



The KUSF and the NCAA: a comparative study of national collegiate sport organizations' academic policies

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Abstract

The purpose of this comparative study was to investigate and compare the academic policies of the Korean University Sport Federation (KUSF) and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). A qualitative, multiple case study design was utilized for this study. Specifically, in-depth interviews were completed with current South Korean ($N = 3$) and US ($N = 3$) college women's tennis players to understand their experiences and perceptions linked to the KUSF's and NCAA's academic policies. A total of three distinct themes emerged with US student-athletes: (a) academic advisor involvement, (b) academic regulations, and (c) study hall. One theme emerged with South Korean student-athletes: absence of academic support. The results of this study provide practical insights to administrators of South Korean intercollegiate athletics regarding their academic policies.

Keywords KUSF · NCAA · College student-athletes · Academic policies

1 Introduction

South Korean sport culture places great emphasis on elite-level athletics. Specifically, actions such as intensive training practices, excessive time commitments, and questionable coaching practices are justified if they result in a gold medal (Heo, 2011). Due to the emphasis on athletic success, many South Korean secondary school athletes are required to devote all of their time to enhance their athletic performance at the expense of pursuing any endeavors besides their sport, including academics (Heo, 2010).

South Korean college athletes do not fare much better than their secondary school counterparts. The South Korean college sport system only considers athletic performance for college admission, meaning that high school athletes can become college athlete without proper academic preparation or credentials (e.g., GPA and college entrance exam) (Kim, 2011). Further, similar to their time in high school, collegiate athletes are asked to focus solely on their sport

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(Lee, 2015). Due to this imbalanced culture in South Korean sport, South Korean college athletes are often unable to recognize the importance of academics (Ham, 2003).

Despite the emphasis on athletics and athletic performance, very few athletes achieve high-profile elite athlete status (Ham, 2003; Huml et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2014). In addition, even if athletes do attain high-profile status, their competitive life span is very short. For example, the average age of a retired South Korean professional athlete in 2016 was only 23.8 years old (Yoo, 2016). Subsequently, most college athletes will need to integrate back into society shortly after their graduation or retirement from athletic competition (Otto et al., 2019). However, many South Korean college athlete do not possess the social or educational skills necessary to successfully make this transition.

In an attempt to remedy the situation South Korean college athletes' face, the Korean University Sport Federation (KUSF) was established in 2010. The KUSF is the governing body for 116 South Korean universities that offer sports teams. Two of the KUSF's main goals are managing and supporting South Korean college athlete' academic development and performance (KUSF, 2020a). The KUSF's mission is to create a South Korean version of the NCAA (KUSF, 2018).

Many South Korean sport scholars and practitioners have referenced and mentioned NCAA academic policies as potential guidelines for use in the South Korean collegiate athletic system (Kim, 2011; Kim & Park, 2009; Lee, 2013). These scholars' works created some initial understanding in South Korea about the NCAA's Division I academic requirements. However, most of those studies were limited to simply translating the NCAA's Division I academic requirements from the NCAA manual from English into Korean. Making NCAA-like rules applicable in the South Korean sport system is a more difficult task.

The purpose of this study was to investigate and compare the KUSF's and NCAA's academic policies. Specifically, this study examined current South Korean and US college athletes' experiences and perceptions of KUSF and NCAA academic policies, respectively. Athletes are vital stakeholders in intercollegiate athletics, as they are directly affected by these academic policies (Freeman, 1984). The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1. How do KUSF athletes describe their on-campus academic experiences?

RQ2. How do NCAA athletes describe their on-campus academic experiences?

This study is significant because conducting field research with KUSF and NCAA athletes will produce a better understanding of the academic policies of each country's intercollegiate athletics governing body. Furthermore, by comparing and understanding the differences between South Korean and US intercollegiate athletics, this study can provide valuable insight to administrators/practitioners in South Korean intercollegiate athletics who intend to adapt and implement NCAA-style academic policies in South Korea.

2 Literature review

In order to set the stage for understanding how athletes perceive and experience KUSF and NCAA regulations, a history of collegiate sports in both countries is presented, as well as an overview of both governing bodies. We begin with South Korea and the KUSF.

