategies, and determination. People with higher levels of hope are more likely to establish clear goals and manage multiple pathways toward achieving these goals, even in the face of obstacles. Optimism is defined as a tendency to believe that life experiences are more likely to be positive. Optimists are also more likely to view outcomes of future events in a positive light and maintain a positive mental state. Resilience refers to the ability of an individual to recover from unpleasant experiences.

A The literature presented highlighted the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic role and its effects on the athlete's identity and optimism using the Identity Theory and Positive Organizational Theory. As Scheier and Carver (1985) would claim, the optimism level in a person can determine how well the individual can adjust physically and psychologically when faced with adversity, and according to Harter (1990) and Rosenburg (1989), a person's optimism or motivation are impacted likely by performances. Furthermore, the factors under Athletic Identity and Level of Optimism supported the research problem. The literature showed how vital the Identity Theory and Positive Organizational Theory are Merrero and Cabelleira (2010) said that optimism has a positive outlook and helps people's life satisfaction achieve their individual goals.

The literature helped the researchers further understand and narrow down what they wanted to do for the study. The literature aided them to identify the possible

variables that impacted the Athletic Identity and Level of Optimism, and these were gender, typology of sports, and competitive level for Athletic Identity, which were stated in the study of Costa et al. (2020) entitled "Athletes and Adversities: Athletic Identity and Emotional Regulation in a Time of COVID-19". For the Level of Optimism, the identified variables were gender, year level, and socioeconomic status, which were stated in the study of Pérez et al. (2014) entitled "What makes us optimistic? Psychological factors as predictors of dispositional optimism in young people".

Moreover, there were already available scales widely used in assessing Athletic Identity and Level of Optimism, such as those developed by Prof. Britton Brewer Ph.D., the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS), and Prof Michael Scheier, which is the Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R).

The Hypothesized Model/Conceptual Framework/Research Paradigm

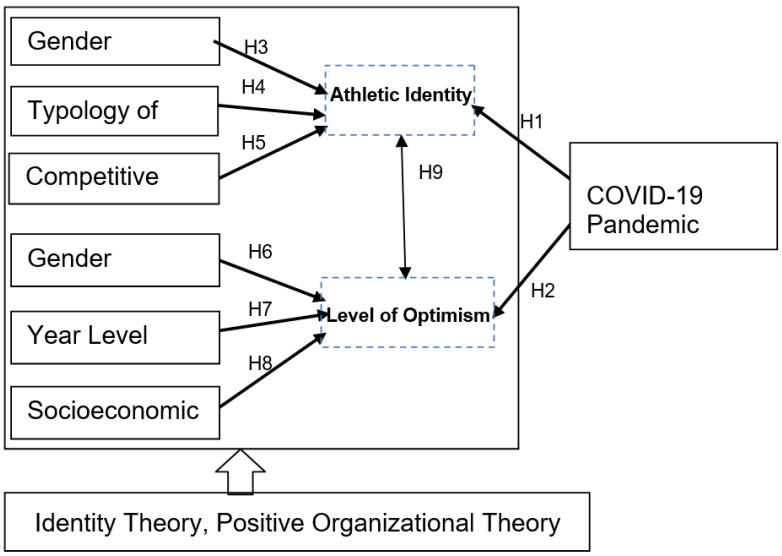

Figure 1. Research Paradigm of the Study

As illustrated in Figure 1, The researchers came up with how they can assess the student-athletes Athletic Identity and Level of Optimism using the Identity Theory and Positive Organizational Theory. In this time of the pandemic, they wanted to know if the Athletic Identity and Level of Optimism were affected. They evaluated it using the factors of Gender, Typology of Sports, Competitive Level for Athletic Identity while Gender, Year Level, Socioeconomic Status for Level of Optimism.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The researchers utilized a descriptive correlational survey method to collect detailed information to analyze the Athletic Identity and Level of Optimism of the selected IPEA's student-athletes. The results were evaluated by the factors of gender, typology of sports, competitive level for the Athletic Identity while gender, year level, socioeconomic status for the Level of Optimism.

