

RECONCEPTUALIZING FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE REPRESENTATION OF
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN INTERCOLLEGIATE SPORTS

A Thesis Submitted to the
College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master in Education
In the Department of Educational Administration
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

By

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Abstract

There has been a significant increase in the number of international students in the classroom of Canadian universities; however, this is not reflected in all aspects of the Canadian post-secondary education experience, specifically in intercollegiate sports (Grbac, 2014). To date, only a few studies have focused on International Student-Athletes (ISAs) in Canada.

Therefore, the purpose of the study was to uncover the factors influencing international students' participation in intercollegiate sports. The research design selected to explore this research was a qualitative case study. This research was guided by the Leisure Constraints Theory (Crawford & Godbey, 1987) and Motivational theories (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Pederson, 2002; Wilkins et al., 2012). This case study employed two methods of data collection: face to face semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion. The data gathered from the participants were analyzed and broken down into four overarching themes: Perceptions, Motivations, Benefits, and Challenges. The results of the study imply that while international students might be motivated to participate in intercollegiate sports, there are several structural constraints to participants as well as other factors that could contribute to their limited participation. This study restates the need for more research on international students, specifically ISAs, to gain a better understanding of the rationale behind their decisions to come to Canada. Some areas that should be researched are the level of awareness of international students to intercollegiate sporting opportunities, potential challenges they may face, and the impacts of perceived bias and discrimination. The study also provides intercollegiate scholars, university athletic departments with recommendations for improving delivery, relationships with international students, and how to diversify of university student-athletes population.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the students who volunteered to participate in my research and shared their insights. Their contributions were valuable, and I wish them success in their future endeavors.

My sincere appreciation goes to my supervisor Professor Janet Okoko, for imparting her invaluable knowledge, advice, and support throughout this journey. My advisory committee members, Professor Vicki Squires, Professor Paul Newton, Professor Michael Cottrell, and Professor Brenda Kalyn, for their constructive feedback and immense contribution to my thesis. I must also thank the entire Department of Educational Administration, notably Katrina Hutchence, for advising me throughout this post-secondary experience.

I want to express gratitude to Leke, Olga, and George, for their unwavering support and encouragement. Maryam, Oluwole, Daenia, Sheree, and all my other friends and colleagues for contributing to my holistic development. My support system in Japan, Collette, Marena, and Latonya, you ladies have played an integral role throughout my journey. My gratitude also to the writing center, especially Christina Desno, her selflessness, and sincerity continue to inspire me. I also want to thank Loni Desanghere and Dr. Saxena for providing me with opportunities for research in the Department of Post Graduate Medicine.

Finally, I am incredibly grateful and indebted to my beloved immediate family members, who have always encouraged me to further my studies and make a difference in society. I am extending my heartfelt thanks to my big sister Mauricia for her unmatched support, my dad, for calling me every Tuesdays and my mom sending my favorite Jamaican treats, so I did not feel far from home. I would not have completed this journey without your prayers and backing, especially during most challenging periods.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all the individuals who did not allow negative experiences to deter them from pursuing their dreams.

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List of Abbreviations

AFA	Athletic Financial Award
AUCC	Association of Universities and Colleges Canada
CAAU	Canadian Amateur Athletics Union
CBIE	Canadian Bureau for International Education
CHECG	Canadian Higher Education and Career Guide
CWUAA	Canada West Universities Athletics Association
EPL	English Premier League
ISA	International Student-Athlete
NBA	National Basketball Association
NHL	National Hockey League
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletics Association
NSISP	Nova Scotia International Students Program
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
SDT	Self Determination Theory
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Chapter One: Introduction

For over a hundred years, intercollegiate athletics has been a significant enterprise that predominantly exists in North America (Grbac, 2014). The United States and Canada have become the preferred destinations for International Student-Athletes (ISAs), as these countries have maintained multiple intercollegiate sporting opportunities at many of their key universities (Geiger, 2013; Grbac, 2014). The United States and Canada provide students with high-quality education and elite sporting opportunities. These elite sporting events are governed by the United States' National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and Canada's U Sports formerly known as Canadian Interuniversity Sports (Geiger, 2013; Grbac, 2014; Long, 1999; NCAA, 2019; U Sports, 2018; Weston, 2006). The NCAA is known around the world and therefore reigns supreme over the U Sports. The U Sports is not as publicized as the NCAA but has worked diligently to improve the delivery, quality of sports program, and packages offered to their student-athletes (Clemencon, 2014; Long, 1999).

In addition to publicity, the NCAA and U Sports have some other differences, including the number of student-athletes, international student-athlete cohort, recruitment strategies, financial assistance, and scholarships (Geiger, 2013; Grbac, 2014). Domestic students who compete in intercollegiate events in the United States and Canada are known as student-athletes, while international students are referred to as ISAs (Grbac, 2014). Currently, there is no standard definition of ISAs; however, in the context of this research, ISAs refers to students who participate in competitive university sports during their studies in the United States and Canada but are not citizens or permanent residents of these two countries. Jara (2015) and NCAA (2019) state that there are over 460,000 student-athletes in the NCAA, and of that number, 20,000 (10.24%) are international students. On the other hand, U Sports had 11,000 student-athletes between 2012 and 2014 and raised to 12,000 in 2016; around 5% of these student-athletes were international students (Clemencon, 2014; Grbac, 2014). These

statistics show that the number of ISAs in the NCAA is considerably higher than that of the U Sports.

Despite having a significant increase in the number of international students in Canadian universities, universities have not yet integrated an equivalent proportion of ISAs into intercollegiate sports programs (Grbac, 2014). However, since ISAs are underrepresented, they are not exposed to the advantages of U Sports, such as athletic and social development. Likewise, universities are not taking advantage of the diverse talents that ISAs may possess.

Background of Study

Historically, people have migrated from one global region to another for education, economic reasons, safety, and tourism (Jingwa & Asongu, 2016). In recent years, there has been a global movement influenced by internationalization, where academic institutions, systems, and human resources have implemented policies to remain competitive in the global educational arena (Knight, 2004). More specifically, there has been an unprecedented movement of students from all corners of the globe towards the west to acquire education (Altbach, 2015). This movement is a significant driving force shaping higher education in Canada in recent years (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada [AUCC], 2014). Due to globalization and internationalization, institutions around the world have been engaging in activities to form global networks and develop global competencies among their students, faculty, and administrators (AUCC, 2014). Besides, at the core of internationalization in Canadian Universities is the recruiting, inviting, and attracting of international students (AUCC, 2014).

Universities in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries are currently the most preferred destinations for international students, especially the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States and Canada (Ortiz et al., 2015).

One reason for choosing these destinations is that they have, amongst other things, the top-ranked universities in the world (Millot, 2015). Canada has been surging on the global scene. In 2017, the country was ranked as the seventh most popular destination for international students (Le, 2017). There is a potential paradigm shift from traditional higher education markets like the United States and the United Kingdom to Canada, which is now ranked the fourth most preferred destination for international students (Canadian Bureau for International Education [CBIE], 2018).

Over the last three decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of international students in Canadian universities. Some of the possible reasons for this increase are attributed to Canada's high-quality education, more opportunities to study and work simultaneously, the exposure to a new diverse culture, the possibility to stay and work after graduation (Chen, 2008; OECD, 2018). The increasing number of international students is as a result of the direct efforts of Canadian universities and governments to gain revenue and, most importantly, to diversify student populations (Burnett & Huisman, 2015). Furthermore, in the globalized setting, there is also an emphasis on international relations and study (ACCU, 2014; Burnett & Huisman, 2015). International students who study in Canada are not only for academic purposes but also for participating in sporting activities. Grbac (2014) explained that globalization and internationalization are responsible for the unprecedented movement of ISAs studying and participating in intercollegiate sports.

Sports in higher education is essential and has gained its reputation as an integral element of the university experience. Danylchuk and Maclean (2001) maintained that campus life for students improves when universities support and provide a spectrum of intercollegiate and recreational sporting activities. Additionally, some researchers claim that intercollegiate athletics aligns with the mission of higher education, which is a response to society's need for community, enhancing student success, developing student community, and a branding tool

promoting institutions (Hirko, 2008; Vanover & DeBowes, 2013). Furthermore, Chen et al. (2010) pointed out that more positive educational benefits are linked to interuniversity sports participation, such as being more engaged academically and socially on campus. Dunleavy and Milton (2009) also stated that social engagement includes participation in school and extracurricular activities. Sports programs can promote campus spirit and social integration or engagement, not only for domestic students but also for those students who have migrated to Canada from their countries.

Social engagement activities, such as recreational and intercollegiate sporting events are also a feature of Canadian university campuses. The Canadian Higher Education and Career Guide (CHECG) states that most post-secondary institutions have recognized the need for programs outside of academics and have, therefore, included athletic programs for students (CHECG, 2019). These universities give students access to a wide array of sporting opportunities, such as intramural games on campus, community and city tournaments, other independent avenues, and intercollegiate sports (CHECG, 2019; McClellan et al., 2012). Intra-mural games are usually recreational, while community and city tournaments are either recreational or competitive. According to the CHECG (2019), one perk of intercollegiate sports is students are allowed to play for nationally recognized teams. One of the most prominent national competition that Canadian universities engage in is U Sports (U Sports, 2018).

