

The Social Lives of Student-Athletes Versus Non-Student-Athletes

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The social life a college student will vary based on a student's class schedule, occupation, family commitments, and extra-curricular activities. With classroom requirements, occupation and family commitments, and extra-curricular commitments, many students place a high value on their social and leisure time. But is there a difference in the social lives of scholarship student-athletes and "regular" students, or non-athletes? The aims of this study were to explore the differences, if any, in how athletes and non-athletes spend their time during a week.

Fifty "regular" students and fifty student-athletes completed a questionnaire. Participants gave information on the number of classes taken on average during the fall, spring, and summer terms, their academic commitments, the number of hours spent on required and voluntary athletic obligations, and occupational requirements. Grade point average, standardized test scores, marital status, scholarship, leisure hours, and financial aid funding were measured. ANOVA was used to compare athletes and non-athletes on the variables of interest.

Statistically significant values were found in comparing grade point averages, scholarship dollars, family commitments, occupational commitments, and the number of hours spent toward studying and leisure. Non-significant differences between scholarship student-athletes and non-athletes were found for the remaining categories.

Results suggest that the average student-athlete's leisure time was less than that of a regular student's leisure hours per week. It was found that grade point averages for athletes were generally higher than that of non-athletes. Additionally, results suggest a statistically significant difference between athletes and non-athletes in scholarship dollars, and the number of hours studied during a one-week period at their university, suggesting a different amount of "available" social time. Athletes in the sample had greater family commitments, while non-athletes had greater occupational commitments.

Results suggest that participating in athletics may hinder a student's social life, but it could have a positive effect on their academic production. Additionally, while non-athletes had greater occupational commitments, it appears that these commitments interfere less with their social life than sport or team related commitments. In interpreting the results it should be noted that the sample was from an urban campus, with some of the non-athletes living at home. For athletes who have family commitments, additional support, both academically and athletically, may be needed to aid the student-athlete to be successful in their home, school, and sport roles. Alternative conclusions, sample representativeness, and further implications will be discussed.