Subjects and Study Site

The study aims to determine and evaluate the factors that influences Athletic Identity and Level of Optimism of the selected student-athletes of IPEA during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers used Stratified random sampling in selecting the respondents, to determine the appropriate sample size, using the Slovin's formula in getting the target sample size of 154 student-athletes over 251 student-athletes with a 95% of confidence level.

Instrumentation

Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) is one of the most well-known scales that measure the dimensions of social identity and negative affectivity. The Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) is a feasible instrument for evaluating people's generalized sense of optimism. It is a six (6) item self-report measurement (plus four filler items). With regards to the approval of usage of the two scales. The researchers contacted Prof. Britton Ph. D and were able to get consent to use his scale, while for the (LOT-R) the author Prof. Michael Scheier of Carnegie Mellon University already expressed in their official website that anyone who wishes to use the scale will be permitted but with proper citation.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data instrument used was a survey questionnaire, the researchers constructed a checklist that was validated by professors who were experts in that field. Before the distribution, a letter of consent was given to the respondents as part of the initial phase. Then researchers distributed the survey questionnaires as working phase conducted via Google Forms since it during quarantine and respondents were limited

to their respective homes. Termination phase took place where recording and collecting data were done.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations mainly focuses on the welfare of the respondents to ensure that the researchers are trustworthy. Confidentiality and informed consent were given to each respondent to ensure their information will not be disclosed without their knowledge and consent.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the results, Microsoft Excel Data Analysis ToolPak was used as statistical software that analyzes descriptive and bivariate statistics, numerical outcome predictions, and group identification predictions. For the 1st statement of the problem, the weighted mean equation was used. For the 2nd and 3rd statements of the problem, paired sample t-test and multiple regression were used. For the 4th statement of the problem, correlational analysis was utilized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. State of Athletes' Level of Optimism

	before	*during*
Mean	3.096	3.088
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.3911	
t Critical one-tail	1.6551	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.7822	
t Critical two-tail	1.9760	

Note: the alternative hypothesis is rejected at p>0.05 level (see Appendix D1).

Considering current premises, the alternative hypothesis H2: There is a significant difference in Level of Optimism before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic is rejected since p-value (0.7822) > 0.05. this means there is a 78.22% probability of no significant difference in the Level of Optimism before and during the pandemic. According to Lipowski (2012), people that have a positive attitude regarding the world around them do not lose up on their dreams, despite hurdles and setbacks. Optimistic athletes compete more in the hope of winning than in the dread of losing, but even if they lose, they see it as the product of events beyond their control rather than their flaws or incapacity to cope with the competition.

Table 2. Factors Affecting the Athletes of Optimism

	Level of Optimism			
	Before		During	
Factors	**P-value**	**Interpretation**	**P-value**	**Interpretation**
Gender	0.105	Not significant	0.279	Not significant
Year Level	0.576	Not significant	0.289	Not significant
Typology of Sports	0.564	Not significant	0.652	Not significant
Competitive Level	0.569	Not significant	0.379	Not significant
Socioeconomic Status	0.064	Not significant	0.956	Not significant

Note: factor is not significant at p>0.05 level(see Appendix D3).

Using the multiple regression, attributes like gender (p-value = 0.11), year level (p-value = 0.58), typology of sports (p-value = 0.56), competitive level (p-value = 0.57), and socioeconomic status (p-value = 0.065) are observed as statistically insignificant on the athletes' Level of Optimism before the pandemic. Thus, rejecting H6: Gender is a significant factor that affects Level of Optimism, H7: Year level is a significant factor that affects Level of Optimism, and H8: Socioeconomic status is a significant factor that affects Level of Optimism. It means that the independent variables did not affect the level of optimism before the pandemic. Reinstating multiple regression on the same variables, gender (p.value = 0.27), year level (p-value = 0.28), typology of sports (p.value = 0.65), competitive level (p.value = 0.38), and socioeconomic status (p.value = 0.96) exhibited as insignificant as well during the pandemic. Thus, rejecting (H6, H7, H8) and retaining null hypothesis.