While these sporting opportunities are available at the intercollegiate level, there has not been much representation by international students. It is challenging to figure out how many ISAs are actually competing in the U Sports. Clemencon (2014) pointed out that “the lack of documentation limits us from acquiring information on the rate at which the number of ISAs has been increasing over time within the U Sports. Therefore, even if the number is

growing, it will continue to be challenging to know the state or the actual figure as it relates to ISAs' participation.

The limited number of international students in intercollegiate sports in Canada is probably attributed to the restriction levied on the maximum of ISAs per sport. The Canadian Amateur Athletics Union (CAAU) has strict limitation rules for the number of ISAs per sports. In recent years, the U Sports has incorporated such limitations or caps in their program. Upon until 2013, there was only one such restriction implemented by the U Sports and it was on men's basketball teams, where only three non-Canadian citizens are allowed on the team (Bradshaw, 2018). The U Sports have since added a limit to women's basketball where only three ISAs are eligible to compete and the men's and women's volleyball teams where only two ISAs are allowed (U Sports, Eligibility Policies, 2018). Considering this practice, Clemencon (2014) expressed that such policies support that U Sports want to maintain spots for Canadian students. Even so, international students remain a small proportion of their student-athletes (Bradshaw, 2018). These factors prove that the underrepresentation of ISAs is not unique to the western Canadian university but across all the Canadian universities competing in the U Sports.

Despite the increase of international students, Canadian universities do not have a significant number of ISAs competing for their respective universities at the collegiate level when compared to the United States. To uncover the reasons for this low representation, this study sought to explore the factors that influence international students' participation in intercollegiate sports in Canadian universities. Past studies have acknowledged that there is a relationship between sports participation and constraints and motivation. These studies have suggested several factors, such as limited time and information, insufficient financial resources, difficulties in balancing academic life and sports, lack of proper skills and abilities, and climate conditions impacts participation (Crawford et al., 1991; Grbac, 2014; Hashim,

2012; Mthethwa, 2017; Rathwell & Young, 2018; Shifman et al., 2012). Researchers also found that funding and athletic scholarships, quality of sporting facilities and equipment, diversity of sporting opportunities and good coaching staff are also influential factors (Foo, 2015; Geiger, 2013; Grbac, 2014; Lim et al., 2017; Love & Kim, 2011; Popp et al., 2011; Zonder, 2013). This research explored the constraints and motivations and the extent to which these influenced the participation of international students in intercollegiate sports in Canada.

Description of Study Context

The research took place at a post-secondary institution located in western Canada, which has over 20,000 students studying in a variety of colleges. In this institution, international students account for approximately 3,000 or 12.5% of the population. The institution has an exceptional academic record and has also excelled in other areas such as intercollegiate sports, where they have been a prominent player since the early 1900s. The athletics teams compete in 15 events; eight men's events and seven women's events. At this institution, the intercollegiate teams excel in U Sports competitions both nationally and regionally through Canada West Universities Athletic Association (CWUAA). The sports in which they compete are basketball, cross country, football (only men), ice hockey, soccer, track and field, volleyball, and wrestling. The intercollegiate team rosters have over 400 student-athletes, and only 7 or 2% of these athletes are international students. At this post-secondary institution, international students currently participate in the men's basketball team and soccer team and women's basketball team.

In addition to the intercollegiate sports competitions, this post-secondary institution also offers campus recreational sporting events to their students. On-campus, the universities organize yearly intramural games, which are events held within the institution's grounds and serve purposes of competition, fun, and socialization but are different from intercollegiate

sports as students have the choice their level of engagement (McClellan et al., 2012). Outside of the university, students also engage in city leagues. City leagues enable intermingling between international students, the dominant culture, and other people from diverse backgrounds (Allen et al., 2010). These sporting opportunities give international students a chance to compete with the best athletes and to develop their cultural competence skills.

Sports, whether organized by sports associations (e.g., U Sports) or by post-secondary institutions (e.g., intramural games), play a significant role in students' lives and their university experience (Clemencon, 2014; Grbac, 2014; Ward, 2015). This research is context-specific, and therefore the aim is to uncover the factors that influence international students' participation in sports. The participants in this study were international students who partake in different kinds of recreational sporting competitions on and off the campus of this post-secondary institution rather than those governed by the university athletics department. This context enabled me to develop a better understanding of these participants' experiences and decisions.

Problem Statement

There has been a gradual increase in the number of international students in Canada, wherein 2016/2017; they account for 245,895, or 12% of all post-secondary students in the country (Statistics Canada, 2018). Similarly, there are currently over 20,000 students overall, with almost 3,000 international students studying in this post-secondary institution. Despite Canadian universities' success in attracting international students, they have not successfully integrated them into both academic and physical activities. For instance, this institution has 12.5% international students, but only 2% of the international students are ISAs. ISAs also account for a small percentage of all student-athletes in the U Sports, which indicates that the lack of representation is not only visible at the institution level but also at the national intercollegiate level. Considering the above statistics, researchers argued that the primary

objective of Canadian universities is to educate the whole person not only academically but also non-academically, especially concerning the significant role of different kinds of sports (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001). However, these statistics do not reflect the goal of educating students holistically.

The integration of ISAs in intercollegiate sports also has several benefits for both domestic and international students and universities in general. On one hand, it helps international students to ease into their overseas university experience. On the other hand, universities can benefit from this in many ways. Hirko (2008) and Hosick (2010) contended that the presence of ISAs facilitates better competition, raises the level of play, evens the playing field in intercollegiate sports, improves classroom interaction, increases academic success, and attracts other prospective students. Despite these benefits, researchers have not shown significant interest in ISAs in intercollegiate sports in Canada (Grbac, 2014). The few existing studies have focused on the lived experiences and motivational factors that influence international students who are currently members of the U Sports (Clemencon, 2014; Grbac, 2014). However, these researchers have failed to consider those international students who can excel in intercollegiate sports but choose to participate in recreational sports instead. My research addressed those students' motivations for playing sports, constraints to sports participation, and how the inclusion of these international students could bring positive benefits to this institution's athletics program and the university overall.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to uncover the contributing factors that influence international students' participation in intercollegiate sports. The study sought to provide valuable information based on the views of international students and how the university can include these views in the plans for the delivery of intercollegiate athletics, and to effect change on campus. The following research questions guided this research:

- What are the international students' perceptions of intercollegiate sports?
- What motivates international students to participate in sports?
- What are the benefits of international students' participation in intercollegiate sports?
- What are the factors hindering international students' participation in intercollegiate sports?

Significance of the study

This research is significant for several reasons. Intercollegiate sports play an essential role in higher education by improving student development through athletics involvement (Vanover & DeBowes, 2013). Firstly, this research adds to the literature in the Canadian context since a vast majority of the existing research done on ISAs were conducted in the United States (Grbac, 2014; Grbac & Dancluk, 2014). As the number of international students in Canadian universities continues to increase, it is essential to conduct researches that identify other factors that might influence their decisions. Therefore, this research serves to fill the knowledge gap and expand the available literature about those factors that encourage or prevent international students from participating in intercollegiate sports in Canada.

Secondly, this research serves to increase the awareness of the importance of international students' inclusion in intercollegiate sports in Canada and, more specifically, in the institution under study. This awareness may lead to practical actions adopted by universities to try to include and develop international students' participation in intercollegiate sports. These actions could consequently promote the fulfillment of international students' potential and their full engagement within the universities, which could contribute to the overall success of universities. Thirdly, as more international students are encouraged to participate in sports, they could act as role models and inspiration for other international students. Lastly, my research could lead to raising awareness for a more

equitable environment where both international and domestic students have the opportunity to develop themselves in intercollegiate sports equally.

Assumptions

This research was guided by the following assumptions:

- 1) International students' experience in sports influences their decision to participate in intercollegiate sports.
- 2) It is necessary for the university to include international students in intercollegiate sports.

Limitations

This research was subjected to the following limitations:

- 1) This research used the purposive sampling technique that might limit the generalizability of the study. However, purposive sampling has been recommended by Creswell (2007) and others as one of the best ways to determine qualified participants. Participants chosen are considered information rich as they can contribute valuable data to the research (Creswell, 2007).
- 2) Additionally, since there was limited literature on international students' participation in intercollegiate sports in Canadian universities, the articles reviewed were from other countries, predominantly the United States.
- 3) Lee and Opio (2011) and Hong (2018) explain some other factors that may affect decision-making and motivation, such as gender and culture. Both genders were not equally represented in this study, as most of the participants were males.

Delimitations

This research was subjected to the following delimitations:

- 1) To nine international students from one post-secondary institution in Western Canada. The aim of this research was not to generalize the results but to gather a deeper

understanding of these students' experiences within that institution. However, the results may be transferred to other international students in other universities.