2.1 History of South Korean elite sport

As previously mentioned, South Korean sport culture places great emphasis on high athletic achievement. This cultural reality sprang from South Korea's recent sporting history. In the 1970s, the South Korean government wanted to enhance the image of the nation through sport. To do so, government officials successfully bid to host the 1988 Summer Olympic Games in hopes of educating the world about South Korea (Lee, 2005; Lim & Huh, 2009). Thus, the South Korean government emphasized elite-level athletic performance through national policies focused on winning gold medals (Lee, 2006). South Korea's policy with regards to elite-level athletes created an imbalanced sport culture, which can succinctly be explained by stating that athletic success is everything (Heo, 2011). As a result, South Korean athletes believed that achieving high-profile elite status was the only way to be considered successful (Ham, 2003).

Even though the South Korean government asked their athletes to become patriots by winning gold medals, they did not emphasize other aspects of athletes' lives (Hong & Ryu, 2007). For example, South Korean secondary school athletes could not pursue a proper education during their time in the secondary school since South Korean junior athletes are required to devote all their time to training for their sport (Heo, 2010).

The sporting culture which focused only on athletes' athletic achievement still exists and affects South Korean college athlete as well. Specifically, South Korean college athlete cannot focus on their academics for two reasons. First, South Korean college athlete are expected to focus on their athletic performance and achievement to act as representatives for South Korea. Second, their athletic achievements also enhance their institution's image (Kim et al., 2014).

The current application system for South Korean colleges also encourages college athlete to place less emphasis on their academics. South Korean colleges do not evaluate high school athletes' GPA as a part of their admission criteria (Lee, 2015). South Korean colleges also do not promote athletes' academic progress. Athletes oftentimes receive high grades despite missing classes and assignments to participate in competitions and practices (Lee, 2015). As a result, the imbalance between academics and athletics in the South Korea college sport system negatively affects athletes' lives after graduation. For example, South Korean college athlete find it difficult to successfully integrate into society after graduation because they only develop sport skills and lack any social or business-oriented life skills (Kim et al., 2014). Given this background, the KUSF was established in an attempt to mitigate the gap between academics and athletics.

2.2 The KUSF

In 2010, to remedy the current situation South Korean athletes are facing, a group of South Korean university presidents established the KUSF as the governing body for college sports (KUSF, 2010). The main reason for establishing the KUSF was to manage South Korean college athlete' academics (Lee, 2015). A total of 116 institutions across the nation are currently KUSF members. The KUSF operates and manages the U-league, which offers a total of six different sports: basketball, volleyball, baseball, ice hockey, soft-tennis, and soccer (KUSF, 2020b).

In 2017, in an attempt to improve South Korean college athlete' academic situation, the KUSF established and implemented a minimum required GPA rule for its member institutions. Based on the rule, athletes earning a GPA lower than 2.0 from the previous semester

are not eligible to compete in the following semester's U-league competitions. Compared to KUSF and college sports in Korea, college sports in the USA have a longer history.

2.3 History of academic reform of the NCAA

The NCAA's academic bylaws governing athletes began in the 1940s (Smith, 2011). In 1947, the NCAA adopted and implemented the "Sanity Code," designed to adhere to the definition of amateurism, prohibiting professional athletes from competing in college athletics, and banning all athletic scholarships to prevent recruiting and financial abuse (Ridpath, 2002; Waller, 2003). With this Sanity Code, the Constitutional Compliance Committee was created, which served as the first regulatory body to investigate abuse by the NCAA's member institutions (Crowley, 2006; Kennedy, 2007). Initially, the Sanity Code appeared to be successful. However, colleges and universities found ways to provide athletes with secret scholarships or pay them discreetly (Waller, 2003). Consequently, the Sanity Code was repealed when the NCAA refused to expel seven institutions for violations (Oriard, 2012; Waller, 2003). As an alternative to the Sanity Code, the NCAA approved the 12-point code in a 1952 convention. Among those 12 codes, half either directly or indirectly addressed the academic aspect of athletes such as (1) Confine practice sessions to the recognized season of the sport (that is, no spring football), and limit or closely supervise out-of-season practices; (2) Limit the number of games in each sport, particularly football and basketball; (3) Reconsider postseason games in light of pressure they create (i.e., a potential ban on bowl games); (4) Require normal academic progress toward a degree for purposes of eligibility; (5) Admit athletes only under the institution's published requirements; (6) Give close attention to the curriculum of the athlete, to assure that he is not diverted from his educational objective (Oriard, 2012, p. 10).

