

Journal of Sports Medicine and Allied Health Sciences: Official Journal of the Ohio Athletic Trainers Association

Volume 8
Issue 1 2022 OATA Annual Meeting and Clinical
Symposium Special Issue

Article 5

May 2022

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Recommended Citation

Gallimore, Brandon J.; Harris, Laura; and Simon, Janet E. (2022) "Academic Resilience of Athletic Training Students During COVID-19 Pandemic," *Journal of Sports Medicine and Allied Health Sciences: Official Journal of the Ohio Athletic Trainers Association*: Vol. 8: Iss. 1, Article 5.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25035/jsmahs.08.01.05>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/jsmahs/vol8/iss1/5>



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Academic Resilience of Athletic Training Students During COVID-19 Pandemic

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OBJECTIVE

(1) To describe resilience in athletic training students enrolled in professional coursework during the spring 2020 semester, and (2) to determine the association between resilience and academic performance during the spring 2020 semester.

DESIGN and SETTING

A retrospective cohort study using a questionnaire that was distributed using the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) Research Survey Service.

PARTICIPANTS

A random sample of 1000 NATA members who (1) were enrolled in a CAATE accredited professional athletic training program in spring semester 2020, and (2) were NATA members at the time of survey completion. 83 participants (69 females, 14 males) completed the survey for a response rate of 8.3%. The mean age was 23.6 ± 3.9 years.

INTERVENTION

Using Qualtrics, participants completed the Academic Resilience Scale (ARS-30). The ARS presents a first person "vignette" to put the participant in the mindset of a student experiencing academic adversity in the university setting; this is followed by 30 questions, which address the student's response to adversity using a 5-point Likert scale (ie., 1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree) with scores ranging from 30 to 150. The ARS has been previously validated and has high internal consistency ($\alpha = .90$) for its three factors: perseverance, reflecting and adaptive help seeking, and negative affect and emotional response. The participants also

self-reported their grades, with items assessing (1) current cumulative GPA, (2) cumulative GPA at the end of Fall 2019 semester, (3) Spring 2020 term GPA, and (4) Fall 2020 semester GPA. Lastly, there was a demographics section, which assessed respondent's age, sex, class rank, degree, and anticipated graduation date.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES

Descriptive statistics for GPA were calculated for Fall 2019, Spring 2020, cumulative Fall 2019, cumulative Spring 2020 (ie., current), change in cumulative GPA, and ARS-30 total score. The primary analysis was a Pearson correlation between change in cumulative GPA and ARS-30 total score. A secondary analysis was conducted to evaluate change in cumulative Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 GPA with a paired t-test. Cohen's d effect size was calculated for the paired t-test. Alpha level was set at 0.05.

RESULTS

Average term GPA for Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters were 3.61 ± 0.34 and 3.68 ± 0.32 , respectively. As for cumulative GPA, the average after the Fall 2019 semester was 3.60 ± 0.32 , and the average after the Spring 2020 semester was 3.63 ± 0.28 . Average ARS-30 total score was calculated to be 111.43 ± 16.15 , which is considered moderate resilience. The Pearson's correlation to determine the relationship between change in cumulative GPA (Spring 2020 cumulative - Fall 2019 cumulative) and ARS-30 total score resulted in a small, negative, non-significant correlation of $r = -.02 (-0.23, 0.21)$ with a p-value of $p=0.90$.

A statistically significant increase in cumulative GPA from Fall 2019 to Spring 2020 was reported ($t_{(79)} = 2.05$, $p = 0.04$), with an average change in GPA of 0.03 ± 0.12 . The Cohen's d score of $d = 0.23$ suggests a small effect size.

CONCLUSION

The non-significant correlation between ARS-30 scores and GPA demonstrates that there was no association between academic resilience and GPA and that academic

performance as determined by GPA was not negatively impacted by the shift to online teaching in spring 2020. In fact, the reported term and cumulative GPAs increased from fall to spring. Although not established in this study, it is possible that the results reported in this study may be partially related to the number of institutions that elected to replace formal grades with "pass" or "non-pass" grades during the shift to remote learning in the spring of 2020 or perhaps more lax academic standards imposed by educators.

KEY WORDS: *Academic Resilience, Education, Academic Resilience Scale, ARS-30, Athletic Training Education, COVID-19*