- 2) To undergraduate and graduate students who do not have Canadian or Permanent residency status.
- 3) To international students who are solely active in recreational sports or other off-campus sporting activities at the time of the research.
- 4) To one particular sport: soccer. Though some of the participants hinted that they played other sports, they were primarily knowledgeable about soccer. All the other sporting events at the intramural level had concluded at the time of participant recruitment.

Definition of Terms

International Students - these students leave their home countries to study abroad.

According to UNESCO (2018), the term international students varies from country to country. Statistics Canada (2016) defined international students as non-Canadian students who do not have permanent resident status and have had to obtain the permission of the Canadian government to enter Canada to pursue an education. International students are often called internationally mobile students (UNESCO, 2018). International students are a subgroup of foreign students who are defined by their citizenship (OECD, 2013).

Noteworthy, foreign students with permanent resident status and immigrant backgrounds were not considered for this research.

Domestic Students- students who are citizens or permanent residents of Canada

Student-Athlete- is an individual performing a dual role of being a student pursuing a degree and a participating member of an intercollegiate sports team.

International Student-Athletes (ISAs) - foreign student-athletes who are not Canadian citizens or who do not have permanent resident status in Canada (U Sports, 2019). For the

context of this research, ISAs are student-athletes competing in intercollegiate sports who are not Canadian born or permanent residents.

Minority/Visible Minority- people are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in color. The minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, and Japanese (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Sport-refers to any organized physical activity; for example, soccer, rugby, football, basketball, and athletics (Khasnabis et al., 2010).

Intercollegiate sports/athletics- also called interuniversity sports in Canada- are sports played at the collegiate level for which the eligibility requirements for participation by a student-athlete are confirmed and demonstrates the campus diversity, sports culture, and student participation (Oregon Legislature, 2019; Ott & Hendricks, 2009).

Leisure Constraints- are defined as the “factors that are assumed by researchers or perceived and/or experienced by individuals to limit the formation of leisure preferences and/or inhibit or prohibit participation and enjoyment in leisure” (Jackson, 2000, p. 62).

Organization of Thesis

This research is organized into five chapters. Chapter One started with an introduction, which is followed by the background of the study and context. Accordingly, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and the definition of primary terms are articulated in this chapter. Chapter Two reviews the literature pertinent to the problem that was investigated in this research. Chapter Three contains a description of the research design, participant selection, data collection and procedures, data analysis and trustworthiness, researcher positionality, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents the data analysis.

Chapter Five concludes the research with answers to the research questions and discussion findings, conclusion, implications, and recommendations for further practices.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

While the international higher education market has experienced a paradigm shift from the traditional destinations to favor Canada, the literature about international student-athletes in Canada yielded few results. As a result of this challenge, my study relied on literature predominantly from the United States. Through comparative analysis, I used the literature to guide my research on the present situation of international students' participation in sports in Canadian universities. The literature included in this review was gathered from library databases such as ERIC, OVID, SPORTDiscus with Full Text, and Google Scholar. Initial search terms used were international students, sports, internationalization, and globalization, and these were narrowed to the following: international student-athletes and student-athletes were used to find peer-reviewed articles.

The literature is divided into four sections. Section one underscores the impacts of globalization and internationalization on higher education across the world with a specific focus on the United States and Canada. This section also includes information on the influence of globalization and internationalization in the realm of sports. Section two provides literature surrounding the NCAA and U Sports- organizations associated with ISAs, as well as the roles and benefits of ISAs in higher education. In section three, the theoretical perspectives of leisure constraints and motivations are presented. In section four, the motives and constraints for international students' participation in sports as a conceptual framework are demonstrated.

Globalization, Internationalization in Higher Education

Globalization and internationalization are the major contributing factors for the increase in international students' migration and education across the world. International students' migration has transcended many borders and has become a very lucrative business for many countries. Due to this, governments and higher institutions have implemented

strategic plans in the competition for international students. Macready and Tucker (2011) added that the competition to attract international students is intensifying, and as more countries and institutions enter into this race, students have more options. Students are getting smarter, and countries have to become more creative as students are not only looking at the education quality (Macready & Tucker, 2011). Governments across the world have become aware of this and have made several adjustments. Sa and Sabzaleiva (2018) confirmed that governments and higher education institutions seek international students as a solution to national skill issues and financial and economic benefits while meeting both international and global goals.

Institutions feel compelled to enhance their internationalization efforts as administrators have witnessed the benefits of including international students and programs. Grbac (2014) explained that some of the most profound impacts or benefits of internationalization are its impact on school ranking and reputation. He expressed that higher education institutions have included such information in their university profiles and as a part of their branding strategies. The implication here is that having international appeal is advantageous when competing for students in the global market. Not to mention the impacts it has had on recruitment and revenue (Anderson, 2015; Grbac 2014). International students are seen as socially, economically, and financially beneficial to higher institutions.

For the last 30 years, the number of international students has grown exponentially. Statisticians have reported that the global number of international students has rapidly increased across the world from 0.8 million in 1975 to 4.5 million in 2014 (OECD, 2014). From 2000 to 2010, the number has increased to 99%, growing at a rate of 7.1 % annually (OCED, 2012). There has been a steady growth in the number of globally mobile students over the past decades, but notably, since the year 2000, there have been significant changes occurring (Anderson, 2015). Many governments have made several public policy adjustments

to attract international students from across the world. According to Sá and Sabzaleiva (2018), governments have to continuously and purposefully seek a positional gain through different public policies in the global competition for talent in the great brain race. Many international students are migrating to some of the leading first-world nations in the pursuit of better opportunities. Some of the major players competing for international students across the world are the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada (Ortiz et al., 2015; OECD, 2014).

Globalization, Internationalization, United States and Canada

Over the years, North America has been one of the leading destinations for international students. Colleges and universities in the United States and Canada are competing for international students on a broad scale and are more attractive to these students because they have some of the most prestigious institutions and amenities in the world (OECD, 2013). In 2011, it was reported that the United States had 709,565 international students (Anderson, 2015). Anderson (2015) and Semotiuk (2018) also pointed out that the United States remains the most popular destination for international students. However, there has been a slight decrease over the past few years, especially since the recent ISAs limitation and political climate. The current situation in the United States could lead to a competitive advantage for Canada. Semotiuk (2018) highlighted that this advantage stems from the belief that Canada is a safer, welcoming, and open country, and students can obtain their study permits more easily than in the United States at the present moment.

While several countries, like Australia and the United States, have long realized the benefits of international students, Canada is in the infancy stages of internationalization, rigorously implementing new policies and strategies to attract international students (Sá & Sabzalieva, 2018). This has prompted over 95% of Canadian higher education institutions and governments to include internationalization into their strategic, aimed at prioritizing and

attracting international students (AUCC, 2014; Statistics Canada, 2016). Consequently, Statistics Canada (2016) has reported an increase in the number of international students on Canadian school grounds and have reported growth from 7% in 2004-2005 to 11% in 2014. Statistics from CBIE (2018) show that there is a steady increase in the number of international students in Canada; currently, there are 494,525 international students, representing a 17% increase over the previous years and a 34% increase between 2014 and 2017. These figures above represent international students at all levels of education in Canada; of that number, three-quarters are studying at the post-secondary level (CBIE, 2018). As the population of international students continues to grow, reports have shown a movement in ranking from the seventh most popular location for international students to fourth (CBIE, 2018; Le, 2017).

Positive Impacts of Globalization, Internationalization, and Sports

The migration of athletes has significantly increased in the number of sporting settings around the world. Globalization has led to the movement of people and now, with internationalization, the movement of athletes who are competing in several sporting leagues around the globe (Love & Kim, 2011). These phenomena are socio-culturally impactful and beneficial to sports all over the world. Grbac (2014) profoundly describes these impacts of sports as having the power to transcend borders geopolitically and culturally and also functions as a mutual realm within which countries, cultures, and people can converge to celebrate. This worldwide impact proves that sports play an essential role in society. This relevance of globalization is further explained by Maguire (1999), who said that “sports is a global phenomenon that represents these countries, individuals, and cultures and in so doing, allows itself to be used by different groups ... to represent, maintain and/or challenge identities”(p.176). These examples are some of the impacts on a broad scale, but there are some sport-specific impacts as well.

Another description of the impacts of globalization on sports was provided by Wilsey (2006), who commended globalization for its positive effects on sports, especially soccer, in bridging differences and overturning national prejudice. Moreover, Thibault (2009) added that this impact has led to much diversity in sports across the world where international athletes compete in many professional leagues across the globe, such as the National Basketball Association (NBA) and the English Premier League (EPL). Furthermore, there is an increase in the number of countries participating in international events around the world, such as the Olympic Games and World Athletics Championships.