In 1973, the NCAA instituted the 2.0 rule. The 2.0 rule abandoned standardized test scores and only required a 2.0 high school GPA for incoming students to compete (Waller, 2003). Despite criticisms of the 2.0 rule, such as lack of uniformity in the nation's different high school grading systems, the 2.0 rule existed until 1986.

In 1986, the NCAA established a new rule, known as Proposition 48. Proposition 48 was similar to the 2.0 rule, but also included a minimum test score requirement. Proposition 48 required incoming athletes to have a minimum 700 SAT score or a composite score of 15 on the ACT, as well as a minimum high school GPA of 2.0 (Staurowsky & Ridpath, 2005).

To strengthen Proposition 48, in 1992 the NCAA created Proposition 16 (Benson, 1993). Proposition 16 included the following changes: (a) increased the number of core high school classes from 11 to 13 and (b) required incoming students to have a minimum GPA and specific minimum SAT score balancing their GPA (Crowley, 2006).

After 13 years of Proposition 16, in 2006 the NCAA implemented the Academic Progress Rate (APR), a system still in use today. The APR is a term-by-term point measurement of eligibility and retention. Athletes can earn two points per semester. For example, athletes will earn one point if they are eligible and another point if they return after the fall semester (LaForge & Hodge, 2011). Points are assigned in the spring semester with the same criteria. Athletes who are eligible and return to their universities can earn total of four points per year. APR is assessed for each team and is calculated by taking the total points earned by the team at a given time divided by the total points possible for the team and then multiplied by one thousand (Kennedy, 2007; Meyer, 2005). A perfect score of APR is 1,000 and teams that score below 930 can face sanctions such as restrictions on their scholarships and practice time (NCAA, 2021).

In sum, today's NCAA academic standards are governed by rules in two specific categories—initial eligibility for freshmen and continuing eligibility, including progress toward degree. It is important to note that the NCAA not only implemented academic regulations but also suggested/required that institutions help their athletes achieve academic success on their campuses. This led to the growth in offering academic advising services for athletes.

2.4 Academic advising at NCAA institutions

Academic advising is defined as “providing advice to students regarding academic, social, or personal issues, and this advice could be to inform, suggest, counsel, discipline, coach, mentor, or even teach” (Kuhn, 2008, p. 3). Athletic advising in NCAA institutions began in the 1970s (Rubin, 2017). After it started, academic advising for athletes has been serving various purposes. In the 1970s, academic advising focused on scheduling classes and has since expanded to include increasing retention and graduation rates (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). In intercollegiate athletics, athletic department advisors typically play an important role in academic advising for athletes. Athletic advisors possess expertise with the various NCAA academic rules and eligibility regulations that athletes must follow (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). In terms of educational background of athletic advisors, Rubin (2017) found that most of athletic advisor in NCAA have earned a master's degree in various programs such as higher education, athletic administration, sport management, school counseling, academic advising, and business administration.

In 1991, the NCAA approved bylaw 16.3.1.1, which required academic counseling and support services for all NCAA Division I athletes. This bylaw also provided financial support for the continuation of academic support services for athletes by creating the Academic Enhancement Fund. This Fund provides financial support for institutions to manage tutoring, hire academic support staff, and acquire new equipment that can help athletes academically (NCAA, 2019). Today, many athletic departments construct and operate state-of-the-art academic facilities in order to encourage athletes to excel in the classroom (Huml et al., 2014). All of these tactics help shape the academic experiences of NCAA athletes. This section discussed the overall information of KUSF and its academic policies as well as NCAA's history of academic reform and academic advising to gain better understanding of both organizations' academic policies for their athletes.

The purpose of this study was to explore and compare the KUSF's and NCAA's academic policies by examining current South Korean and US college athletes' experiences and perceptions of KUSF and NCAA academic policies.

3 Method

This study utilized a qualitative research design to examine and understand the academic experiences of college athlete from South Korea and the USA. According to Glesne (2016), a qualitative study design is useful in for “documenting how structures shape individual experiences, and also how individuals create, change, or penetrate the structure that exists” (p. 39). This approach does not remove participants from their everyday lives and leads to understanding their real lived experiences (Creswell, 2007; Itoh et al., 2017; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Using a qualitative approach, this study sought to uncover the thoughts, perspectives, and feelings of the participants, which would allow readers to enter into and experience the world of the participants (Yin, 1993).