Table 3. State of Athletes' Athletic Identity

	before	*during*
Mean	6.0504	5.9504
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.0267	
t Critical one-tail	1.6551	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.0535	
t Critical two-tail	1.9760	

Note: the alternative hypothesis is rejected at p>0.05 level (see Appendix D2).

Based on the t-test conducted, the alternative hypothesis H1: There is a significant difference in Athletic Identity before and during the COVID19 Pandemic is rejected since p-value (0.0535) > 0.05. this means there is a 5.35% probability that there is no significant difference in the Athletic Identity before and during the pandemic. Instead of rejecting the alternative hypothesis, the researchers have considered the probability. With 5.35% probability, it shows that it is close to the borderline of 0.05/5%, making it

too low to think of rejecting the alternative hypothesis. After careful consideration, they decided to accept the alternative hypothesis.

Table 4. Factors Affecting the Athletes' Athletic Identity

	Athletic identity			
	Before		During	
Factors	**P-value**	**Interpretation**	**P-value**	**Interpretation**
Gender	0.823	Not significant	0.370	Not significant
Year Level	0.909	Not significant	0.974	Not significant
Typology of Sports	0.213	Not significant	**0.023**	**Significant**
Competitive Level	0.172	Not significant	0.319	Not significant
Socioeconomic Status	0.931	Not significant	0.086	Not significant

Note: factor is not significant at p>0.05 level(see Appendix D4).

Using multiple regression method, attributes like gender (p.value = 0.82), year level (p.value = 0.90), typology of sports (p.value = 0.21), competitive level (0.17), and socioeconomic status (p.value = 0.93) are examined as statistically insignificant on the athletes' athletic identity before the pandemic. Thus, rejecting H3: Gender is a significant factor that affects Athletic Identity. H4: Typology of sport is a significant factor that affects Athletic Identity, and H5: Competitive Level is a significant factor that affects Athletic Identity. Reinstating multiple regression on the variables, gender (p.value = 0.37), year level (p.value = 0.97), a competitive level (0.31), and socioeconomic status (p.value = 0.08) are found as statistically insignificant while typology of sports (0.02) as statistically significant on the athletes' athletic identity during the pandemic Thus, rejecting H3 and H5, and retaining H4.

The correlation coefficient of Athletic Identity and Level of Optimism before the pandemic is 0.300. On the other hand, the correlation coefficient of Athletic Identity and Level of Optimism during the pandemic is 0.307. Both time frames rejected the alternative hypothesis H9: A significantly strong positive correlation exists between Athletic Identity and Level of Optimism of the student-athletes, based on the correlational result; before (0.300) and during (0.307). According to Spearman's correlation coefficient, 0.20-0.39 is a weak correlation. Based on the correlational results, it shows that it falls under the category of weak.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, for the 1st statement of the problem, the Athletic Identity showed a significant difference before and during the pandemic, with typology of sports having a significant impact on the slight decline in Athletic Identity. It appears that those who play in team sports were affected compared to those who compete individually. For the 2nd statement of the problem, the Level of Optimism of the student-athletes has remained intact amid the pandemic. For the 3rd statement of the problem, several families have been affected financially on the socioeconomic status before and during the pandemic. And for the last statement of the problem, there is a weak connection between Athletic Identity and Level of Optimism for the Correlational Analysis. Thus, it is safe to assume that no relationship exists between these two constructs.

For the student-athlete to remain their level of optimism amid the pandemic, it is recommended that athletes should have sport psychologists and psychiatrists that can help them manage their stress and provide them with strategies and methods to help them overcome the challenges. It is recommended to continue attending online training to maximize their potential and maintain their scholarship. It is also recommended to take/answer the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) and the Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) as it would serve as a precaution to prevent further harm. Lastly, it is also recommended to have additional financial incentives granted to those student-athletes who are medalists (sports) and those who are on the Dean's List.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest among the participants of the study, the department, and the university.

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