On the other hand, these phenomena have also impacted intercollegiate sports. Intercollegiate athletics plays a vital role in higher education by enhancing student development through athletics involvement and bringing multiple benefits to institutions in different ways (Duderstadt, 2003). It also connects institutions, students, and communities, and the trend of international outreach takes place in the area of intercollegiate athletics, bringing benefits to not only the students and the athletics but also the institutions (Hong, 2018; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Weston, 2006). Intercollegiate sports have also been impacted by globalization and internationalization, and as such, there is a growing number of international athletes studying and playing sports abroad. ISAs have become essential in improving athletics programs and a visible sub-group of international students, but in the United States and Canada, there is a notable lack of literature on ISAs (Lee & Opio, 2011; Rodriguez, 2014). Despite this scarcity, Kim and Love (2011) highlighted that there is an alarming rate of internationalization that is occurring at the collegiate sports level in the United States.

The impact on intercollegiate sports has been significant, and according to the NCAA (2019), there are over 400,000 student-athletes in the NCAA and highly publicized (Grbac, 2014). In the NCAA, there are over 20,000 ISAs in all competitions (NCAA, 2019). On the

other hand, U Sports, which is less known, has just over 12,000 with close to 600 ISAs (Grbac & Danylchuk, 2014). While there are international student-athletes in Canada, most of the existing literature on ISAs are conducted in the United States (Grbac & Danylchuk, 2014). ISAs, like any other international students, are essential to higher education institutions. The increasing number of ISAs and global connections through sports have been invaluable and welcoming, and higher education institutions around the world are competing for international students, especially the United States and Canada. Research conducted by Weston (2006) found that the addition of ISAs has led to increases in the quality of play in the NCAA, and as such, with the addition of ISAs, university athletics programs will likely be improved and strengthened. Bearing in mind these positive impacts and benefits, the United States has been in the business of acquiring large numbers of ISAs, and hence the NCAA is globally known for intercollegiate sports. Canada, on the other hand, has been active in intercollegiate sports for over 130 years but does not have the same notoriety (Kim & Love, 2011). Even though Canada is not as well known for intercollegiate sports, several ISAs have found the experience to be rewarding (Clemencon, 2014; Grbac, 2014; Rathwell & Young, 2018). ISAs can be of great benefit to not only university sports programs but also to students.

Negative Impacts

While the globalization of sports has been renowned for its positive impacts, it has also been criticized for having adverse outcomes. Bale (1991) mentioned the term *brawn-drain*, similar to brain drain, as most of the best talents migrate from their home countries. The departure of elite athletes from their home countries has continued to occur because athletes seek better opportunities for themselves, but this negatively affects their countries. Many poorer countries use resources on athletes, but they are often lured away by developed countries that have control over the athletic market and media-sport production (Bale 1991;

Maguire, 1999). Bale (1991) also explained that this leaves a negative impact on home countries not only because of the loss of talent but because athletes might turn their back on their home nation.

Moreover, brawn-drain can lead to many local athletes losing out on opportunities given to international athletes (Bale, 1991; Thibault, 2009; Weston, 2006). Additionally, globalization and internationalization have increased the dependency relationship between countries since there is always a need to outsource. One of the inconvenient truths of globalization, as explained by Thibault (2009), is that dependency relationships often benefit wealthier nations (developed) at the expense of poorer countries (developing). Ultimately, globalization and internationalization can have both positive and negative impacts on sports.

Collegiate Sports Associations and ISAs

Sports Associations in North America were chosen for this research, as two of the most renowned intercollegiate sports bodies are located in this region. The NCAA and U Sports have become the preferred location for international students who want to study abroad and compete for intercollegiate sports teams (Grbac, 2014; Jara, 2015; NCAA, 2019; Weston, 2006). This choice is influenced by the fact that they are the only two sports associations that provide students with the opportunity to fulfill a dual role of being a student trying to achieve a degree and actively participative in sports (NCAA, 2019; U Sports, 2018). Research on these associations informed the readers on how the policies used by both organizations have influenced ISAs in similar and different ways. The NCAA and U Sports engage in recruitment, and the offering of sports and athletics scholarships to attract international students (Ali, 2014; Grbac, 2014). Scholarships are usually offered based on skills as well as an academic component.

Academic Requirements of ISAs

Student-athletes have a unique role as they have to strike a balance between academics and athletics. Balancing sports and academics can be a very daunting task for student-athletes as they are expected to study and train hard simultaneously. The downside is that it is often assumed that student-athletes are not held to the same academic standards as other students. These beliefs have contributed to the stereotype of athletes being referred to as being *dumb jocks* and academically challenged (Lee & Opio, 2011). Furthermore, students of African descent and ISAs from developing countries have faced the brunt of the labeling amongst all student-athletes (Lee & Opio, 2011). These negative claims have been refuted by researchers who believe that student-athletes, specifically ISAs, are prepared to overcome academic challenges due to their upbringing (Bale, 1991; Popp, 2007; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000). Furthermore, these same researchers elucidated that international students are often equipped to manage the rigors of not only athletics but also academics, more so than some domestic students.

Bale (1991) also added that African students and other ISAs have often been unfairly stigmatized and labeled as lacking academic integrity and excellence. However, Weston (2006) reported that coaches believe that student-athletes perform well in and out of the classroom. Moreover, Lee and Opio (2011) exclaimed that ISAs are highly motivated to succeed not only in academics but in sports because they fear the disgrace of going back to their home countries without a degree.

The U Sports and NCAA expect students to be academically and athletically balanced and hence require students to meet and maintain specific academic standards. Both the NCAA and U Sports expect students to perform well in both capacities, for instance, keeping grades favorable, completing their degrees in the allotted times, and upholding a high academic standard (Geiger 2013; Grbac, 2014; NCAA, 2019; Newell, 2015; Roth, 2013).

Those who do not comply with these rules may lose their scholarships indefinitely.

International students in the NCAA, or those who want to participate, must provide nine years or more academic records in their native language and translated to English, proof of graduation, which can be certificates, diplomas or final exams, and SAT or ACT scores (Roth, 2013; NCAA, 2019).

Likewise, in the U Sports, student-athletes must maintain an 80% GPA before entering university to be considered eligible for athletic scholarships, and in Ontario, for instance, student-athletes are expected to have a minimum 60% or 70% average (Geiger, 2013; U Sports, 2018). U Sports requires that all student-athletes must be enrolled in three courses in the term that they are competing, and complete at least three full courses per year, or six half courses or eighteen semester hours (U Sports, 2018). Student-athletes and non-athletes are also held to the same admissions criteria (U Sports, 2018). In addition to this, student-athletes in both the U Sports and NCAA have high completion rates, and some even go on to pursue a professional career (NCAA, 2019; U Sports, 2018; Weston, 2006). The NCAA and U Sports have the same academic expectation for their student-athletes, and due to this, I did not expound much on academic requirements.

Recruitment of ISAs

ISAs are typically acquired through different recruitment strategies employed by universities abroad. Despite being such an essential tool in obtaining talented ISAs, Jara (2015) explained that there is a paucity of literature on this specific kind of international student recruitment. Historically, ISAs recruitment began when it became difficult to attract top American athletes who, at the time, only went to nationally recognizable colleges (Jara, 2015; Zonder, 2013). There was also a limited number of elite athletes within the country that can have a substantial impact, so they seek universities around the world (Jara, 2015; Zonder,

2013). The first group of ISAs were Canadians who were recruited for track and field when American colleges were experiencing shortages (Hong, 2018; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000).

Consequently, the recruitment of ISAs has become the most predominant form of sports migration to date (Foo, 2015). Globalization has led to the dependency culture between nations. Foo (2015) explained that this dependent relationship has intensified as top tier institutions and coaches seek overseas talents and countries with an abundant supply of potential international student-athletes. Popp et al. (2011) and Weston (2006) described the recruitment of top international talent as an *arms race* where it is necessary to win at all costs, and universities are pressured to recruit talent internationally. This statement is indeed plausible because while America is leading in student recruitment, Canada is also seeking a supply of student-athletes themselves.

In the NCAA, coaches, and, respectively, universities actively pursue and recruit overseas talent. In the NCAA, one of the leading priorities of coaches is recruiting international students (Pierce et al., 2011). They further stated that coaches are pressured to be successful and win, and to fulfill this, they must acquire talented-student athletes. In the NCAA, coaches have employed several recruitment strategies, with overseas scouting being the most popular technique used by coaches. Some of the best talents exist in the international pool and have continuously caused the recruitment of international students. Many coaches and sports academics travel abroad and attend sporting events to seek potential athletes (Jara, 2015; Weston, 2006; Zonder, 2013). Another essential strategy is networking; this has become essential in acquiring international students (Jara, 2015). One form of networking is called the talent pipeline. Bale (1991) explained that a *talent pipeline* is a strong partnership between international sources and college destinations. Coaches in the NCAA have a reputation for recruiting students from specific countries through pipeline connections (Zonder, 2013). In addition to building relationships through pipelines with

students, campus visits also help coaches to meet and greet potential recruits (Remillard, 2014). The internet and other forms of technology have also played a crucial role in recruiting student-athletes. This practice was highlighted by Jara (2015), who explained that recruitment has evolved to include social media websites, skype, FaceTime, and other forms of communication technology to connect with potential student-athletes.