Table 1 Information of study sample

Name	Year in school
<i>South Korean Participants</i>	
Jaehee	4
Soojung	3
Hyunjung	3
<i>US Participants</i>	
Leigha	4
Brea	4
Alisa	3

All names are pseudonyms.

3.1 Case study design

A case study can be defined as exploring “a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information... and reports a case description and case themes” (Creswell, 2007, p. 97). This study utilized a case study design to examine KUSF’s and NCAA’s academic policies through multiple sources of information, such as in-depth interviews with current athletes from both the KUSF and the NCAA, as well as various documents, including academic journals, news articles, and academic policy manuals from both governing organizations.

Since this study includes more than one case, a multiple case study design was utilized (Gustafsson, 2017). A multiple case study design allows the researchers to understand the differences and similarities between the cases (Stake, 1995). In addition, by using a multiple case study design, the researchers were able to analyze the data both within each case and across cases (Yin, 1993).

3.2 Selection of participants

The target population for this study was college athlete in South Korea and the USA. This research used purposive sampling methods to recruit participants who could describe their academic experiences as athletes either in South Korea or the USA, while maintaining a manageable sample size for in-depth qualitative analysis (Beamon, 2012). To recruit the participants, the investigators contacted current athletes from South Korean and US universities (see Table 1). A total of six interviews were conducted, ($N = 6$), three with South Korean athletes and three with athletes competing in the USA. Since college athletes may have different experiences based on the unique characteristics of the sports they play (e.g., daily practice and tournament schedules), this study selected participants from the same sport (women’s tennis) for direct comparison. Specifically, three women’s tennis players from a large university in a major city in South Korea and three women’s tennis players from a large university in the Southern US participated in this study.

3.3 Data collection

The researchers conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the participants. In terms of the US participants, each athlete was interviewed individually in a face-to-face setting.

With the athletes in South Korea, on the other hand, telephone interviews were conducted as access to the population of participants was limited due to their locations. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 min. Data collection occurred from December 2019 through February 2020.

The investigators obtained human subjects' approval from their university. Respondents were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary. In keeping with protocol, signed informed consent was collected from the participants. Specifically, the US participants physically signed the consent form, whereas South Korean participants signed electronically and sent the forms to the researchers via email. All participants were given an information letter, along with a consent form.

The interviews included several questions asking athletes about their experiences and perspectives of their institutions' academic support services. Specifically, the researchers modified questions used in previous research which related to athlete academic services (Huml et al., 2014). Some examples of specific interview questions include (see appendix for all questions that used in the study):

- Are you satisfied with the current academic services provided by your institution?
- Do you know the academic requirements for you as athletes?
- Do you think you were given the necessary academic support from your institution during this academic year?

Other written materials were used for triangulating the data, as well as for gaining a better understanding of both the KUSF and NCAA's academic policies. Specifically, news articles, the official website, and academic policy manuals were used to examine the KUSF's academic policies. In terms of NCAA, news articles, the official website, academic policy manual, and academic journal were analyzed.

3.4 Translation Strategies

Interviews with the South Korean athletes were conducted and transcribed in Korean and then translated into English. A translation strategy was utilized to minimize errors that might have arisen during the translation process (Weeks et al., 2007). First, two bilingual translators translated the transcripts from Korean to English. Second, two bilingual translators who had not previously read the manuscripts were requested to translate the English version of transcripts back to Korean (back translation). Lastly, the final process included substantial discussions with all translators regarding any potential discrepancies identified during back translation.

3.5 Data Analysis

The first and second authors utilized Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis to analyze the participants' interview data. There was no external auditor for the analysis. Thematic analysis is a systemic process to organize, identify, and offer patterns of themes/meanings across a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Based on thematic analysis, there are a total of six procedures to analyze data: (a) familiarize one's self with the data through reading and re-reading, (b) generate initial codes, (c) search for themes from the codes, (d) review potential themes, (e) define themes, and (f) provide the report. Analysis of the dataset led to the identification of three distinct themes for US college athletes' academic services experiences and one theme for South Korean college athletes' academic services experiences.

3.6 Results

The results of this study revealed a total of four themes. These themes are organized in two individual cases by NCAA and KUSF athletes' academic experiences.

3.6.1 Case #1—NCAA athletes' academic experiences

Three distinct themes emerged regarding the NCAA's athletes' academic experiences: (a) academic advisor involvement, (b) academic regulations, and (c) study hall. The next sections will include participants' quotes to illustrate these themes.

