

Career transition experiences of Japanese university student-athletes: A qualitative study

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Abstract

Student-athletes' career transitions have been discussed in recent years, and there has been a movement toward understanding athletic career as a part of life. Their career transitions have been studied from individual, support, and environmental perspectives; however, research on Japanese student-athletes is lacking. Through semi-structured interviews with twelve student-athletes, this study clarified Japanese university student-athletes' experiences of career transitions. The analysis was conducted using the grounded theory approach. The results were described in terms of three aspects: perspective (what the student-athletes think), barriers (what difficulties they face), and coping strategies and resources (how they cope). The university student-athletes mainly had three career perspectives: pursuing an athletic career only, having options for an athletic career and others, and pursuing a non-athletic career only. They experienced barriers in choosing an athletic and non-athlete career, and faced interpersonal and environmental barriers. We proposed a model that incorporates both athletic and non-athletic careers, and the findings had practical implications for supporting athletes. Assessing the perspectives revealed in this study (e.g., comprehensively examining how student-athletes currently think about their career paths, what barriers they face, how they cope, and what kind of environment they are in) will assist in providing the necessary support to university student-athletes.

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