The recruitment or scouting of international students is not as wide scale in the U Sports as it is in the NCAA. However, it is often used by institutions in Ontario who have prioritized overseas recruitment in U Sports (Grbac, 2014). Furthermore, in Grbac's (2014), it was reported that only a few of the universities in the U Sports recruit ISAs; for instance, a few coaches went to Australia to watch prospective students play. Another recruiting strategy is communicating with prospective student-athletes via phone call or email and arranging official or unofficial school visits are more prevalent in the U Sports. Many international students use school visits to decide on their potential university in Canada. Through school visits, they can scope out the facilities and with the coaching staff. According to the U Sports Recruitment Regulations (2018), prospective students participate in an official campus visit, which is funded by the institution, and they are only allowed to visit once or twice throughout a year. The student is permitted no longer than a 72-hour visit and can be allowed to visit an official intercollegiate game. There are also unofficial visits that the university is not allowed to sponsor (U Sports Recruitment Regulations, 2018). Grbac (2014) stated that the use of university visits as a form of recruitment was employed by some U Sports head coaches and athletic directors and was reported as an effective recruiting tactic. Therefore, the coaches' personalities play a significant role in the recruitment process (Grbac, 2014).

A study conducted on ISAs in the U Sports revealed that many of them received offers to play in the NCAA, but after visiting Canadian campuses, they chose the U Sports instead (Grbac, 2014). Some students were also recruited by peers and former coaches who

were familiar with the U Sports. Students who played football overseas were made aware of the U Sports through interactions with former teammates, who then inform the coach about their potential arrival (Grbac, 2014). Another source for ISAs to receive information is from relatives who are knowledgeable about sporting opportunities in Canada. For example, Grbac (2014) spoke about one participant in his study, who mentioned that their relative made connections with one of the coaches. When the student arrived in Canada, the coach offered a tryout session. He reported that after the trials, the student was successful and was eventually offered a spot on the team.

Another recruitment strategy used in both associations are letters of intent. This initiative has long existed in the NCAA but only began in recent years in the U Sports. According to the NCAA (2019) and U Sports (2018), the letter of intent was a process established to ease recruitment of prospective students; students sign this letter to state their interest and intention of being a student-athlete in a specific sport at a particular university. The letter of intent is a voluntary process as well but has restrictions. For instance, students must fulfill their letter of intent agreement, and the student must not be in contact with the recruiting university once it has been signed. Students can also be banned for a year if they do not fulfill their commitment (NCAA, 2019; U Sports. 2018).

Letters of intent is a formal procedure that is usually done before being accepted at a university (U Sports, 2018). If students do not want to sign a letter of intent, they can personally contact the head coaches (U Sports Recruitment Regulations, 2018). The western Canadian institution in this research also uses this method. On the institution's sports website, students are informed to send an email to the head coach before applying to their respective programs. After engaging in dialogue with the coach, the next step is to apply to a program. Students can also use this tactic to request a practice or trial session with the respective head coaches of specific sports. The strategy may or may not be as useful as other tools used to

attract international students because if students do not have the knowledge or the capabilities to navigate this system, they may miss out on sporting opportunities.

Scholarships and ISAs

Many international students receive funding and academic scholarships to participate in intercollegiate sports. Athletic scholarships serve a dual purpose to student-athletes as these scholarships give them the chance to participate in sports and pursue a degree that might not have been available in their home countries (Geiger, 2013). The NCAA and U Sports offer athletic scholarships to student-athletes, but the availability and amount differ in each system (Geiger, 2013). For international students, this is a major determining factor when choosing between these two sporting associations. Geiger (2013) also highlighted that in the NCAA, student-athletes get full scholarships valuing between 15,000 to 35,000 U.S. dollars that can cover rent, tuition, food, and more. These athletes also receive scholarships based on gender, region, and type of sport they play, among other factors (Cl  men  on, 2014).

On the other hand, Geiger (2013) stated that while coaches in the U Sports may recruit student-athletes based on athletic ability, scholarships in the U Sports are significantly based on academics at the institutional level. Student-Athletes often get athletics residences, but those are not universally a part of the Canadian experience (Miller & Gretchen, 2003). U Sports Athletic Financial Awards (AFAs) are strictly limited to tuition and other compulsory fees (Ali, 2014). Before the year 2000, AFAs in the U Sports were significantly lower; for instance, students merely got 1,500 CAD (Miller & Gretchen, 2003). Since then, the regulatory body governing athletics scholarships have revised them. Geiger (2013) mentioned that U Sports offer up to 4,000 CAD per student in scholarship awards. In the central region of U Sports, universities in Ontario offer adequate athletic scholarships to their athletes (Geiger, 2013). According to Won (2017), to be eligible for such athletics financial awards in

Canada, students must have a 70% or a 3.0 GPA, and above while in the United States, some students can get scholarships with under 70% (The NCAA, 2019).

In 2005-2006 it was reported that the U Sports gave out 6 million Canadian dollars in athletics award money to universities (Ainsworth-Vincze, 2007). Though not as significant as those in the NCAA, U Sports AFAs have continued to increase over the years (Miller & Gretchen, 2003). The lack of athletic scholarships implies that U Sports has lost out on many talented student-athletes (Geiger, 2013). Not only has U Sports lost out on potential ISAs, but they have been susceptible to talent-drain of Canadian students as well (Ainsworth-Vincze, 2007; Ali, 2014). A primary reason is that students are unaware of scholarship opportunities in Canada, and the United States also offers better financial packages; hence they choose to become ISAs in the United States instead (Ainsworth-Vincze, 2007). In both the NCAA and U Sports, there is often an issue with gender and scholarships. Blackley (2013) elucidated that the AFA report that several universities and colleges do not provide equal athletic funding to males and females. Laval University reported that they offer 80 % of their scholarships to males and only 20% to females; likewise, McMaster and Laurier University have similar scholarship disparities (Blackley, 2013). The scholarship gender imbalance may influence athletes' decisions to participate in sports. Recruitment strategies and funding and scholarships may be contributing factors to the lack of participation in intercollegiate sports in Canadian universities.

The western Canadian university being studied has done well in recruiting and attracting international students as well as diversifying its students' population over the years. As mentioned in Chapter one, 12.5% of the population are international students. While this is evident in the classrooms, such growth has not been reflected in their intercollegiate sports teams. Currently, this university has only seven ISAs, which represents just 2% of the entire international student cohort on its campus. Understanding the importance of recruitment and

scholarships may benefit the western Canadian university in its efforts to attract more international student-athletes. These factors are also crucial in understanding how they influence international students' participation in intercollegiate sports.

This section outlined some of the similarities between NCAA and U Sports in their pursuit of attracting ISAs. However, there are some differences in their recruitment strategies and distribution of scholarships, which are usually are major determining factors when deciding to compete in sports at the intercollegiate level. Being a student-athlete is a dual role, which means students must maintain specific academic standards while participating in the NCAA and U Sports. International students are no exception to this expectation. International students' migration to Canada has been increasing rapidly, but ISAs are not moving at the same pace. Researchers point out that ISAs' participation in the NCAA continues to increase yearly, but U Sports has not shown the same growth (Clemencon, 2014; Grbac, 2014). The differences between these two associations appear to be deciding factors for international students' participation. These findings could also explain why they take their talents to recreational sports instead. Grbac (2014) found that some Canadian universities and coaches have recruited international students and, in some cases, offered financial incentives. Grbac (2014) further stated that more could be done; likewise, Won (2017) explained that the scholarship offerings in Canada, though available in some universities, could attract more students if they are increased on a broader scale.

Based on the evidence provided, the NCAA and U Sports have differences and similarities regarding their priorities, strategies, and policies. ISAs have different preferences, beliefs, motivations, and expectations when they participate in intercollegiate sports, mainly to either develop an athletic or professional career after they have graduated from university. Popp (2007) cited that international students are often equipped with grit and perseverance necessary to be student-athletes. Besides, the NCAA (2018) and U Sports (2018) have

reported high graduation rates, and many have gone on to work in their field of study, and others have transitioned into professional athletes. International students have also become professional and semi-professional athletes in Canada, the United States, and around the world. Past international students have gone on to participate in the Olympic Games, the World Championships, other international competitions representing their home countries, the National Basketball League (NBA), Canadian National Hockey League (NHL) and the National Football League (NFL) (Druzin, 2016; Grbac, 2014; Krasnoff, 2017; Stoller, 2018; U Sports, 2016).

Roles and Benefits of ISAs

Countries worldwide compete for international students for several reasons. Primarily, from a social perspective, they add value and strengthen Canadian schools, universities, and communities in which they live and study and overall improve the quality of educational experiences for all students (ACCU, 2014; Grbac, 2014). International students also bring several benefits to host institutions (Statistics Canada, 2014). The presence of international students and ISAs on campus can have a positive impact on schools' reputations. Nova Scotia International Student Program (NSISP) pointed out that schools renowned for their openness towards ISAs are often preferred by prospective students, thereby increasing the overall population of international students in their schools (2018). The symbolism of a diverse population of ISAs on campus is advantageous to universities as this can attract other potential students. International students, including ISAs on campus, bring a variety of economic and educational benefits to higher education institutions. Anderson (2015) states that internationalization in Canadian universities is beneficial to domestic students because it exposes them to different cultures, and the languages, gain new perspectives and experiences from their foreign classmates as well as educational and intellectual impacts. Overall, Weston (2006) opined that the inclusion of ISAs on campus is invaluable as it promotes a sense of

diversity and a positive, enriching educational and team atmosphere for all students. As a result, international students can include global perspectives in their discussions and classroom activities.

