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Changes in Athletic Identity in High School Athletes Before and After Injury

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OBJECTIVE

The primary objectives of this research include; (1) establishing reliability of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) in an adolescent population, (2) to describe athletic identity in a sample of healthy high school athletes, and (3) to determine the impact on athletic identity following injury.

DESIGN and SETTING

A prospective cohort study was used to explore athletic identity at two public high schools located in rural, Southeast Ohio.

PARTICIPANTS

Healthy male and female high school athletes between the ages of 14-19 who were members of a school-sponsored sports team during the Spring 2017 sport season (n=22; 11 males, 11 females) and the Fall 2017 and Winter 2017-2018 sports seasons (n=18; 17 males, 1 female) completed a baseline AIMS. Injured participants who were removed from sport for at least 72 hours completed a second AIMS.

INTERVENTION

The AIMS was administered (1) prior to the respective sport season (n=40) and (2) within 72 hours of injury (n=2).

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURE

All participants completed the AIMS prior to the start of their respective sports seasons in order to establish reliability in adolescents. Cronbach's α was used to determine the internal consistency of the AIMS. Using t-tests and an ANOVA ($p < 0.05$), AIMS scores were examined by sex, academic rank, sport

participation, post-high school sport aspirations, and injury status. Injured participants who were removed from sport for at least 72 hours completed a second AIMS within 72 hours of injury to examine changes in AIMS scores following injury.

RESULTS

Reliability of the AIMS was established through measures of internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$). Individual item analysis indicated that the internal consistency would not be improved by deleting any one of the ten items on the AIMS (Cronbach's α range = 0.72-0.75). Differences between sex ($p = 0.09$), academic rank ($p = 0.51$), and sport participation ($p = 0.82$) failed to produce statistically different AIMS scores. Those participants who expressed a desire to participate in sports after high school reported a statistically significantly higher AIMS score compared to those without sport aspirations after high school ($t = 2.90$; $p = 0.01$). Considering that only 2 of 40 participants met the criteria established for a post-test AIMS, statistical analysis was not possible. Within subject analysis indicated that AIMS scores were not influenced by injury in the two injured participants.

CONCLUSION

Previous studies have reported internal consistency for the AIMS (Cronbach's α range = 0.81-0.93) when used in an adult population.¹⁻² Descriptive statistics for each of the independent variables (sex, academic rank, sport participation, and post-high school sport aspirations) produced similar results to

previous studies.³⁻⁵ In this study, the Cronbach's α of 0.89 and the similar results described by the independent variables suggests the AIMS is a reliable instrument to use within an adolescent population. Generalizing this study's results indicating that injury does not impact AIMS scores should be taken with caution given the low number of injured participants (n=2).

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