Theme 1: Academic advisor involvement Athletes indicated that their academic advisor helped improve their academic work in various ways. In addition, athletes indicated that their academic advisor was always available and actively communicated with them in various modes (e.g., email, phone call, text).

For example, Alisa stated, "Yes, [the academic advisor] is always available, and whenever I need him, he's there to help...I normally just text or email him." Leigha commented "Yes, our academic advisor is always available. Sometimes I would text him at like 10 pm to ask him questions and he would always respond." Brea stated "I think that he provided us with all the necessary support during this academic year." Alisa added:

So, to make a schedule with him, I usually give him a call, because that's easier to do versus text. And then, I just tell him what classes I want to be taking and he'll kind of guide you through like what's smart to take during season, what's not smart to take during the season in terms of like the complexity of the classes.

It is important to note that the academic advisors actively motivated and encouraged the athletes to go to class and emphasized the importance of academics. Leigha commented that "Yes, our academic advisor definitely expects and motivates all of us to go to classes." Brea concurred:

We had a match recently in Indiana. It was like a two and half to three-hour drive, we weren't leaving till later that day, and he made sure to text everyone that we needed to go to classes because we weren't leaving until 3pm. So, if your class ended at 2pm you still had to go to class to bolster your GPA.

Participants' comments about the role of their academic advisor, which included scheduling classes, motivating athletes go to classes, and helping their assignments, supported similar findings from previous studies (Otto et al., 2019).

Theme 2: academic regulations Athlete eligibility has become a greater priority for universities (Huml et al., 2014) as both the NCAA and many institutions set specific academic regulations. Learning and understanding regulations such as minimum GPA or satisfactory progress toward a degree is critical. Athletes become ineligible to compete if they cannot meet academic requirements. Study participants learned about those rules during their freshman year through various ways provided by their institution. For example, Leigha mentioned that "I read all NCAA academic regulations in the handbook, which they gave us the first week of classes." Brea stated:

NCAA regulation rules I learned that my freshman year. I have to go to a bunch of orientations that kind of goes over all the academic rules what you can and cannot

do...There is also a handbook that all athletes get in the beginning of the year and someone from the athletic department goes over the handbook with us.

All NCAA coaches have to complete an annual exam on the rules and regulations for NCAA athletes since coaches are deemed the guardians of athletes (NCAA, 2019). Coaches also have to meet specific scores on their annual exam to remain employed in their coaching positions. With their knowledge, coaches also helped the study participants regarding academic regulations. Alisa commented that “I can always ask about the academic regulations, including my eligibility, to my coaches.”

It is important to note that institutions try to educate athletes regarding NCAA academic regulations through various means such as orientations and handbooks. These efforts aim to ensure that athletes acknowledge the requirements and regulations they have to follow to remain eligible.

Theme 3: study hall Academic centers are typically open to every athlete 7 days a week, and include a variety of resources, such as private study carrels, group study rooms, computer labs, and quiet places to rest. The US participants’ institution recently constructed a new academic center for their athletes (Rubin & Moses, 2017).

Study hall is also held in the academic center. Specifically, every freshman and selected students who do not meet the academic standards set by the institution after their freshman year are required to participate in six to eight hours of study hall per week. Study hall is not required after freshman year as long as athletes maintain good academic standing of a 2.0 GPA or higher. Brea stated: “As a freshman, I did participate in study hall and had to do eight hours per week, but as a senior, I do not have to participate in that” and Alisa concurred that “my first semester, I had six hours of study hall every week that I had to meet, but since I am a junior and I got a good GPA, I don’t have to do it now.”

In addition, study hall is supervised by academic advisors and study hall monitors. The study hall requirement aids the athletes, especially freshmen, with time management skills and helps them adapt to the new, challenging academic environment and expectations at their institution. In addition, seeing groups of athletes studying motivates other athletes to do the same. For example, Leigha commented that “I think study hall definitely helps you to prepare. If you go there, you see people who are studying there and it makes you want to study more.” Brea mentioned, “Usually freshmen have to go to study hall just to kind of force them to figure out how to balance school, as well as their sport.” Alisa also commented that “Yes, I think study hall is definitely monitored appropriately...like it’s quiet and it’s really nice to be able to sit down and like see other athletes working hard and doing their homework.” This section discussed the NCAA’s academic policies based on the interviews with current NCAA athletes. The following section describes the South Korean college athletes’ experiences with the KUSF’s academic policies.