International students provide learning opportunities for domestic students. International students offer the opportunity to view sports through a new cultural lens. It exposes the competition and engages players in cross-cultural exchange through language and playing styles. Hirko (2007) also elucidated that the inclusion of minority-student athletes provides opportunities for multicultural understanding. According to Hirko (2007), multiculturalism is knowing and appreciating people from differing backgrounds and knowing about oneself with others. He further highlighted that multicultural policies in higher education include integrating diversity content, providing equitable pedagogy, implementing ways to reduce prejudice, improve cross-cultural understandings, and empowering social structures (Hirko, 2007). Therefore, higher education institutions must continue to increase their recruitment efforts. Seeing that Canada is a multicultural society, this would be of great benefit to their universities. Hirko's (2007) study also advised that university administrators should consider maintaining and improving efforts to include minority student-athletes in their programs to provide them with opportunities for interracial interaction. Hirko (2007) further explained that racial diversity in the intercollegiate sports team could positively impact student-athletes academic success.

Polman and Moore (2011) reported that sports participation affords individuals the opportunities to develop new networks and to socialize with others, thus minimizing isolation and contribution to individual wellbeing. Explicitly, for international students, the NSISP (2018) stated that sports participation helps international students make friends, stay active, build confidence, and improve their language skills, which help them adjust and enhance their Canadian experience. It also establishes a sense of community and involvement.

Rathwell and Young's (2018) study on athletes in Canadian intercollegiate sports reported that interpersonal relationships forged through sports provided social support systems for athletes where they can cope with issues and share their experiences with teammates and coaches. Likewise, international students who participate in sports at intercollegiate or intramural levels can feel a sense of belonging and a part of the broader school community (Ward, 2015). Overall the benefits and role of international students in intercollegiate sports are essential and should not be ignored as they improve athletic competitiveness contributing to successful athletic programs that enhance institutional reputation, as well as increasing diversity on campus (Lee & Opio, 2011).

Benefits of ISAs to the University Administration

Although the inclusion of ISAs has foreseen benefits to sports programs, domestic students, and the broader school community, there are also specific ways that university administrators gain value from these students. Mixon et al. (2004) claimed that university administrators and economics scholars found that there is a correlation between athletic success and the enhancement of educational goals in higher education. Furthermore, institutions with successful athletics programs and a substantial number of wins attract both student-athletes and other students with good grades and therefore improves the academics of the entire institution (Chen et al., 2010; Mixon et al., 2004). Other pull factors such as good athletic programs and coaches tend to attract ISAs (Foo, 2015; Geiger, 2013; Grbac, 2014; Lim et al., 2017; Love & Kim, 2011; Pierce et al., 2011; Zonder, 2013).

Goff (2000) expounded that a successful athletics program might also affect students' interest, which is measured by the number of students desiring to attend a university and the quality of those students. Goff (2000) also encouraged university administrators to evaluate and measure the kinds of students they usually attract and how they can attract more. He further claimed that while this is a reliable measure, administrators may believe that students

who are mainly looking into sports programs are not necessarily interested in academics. This argument was refuted as the OCED (2014) reported, Canada and other OECD countries acquire the brightest and most talented students.

Skill and Student Development

International students add diversity to the classroom as well as to the sports teams. Many coaches state that they bring forth skills that make intercollegiate sports better (Weston, 2006). Hosick (2010) made similar claims and expressed that ISAs' presence sometimes develops the level of play, facilitates better competition, and levels the playing field in intercollegiate sports. As mentioned previously, some coaches believe that they should recruit overseas to find skilled players as there are a limited number of domestic players available to play or compete. Therefore, international students help to fill the void for those students. Weston (2006) pointed out that many teams in the NCAA have progressed with the inclusion of ISAs.

There is also concern about the presence of ISAs as well as dominance. Several researchers, students, and families are concerned that domestic students will lose out on potential scholarships as these are available to ISAs as well (Weston, 2006). She further said that while this is a concern, there is a place for ISAs in intercollegiate sports. The implication here is that both domestic student-athletes and international student-athletes can coexist in intercollegiate sports. Furthermore, the data provided earlier showed that there were more domestic student-athletes in both the NCAA and U Sports than there are ISAs.

Nonetheless, international students bring diversity and a new viewpoint on the benefits of sports. It also helps both domestic and international students to learn how to coexist as a team, make decisions, conflict resolution, supporting others, networking, and leadership (Rathwell & Young, 2018; Weaver & Smith, 2015; Weston, 2006). These skills international students learn as student-athletes can also help them to become better leaders on and off the

field (Rathwell & Young, 2018; Weaver & Smith, 2015). Importantly, international students can help to develop their skills, and can, later, venture into professional sports, as seen in tennis, football, soccer, Canadian hockey, and more (Weston, 2006).

ISAs and Fan base

Intercollegiate sporting activities are not only beneficial to athletes but also fans. Fans are vital consumers of sports and have the potential to be assets to intercollegiate sports in Canada, given the inclusion of international students. In Grbac's (2014) study, he highlighted that viewership has helped to increase the popularity of collegiate sports in the United States. Weston (2006) believes that international student-athlete presence in intercollegiate sports helps to develop a fan base and following from local and international viewers. Fans can get a chance to watch international players that they may not usually get a chance to see (Weston, 2006). Geiger (2013) expressed that the NCAA is highly commercialized and gain national media coverage, which builds up the excitement and needs to win. As aforementioned, there is more exposure, visibility, more extensive viewership, and media coverage for NCAA competitions, contrary to U Sports competitions. According to Ainsworth-Vincze (2007) and Ali (2014), U Sports lack visibility on the global market and is not known for intercollegiate sports when compared to the United States.

Moreover, many people assume that they are way better than Canada in every aspect. The U Sports has retooled its website based on previous suggestions and criticisms (U Sports; 2017). As a result of this, the U Sports developed new strategic plans aimed at attracting local viewers and increasing viewership awareness, including being televised, increasing popularity, and bringing more exposure to the competitions (U Sports, 2018; U Sports; 2013; Won, 2017). Such policies are aimed at more student engagement and to attract sports fans. International students may draw and invite their peers to events on campus, which can foster student engagement as well.

Relevant Theoretical Models

Leisure Constraints Theory

Many factors may influence international students' participation in sports. Studies have shown that health, cultures, fitness, and psychological and social factors often influence sports participation behaviors (Yusof & Shah, 2007). Scholars have called these hindrances *constraints*. The leisure constraints theory has been widely used to examine the factors that prevent or inhibit the pursuit of recreational or leisure activities (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Liu et al., 2014). In this theory, Crawford and Godbey (1987) proposed three constructs; structural, intrapersonal, and interpersonal constraints, which coincide with the person and context, correspondingly. Structural constraints include social, economic, and environmental factors; intrapersonal constraints are internal factors, and interpersonal factors are social interaction factors (Crawford & Godbey, 1987).

In the past, the term barrier was used instead of constraints. Older leisure constraints models focused on the term barriers but were often criticized for being insufficient. Crawford et al. (1987) elucidated that the term barriers refer to any factor, which intervenes between the preference for activity and participation. The term barrier was scrutinized for two main reasons. Firstly, Jackson (1988) and Jackson and Scott (1999) explained that the term barrier failed to capture the range of reasons for nonparticipation, ceasing participation, and reduction. Secondly, the term barrier misled researchers into thinking only structural constraints influenced participation in leisure (Jackson 1988; Jackson & Scott, 1999). Besides, the constraints theory has shifted its narrow focus on barriers to participation in leisure towards a broader conceptualization of constraints (Alahmad, 2016).

The theory has since been developed to study recreational sports, travel, tourism, outdoor recreation, and urban and state park usage (Liu et al., 2014). Constraints do not only affect participation and non-participation, but it also impacts individuals' preferences, lack of

desire, or lack of awareness (Crawford & Godbey 1987; Hinch et al., 2005). Identification of these constraints and motivating factors is an essential component in the process of understanding participation levels in physical activity and sports (Almahad, 2016). The main constraints to participation in sports or leisure that continues to feature in the literature are interest, time, money, facilities and opportunities, academic obligation, awareness, and skill and abilities (Crawford et al., 1991; Hashim, 2012; Mthethwa, 2017; Searle & Jackson, 1985; Shifman et al., 2012). While this research is about intercollegiate sports participation and not recreation or leisure, the findings in this theory and variations of the theory can be used to explain why international students have not been participating in competitive sport extensively.

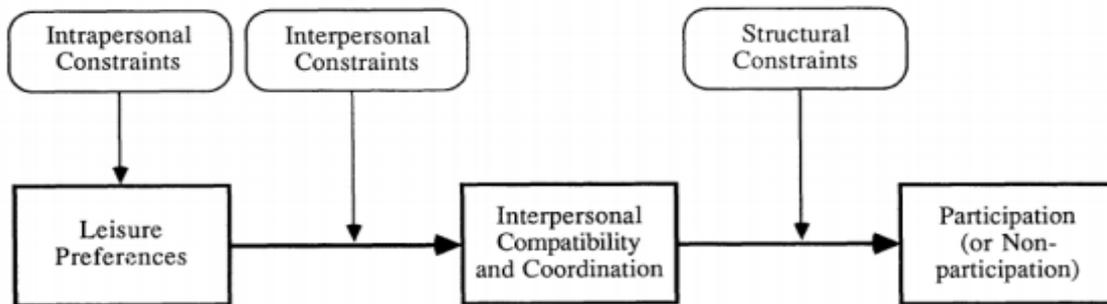
Hierarchical Model of Leisure Constraints

Crawford et al. (1991) argued that the constraints explained in the initial leisure constraints model were not conceptually linked to each other, and, thus, the model failed to explain the dynamics of those constructs. Consequently, this led to the development of the hierarchical model of leisure constraints. According to Crawford et al. (1991), “leisure participation is heavily dependent on negotiating through an alignment of multiple factors, arranged sequentially, that must be overcome to maintain an individual’s impetus through these systemic levels” (p.314). The hierarchical model of leisure constraints suggested that individuals usually experience intrapersonal constraints first as it is the most powerful, followed by interpersonal constraints and then structural constraints (Alexandris & Stodolska, 2004; Crawford et al., 1991; Mthethwa, 2017). In their studies, they believed that intrapersonal constraints trigger an individual’s will to act or motivation to participate in activities.

They also posited that intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints affect leisure preferences, whereas structural constraints intervene between preferences and participation. The model also explained that participation would only occur after they have overcome intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints and did not have any structural constraints to interfere with their desires.

Figure 2.1

Hierarchical Model of Leisure Constraints



Note: This figure demonstrates the different kinds of constraints and how they impact participation in leisure. From “Hierarchical Model of Leisure Constraints,” D.W. Crawford, E. L. Jackson, and G. Godbey, 1991. *Leisure Sciences*, 13(4), p. 313, (<https://doi.org/10.1080/01490409109513147>).

Intrapersonal Constraints and sports participation

Intrapersonal constraints, “involve individual psychological states and attributes which interact with leisure preferences rather than intervening between preferences and participation” (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p 122). Intrapersonal constraint, as mentioned above, is the most impactful constraint as it influences the individuals to desire to participate in events and the extent to which the individual has the aptitude and skills to participate in leisure. Examples of these constraints include “stress, depression, anxiety, religiosity, kin,

and non-kin reference group attitudes, perceived self-skill and subjective evaluations of the appropriateness and availability of various leisure activities” (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p. 122). Other intrapersonal constraints that influence sports participating, especially in adult or young adults, are age, commitment, and negative experiences (Polman & Moore, 2011). Self-perception is also a constraint. Self-perception includes the way individuals view themselves and, in comparison, to others. Examples of these constraints are perceived lack of skills, perceived low fitness levels, and fear (Polman & Moore, 2011).

It is believed that leisure preferences are formed after negotiation or the absence of intrapersonal constraints because, based on the hierarchical model, intrapersonal constraints are the most powerful and more than likely occur first. Lack of awareness and knowledge about sporting activities has been reported as one of the significant constraints to participation in sports. Hashim (2012) stated that the lack of information about events and the inability to reach intended audiences are the primary factors that will likely influence students’ decisions about partaking in recreation and sporting activities. Additionally, Kutintara and Min’s (2016) study revealed that fewer international students who participated in competitive sports in their home countries did not try out for intercollegiate sports. These international students often believed that these intercollegiate teams might have been too competitive to get in (Kutintara & Min, 2016).

Interpersonal Constraints and sports participation

Interpersonal constraints “result from social interaction or the relationship between individuals’ characteristics” (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p. 123). They explained that these constraints usually emerge from non-correspondence of intrapersonal constraints or one’s interpersonal relationship patterns. An individual may experience this type of constraint when they are unable to find someone with whom they can participate in an activity, or if there is something about the co-participants that constraints involvement (Raymore et al., 1993).

Kang (2014) reported that perceived interpersonal constraints negatively impacted most Korean students in Australia, and as such, they struggled to participate in mainstream sports. Students were able to overcome or cope with these constraints by having social networks and supportive environments, and these are described as the best ways to deal with interpersonal constraints (Kang, 2014; Rathwell & Young, 2018). Lack of partners appears to be the most common interpersonal constraints, but other studies found that a lack of encouragement and social influence were more powerful interpersonal constraints (Ledford, 2013). Lack of encouragement or social influence may impede international students from playing sports because they might not have the confidence to go to tryouts and approach coaches.

There are possible interpersonal constraints such as bias and discrimination that can hinder leisure. Studies have confirmed that discrimination exists in the realm of sports (Hirko, 2007; Lee and Opiio, 2011). Discrimination is the unequal or unfair treatment of an individual or group based on age, class, race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, etcetera (British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association, n.d. as cited in BC Human Right Coalition, 2003). They further explained that prejudiced feelings or attitudes often result in bias, which is a preference that holds impartial judgment about an individual or group.

Researchers have also reported on the effects of bias and discrimination as a constraint to participation in leisure (Livengood & Stodolska, 2004). Moreover, they found that bias and discrimination discourage and restrict individuals from participating in sports. Furthermore, discrimination has also affected other minority groups, which causes them to avoid leisure participation (Livengood & Stodolska, 2004). The issues also exist the intercollegiate sports in the United States. There have been several studies on minority

student-athletes in the NCAA who have expressed that they have experienced bias, prejudice, and discrimination (Hirko, 2007; Lee & Opio, 2011).

In contrast, there is limited research on bias, prejudice, and discrimination in Canadian sports. However, the research that exists has revealed that there is indeed racial and ethnic discrimination in Canadian sport (Frisby et al., 2013). In this same study, they advocated for many laws and policies to be changed to increase multiculturalism in Canadian sport. Besides, they suggested that if Canada boasts of having a multicultural and diverse society, this should be reflected in all aspects of the country. Danford and Donnelly (2018) also reported that discrimination against certain minority groups in Canada has led to barriers to sports participation. They also expressed that in Canadian intercollegiate sports, the notion of white privilege seems to exist, and as such, changes should be made to their policies. With policy changes, bias and other constraints can be minimized.

Structural Constraints and sports participation

Crawford and Godbey (1987) defined structural constraints “as those intervening factors between preferences and participation” (p. 124). Structural constraints are usually beyond the individual’s control. These constraints are the physical or environmental factors that impede an individual from participating in leisure (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Kim & Trail, 2010). Some examples of such constraints are lack of facilities, financial resources, season, availability of opportunity, and the scheduling of worktime (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Kim & Trail, 2010).

Another structural constraint that might affect sports participation is climatic conditions (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Schellenberg and Maheux (2007) reported that many immigrants disliked the climate and weather conditions that exist within Canada. It was further reported that immigrants found it difficult to adjust to the condition for travel, to outdoor activities, and when taking transportation. For example, the western parts of

Canada—site of the research—are known to have some of the harshest winter conditions in the country. Considering these factors, international students' who are not used to such conditions may refrain from participating in some outdoor sporting activities.

There are divergent views on the magnitude of influence structural constraints have on people. Crawford and Godbey (1987) posited that intrapersonal constraints are the most dominant form of constraints. On the other hand, more recent studies have found structural constraints to be more dominant (Cho & Price, 2016; Shifman et al., 2012). Shifman et al. (2012) study on lack of participation in intramural sports, found that the lack of time to be the main structural constraints for international students. Many international students try to balance working and schooling, which makes it challenging to fully dedicate themselves to participate in leisure (Cho & Price, 2016; Rathwell & Young, 2018). These findings could also be applied to intercollegiate events, as these require some time away from doing assignments. International students may be particularly affected by structural constraints as many have a heavy workload, which reduces their free time.

Constraints, Negotiation and sports participation

The hierarchical model of constraints has been faced with much criticism, wherein scholars such as Kay and Jackson (1991) and Shaw et al. (1991) believed that constraints do not necessarily inhibit or reduce participation because people can negotiate and gauge their leisure practices. Jackson et al. (1993) explained that the construct of negotiation rebuffs the idea that all constraints are insurmountable obstacles to participation in leisure. With negotiation, scholars acknowledged that constraints existed but believed that these do not always hinder participation (Hubbard & Mannell, 2001; Jackson et al., 1993; Kay & Jackson, 1991). Researchers argue that, when constraints exist, individuals often negotiate or make an effort to participate if they felt the need or thought it was essential to do leisure activities (Hubbard & Mannell, 2001; Jackson et al., 1993; Kay & Jackson, 1991). This claim indicates

that constraints can be overcome or negotiated as constraints do not affect people in the same way. This concept of negotiation is supported by Jackson and Rucks (1995), who maintained that people would not react passively to constraints by not participating but will negotiate through them. Leisure constraints are forces in people's lives that must be negotiated successfully if leisure involvement is to occur (Scott, 1991).