3.6.2 Case #2—KUSF athletes’ academic experiences

Theme: absence of academic support Even though the KUSF is the governing body for South Korean intercollegiate athletics, the organization has no specific bylaw requiring individual institutions to provide academic support for athletes. There is, however, a minimum required 2.0 GPA for South Korean athletes participating in U-league sports (i.e., soccer, basketball, baseball, ice hockey, volleyball, and soft-tennis). Hyunjung stated, “There’s no academic support for athletes, but the athletes who are participating in U-league still have to meet the minimum required GPA set by KUSF.”

South Korean youth sport culture likely exacerbates the academic difficulties that college athlete experience. As previously mentioned, the lack of balance between athletics and academics in South Korean sport culture requires athletes to devote almost all of their time and attention during secondary school to training for their sport. Athletes are not able to devote a proportionate amount of time to their education, as this would take time away from training (Heo, 2011). In addition, athletic performance is the only criteria for South Korean athlete college admission, as schools do not consider high school athletes' GPA as a part of this process (Lee, 2015). Subsequently, South Korean college athletes commonly experience difficulties with classwork and would benefit from academic support that can provide basic learning skills and strategies. For example, Soojung stated, "Since we skipped most classes during our time in high school to practice our sports, we are not familiar with academic learning...honestly we do not have basic learning skills, such as how to take study notes." Jaehee also added that.

even though I've graduated from high school and became a college student, our academic abilities need to be improved significantly...honestly, for example, most of the athletes around me only have basic math skills such as algebra, and some do not know even know the alphabet. Therefore, there is a big discrepancy between the level of the classwork and our actual academic ability.

This statement showed that how lack of education from high school negatively affects South Korean college athletes' classwork.

Since there are no academic support services specifically for athletes, they are forced to use the academic support services provided for all students at the institution. However, as previously discussed, athletes' academic ability is different from non-athlete students, as athletes are unable to take advantage of the academic support services available to all students at their institution. For example, Jaehee stated that "It's kind of hard to catch up with academic support services for all students due to our learning ability...also, most academic support services take place on weekdays, so it overlaps with our training and practice schedule." Understandably, participants experienced difficulties managing their academics.

4 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate and compare athletes' academic experiences at KUSF and NCAA institutions. The results illustrated that US athletes benefitted from various academic services at their institution. The US athletes indicated three different types of support (i.e., academic advisor involvement, NCAA regulations, study hall) as beneficial for them. On the other hand, despite the KUSF's minimum GPA requirement to participate in the U-league, no academic services were available for South Korean college athletes. It is important to note that the NCAA not only requires a minimum GPA for athletes' eligibility, but also that individual institutions provide academic services to support them. For example, NCAA Bylaw 16.3.1.1 requires academic support services be available for all athletes (Huml et al., 2014; Navarro et al., 2020; NCAA, 2006). In addition, the NCAA created the Academic Enhancement Fund to provide financial support to help NCAA member institutions provide various academic support services for their athletes such as tutoring, hiring academic advisors, and purchasing new equipment related to academics (NCAA, 2019). The participants in this study expressed that those support services directly affected athletes' academic experiences in positive ways.

The KUSF, meanwhile, created and implemented a minimum required GPA rule in hopes of improving athletes' academic performance, but did not mandate that institutions set up formal programs to help them achieve academic success (Kim, 2011; Kim & Park, 2009; Lee, 2013). The results of the current study revealed, however, that South Korean college athlete need a formal support structure to achieve this standard—namely additional academic support from their institution beyond simply a required minimum GPA rule.

Previous research suggested that South Korean secondary school athletes were required to spend most of their time practicing their sport (Heo, 2010). This means they do not have the opportunity to learn proper academic skills and yet are expected to meet minimum academic standards. In other words, the policy lacks a mechanism to achieve its goal. Considering this fact, requiring a minimum GPA but not providing any academic support for college athlete may not help athletes academically at all. That situation could potentially make it more challenging for athletes to meet the required standards to remain eligible and could even make them become frustrated, give up on their academics, and derail their athletic career.

In addition, the results suggested that the KUSF needs to create a stronger academic climate which encourages and supports academic services for their athletes. The findings of this study revealed that the climate in South Korean college sports where athletic achievement is the only way to be considered successful makes athletes believe they need to focus solely on athletics rather than academics. Thus, as a governing body of South Korean college sports, the KUSF needs to try and change the current climate of South Korean college sport to reinforce the need for their athletes to balance academics and athletics while providing formal support to achieve these goals.

Next, when referring to and trying to apply policies from the US to the current South Korean system, administrators need to first gain a better understanding of the development of those policies. For example, as noted above, the NCAA's long history is extremely different from the KUSF's. Additionally, there are discrepancies in the overall environments and systems between the NCAA and the KUSF. In other words, the policies for NCAA Division I could more likely be successful within the context of institutions with more than a hundred years of history.

Therefore, while gleaning ideas from foreign-based policies is a good place to start, simply applying those policies to the South Korean system without modification will be insufficient to promote true change. South Korean college sport administrators will need to think harder and deeper about how to make a "South Korean" version of academic policies for college athletes. Finally, but most importantly, if new policies are developed, the welfare of athletes should be the top priority. It is imperative that South Korean athletes begin to realize the importance of balancing academics and athletics. In a culture where the imbalance between these two still reigns supreme, changing the culture will require measured and thoughtful policy generation and implementation.

The results of this study provide practical insights to administrators and practitioners working in South Korean intercollegiate athletics. Since South Korean college athletes are not familiar with academic learning experiences due to the absence of a proper education during their time in secondary school, it becomes important that they receive sufficient academic support and resources in higher education. Specifically, the KUSF needs to focus on constructing and implementing new policies that can realistically help athletes while also supporting the goals established through their regulatory policies. For example, South Korean colleges might hire some academic advisors that can increase its athletes' academic achievement by providing regular academic support. While a model such as the NCAA's Academic Enhancement Fund may work better than simply requiring a minimum GPA, an assessment

of institutional capacity and resources required to implement such a policy should first be conducted to assess the potential impact on institutions.

5 Limitations and future directions

Like any other research endeavor, this study was not without limitations. First, since the present study had limited number of participants, it might be hard to generalize the results of this study to a wider population. The future study will need to later examine larger sample size to obtain a holistic understanding of each country's national collegiate sport organization's academic policies. Specifically, future research could be broadened by using of quantitative analysis with great numbers of participants. Second, the researchers only explored athletes from one specific sport, women's tennis. Since other sports have their own characteristics, it would be worthwhile to examine the academic experiences of athletes from various sports. Third, this study only focused on athletes' experiences to compare the academic policies between South Korean and US colleges. Even though athletes themselves can be viewed as essential stakeholders since they are directly affected by the academic policies, other stakeholders such as academic advisors, faculty members, and athletic administrators are involved in developing college athletes' academic policies. Therefore, future researchers would be wise to examine other stakeholders' perspectives on academic policies in South Korean and US colleges to attain a holistic understanding of both countries' academic policies. Lastly, it would be worthwhile to investigate academic policies of other countries' collegiate governing bodies. Since the system and environments of college sports vary widely by countries, future research could compare the academic policies of collegiate governing bodies among those various countries.

6 Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore and compare the KUSF's and NCAA's academic policies by examining current South Korean and US college athletes' experiences and perceptions of KUSF and NCAA academic policies, respectively. The results of this study illustrated that the variations between the academic experiences of college athletes in the USA and Korea are quite evident from the responses provided by the participants in this study. Hopefully, the results from this study will provide useful information for both college sport researchers and practitioners working in intercollegiate athletics.

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Appendix

Interview questions

- How many times you met with your academic advisor in this semester?
- Do you know the academic requirements for you as a student-athlete?
- Do you know the NCAA regulations regarding your academic eligibility?
 - Yes, from where? Who?
- Does your academic advisor is always available to schedule meetings with you?
 - What's the process of you make a schedule with him/her?
- Do you think your academic advisor and your coach communicate well with each other?
- Does your academic advisor expects/motivates you to go to class?
- Dose your academic advisor expects/motivates you to go to study hall?
- Do you think you were given the necessary support from academic advisor during this academic year?
- How many you used the tutorial services in this semester? Or per week?
- Do you think the tutorial service is helpful?
- How many you used study hall in this semester? Or per week?
- Do you think your study hall is monitored appropriately?
- Do you think study hall helps you prepare for class?
- Are you satisfied with the current academic support services that provided by your institution?
 - Tutoring you received
 - Academic services provided
 - Personnel of the academic services (tutors, counselors)

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