Skill acquisition, time management, interpersonal coordination, and financial resources management and strategies are known as negotiation strategies (Hubbard & Mannell, 2001; Jackson & Rucks, 1995; Rathwell & Young, 2018). The result of the negotiation process depends on the magnitude of the constraints, the interactions between constraints and motives for participation (Crawford et al., 1991). Hubbard and Mannell (2001) further studied the concept of negotiation but also added motivation to the model. In the constraints-effects mitigation model, it hypothesized that negotiation and motivation directly and positively impacted participation while constraints negatively and directly impacted participation. Other studies suggest that motivation plays a significant role in encouraging participation directly (Carrol & Alexandris, 1997).

Other views on the Leisure Constraint Theory

While the leisure constraints model has been extensively used in explaining why the students may or may not participate, Godbey et al. (2010) argued, "it would be naïve ... to expect that all individuals—in all social, cultural, and historical contexts—would experience the same set of constraints and perceive each of them to have the same importance or strength" (p. 119). It must be noted that intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints are not one size fits all and may differ across cultures, which is an area that has not been heavily researched (Cai, 2015). In a follow-up article on the relevance of the hierarchical constraints' theory after two decades, Godbey et al. (2010), shared that despite the criticisms of the model, it still has its relevance today. However, they have now expressed that people

may not experience intrapersonal constraints first, as they had posited in the model. Ultimately, they stated that the constraints might occur depending on the individual's situation, including their relevant attitudes, interests or level of participation, related knowledge, skills, location, access to facilities, social network, cultural background, and more (Godbey et al., 2010). Furthermore, constraints may arise once the situation changes.

There have also been some mixed views on the constraints model. Shaw et al. (1991) explained that constraints do not necessarily equate to less leisure, and sometimes even when multiple obstacles exist, people are inclined to participate. This claim may apply to international students as they may use intercollegiate sports as a coping strategy or a means of balancing personal life and school life. Shaw et al. (1991) also expressed that the alleviation of a constraint may not inevitably lead to increased participation in leisure. The hierarchical model has also been criticized for being too linear and that the structural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal constraints were seen as isolated factors (Godbey et al., 2010). However, but some researchers found different constraints can coexist and are often intertwined (Godbey et al., 2010). Some other studies suggest that factors may fall under more than one constraint; for instance, one factor could be interpersonal and intrapersonal, on the one hand, and structural (Alahmad, 2016).

Motivation for International Student's Participation in Sports

There are a variety of motivational factors that influence international students' decisions to study abroad. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) suggest that personal and professional aspirations drive these students' motivations for undertaking international study.

Push and Pull Framework

International students travel from all over the world for many reasons ranging from academics such as post-secondary education and non-academic such as sports and other forms of engagement. One theoretical framework that can be used to explain students'

motivations for choosing Canadian universities is the push-pull factor framework. The push-pull framework was initially developed in 1966 by Everett Lee to describe factors that influence the movement of people for migration. In recent years, educational researchers have used this framework to identify and examine international students' motivations and other factors, which influence the decision to study abroad (Wilkins et al., 2012). The push-factor is usually within home countries and initiates students' decision to understand international study while the pull-factors lie within the host country to attract international students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). For international students, this model can provide information on the various motivational factors that influence their decision to choose the best-fit college for them.

Globally, students are seeking new avenues and opportunities to improve their quality of life and education. Many international students expressed that they leave their home countries because there are fewer opportunities, low educational opportunities, and economic problems, and so on (Wilkins et al., 2012). These are considered push factors. Generally speaking, student-athletes including ISAs are motivated by coaching staff and personality of coaches, "this is because 'coaches can influence athletes' experiences and self-perceptions through their direct interactions with their athletes, as well as through the broader motivational climate they create in the sport context," (Coatsworth & Conroy, p. 3). Degree availability, financial aid, and scholarships, facilities, skill development, ability to play, personal reasons (Hong, 2018; Lim et al., 2017; Love & Kim, 2011; Pierce et al., 2011; Zonder, 2013).

ISAs consider several factors when choosing their preferred destination for study and intercollegiate sports. Hong (2018) reported that ISAs consider the competitiveness, level of performance of program, international diversity in their decision-making process. For students who choose to study in the United States, the factors that influence students' choice

are academic scholarships, sports scholarships, and other forms of assistance (Ainsworth-Vincze, 2007; Foo, 2015; Geiger, 2013; McMahon 1992). Lee and Opio (2011) cited Holland 1980 survey on NCAA track and field ISAs, which reported that highest rated migration variable was academic related at (74.5%), availability of athletic scholarship (59.8%), increased competition (49%), cultural experience (17.3%) and climatic factors (17.3%). This denotes that international students view these factors when deciding to study abroad (Lee & Opio, 2011). Conversely, for Canada, motivational factors were multiculturalism, future employment opportunities, cost of living, more straightforward visas process, quality and reputation of institutions, studious environment, and safety (Chen, 2008; Clemencon, 2014; Grbac, 2014). The push and pull framework can be applied to understand the motivational driving forces behind the mobility of ISAs in the U Sports.

Self-Determination Theory

Research on motivation can contribute to a better understanding of individuals' decisions concerning sports participation. Ryan and Deci (2000) claim that individuals have different amounts, levels, and various kinds of motivation. This claim implies that a range of factors will trigger individuals. Kondric et al. (2013) further explained that motivational factors are diverse and differ from individual to individual. Besides, these have been proven to be a contributing factor to participating and non-participating in sports or physical activity (Kondric et al., 2013). Motivation is defined as an inner driven feeling by someone's needs, desires, implies motives, and is geared towards goal achievement that from the outside functions as a stimulus for behavior (Kondric et al., 2013). Self-determination theory (SDT) is a broad theory that explains human motivation. The SDT distinguishes the difference in human motivation based on several reasons or goals that give rise to an action. SDT by Ryan and Deci (2000) clarified that there are several types of motivation, but the two dominant forms of motivation are extrinsic and intrinsic motivations; these are called autonomous

motivation. Autonomous motivation exists “where people have identified with an activity’s value and ideally, will have integrated it into their sense of self” (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 182). Their study further explained that extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation are responsible for shaping who people are and how they behave.

SDT has been widely used in research on sports participation. Kondric et al. (2013) defined intrinsic motivation as everything that drives us from the inside, specifically, the activities representing a goal as such. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation indicates that athletes engage in sports for external outcomes such as rewards that will result from participation in an activity (Kondric et al., 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Other researchers such as Bhatnagar and Karageorghis (2008) added that intrinsic motivation is usually aligned with activities done for pleasure, excitement, fun, and satisfaction, while extrinsic motivation entails participation for external rewards such as money, medals, and social approval. Identifying and understanding the motivations behind participation in competitive sports could help to enhance and encourage participation.

Although the SDT model describes intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in certain situations, the model does not account for more complex situations or realist scenarios where there are conflicting factors. Pederson (2002) shared that his main criticism of Ryan and Deci’s SDT model is that the model presents extrinsic and intrinsic motivations as a dichotomy. He explained that intrinsic factors are not independent of extrinsic factors. This statement means that though scholars tend to separate extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, people often experience a mixture of both depending on the activity. Besides, motivation can shift from intrinsic to extrinsic; for example, an individual may be intrinsically involved in an activity, but once they receive external rewards, their motivations may change to extrinsic. Further, he shared that the “motives for participating in sport may be construed as varying along an intrinsic-extrinsic continuum” (Pederson, 2002, p. 461).

Since the 1980s, the Participation Motivation Questionnaire (PMQ) has been used to analyze the motives for youth participation in sports (Kondric et al., 2013; Kutintara & Min, 2016). Since then, it has also been used to understand college student-athletes' motivation for participating in competitive and recreational sports (Kondric et al., 2013; Kutintara & Min, 2016). The motivation for sports participation, as mentioned above under the SDT theory, varies from person to person and across genders are often driven by internal and external factors (Kondric et al., 2013). For males, they are more motivated to participate in sports for intrinsic factors such as competition and challenge, as well as the need for power (Kondric et al., 2013). Females, on the other hand, are motivated by extrinsic factors such as losing weight and appearance. In the same research, it was disclosed that motivation to participate in sports, both intrinsic and extrinsic combined were peer influence, popularity, fitness and health, social status, sports events, and relaxation through sports (Kondric et al., 2013).

The researchers found that the students engage in sports for several reasons, which includes fun, improving skills, enjoyment, learning, being with friends, achievement/success, winning, and health (Kondric et al., 2013; Kutintara & Min, 2016). Additionally, for many international students, “their participation in sports is motivated by their desire to be a part of a cohesive group and an internalized feeling of belonging” (Allen et al., 2010, p. 142). This statement indicates that there are correlations between sports and a sense of belonging for international students.

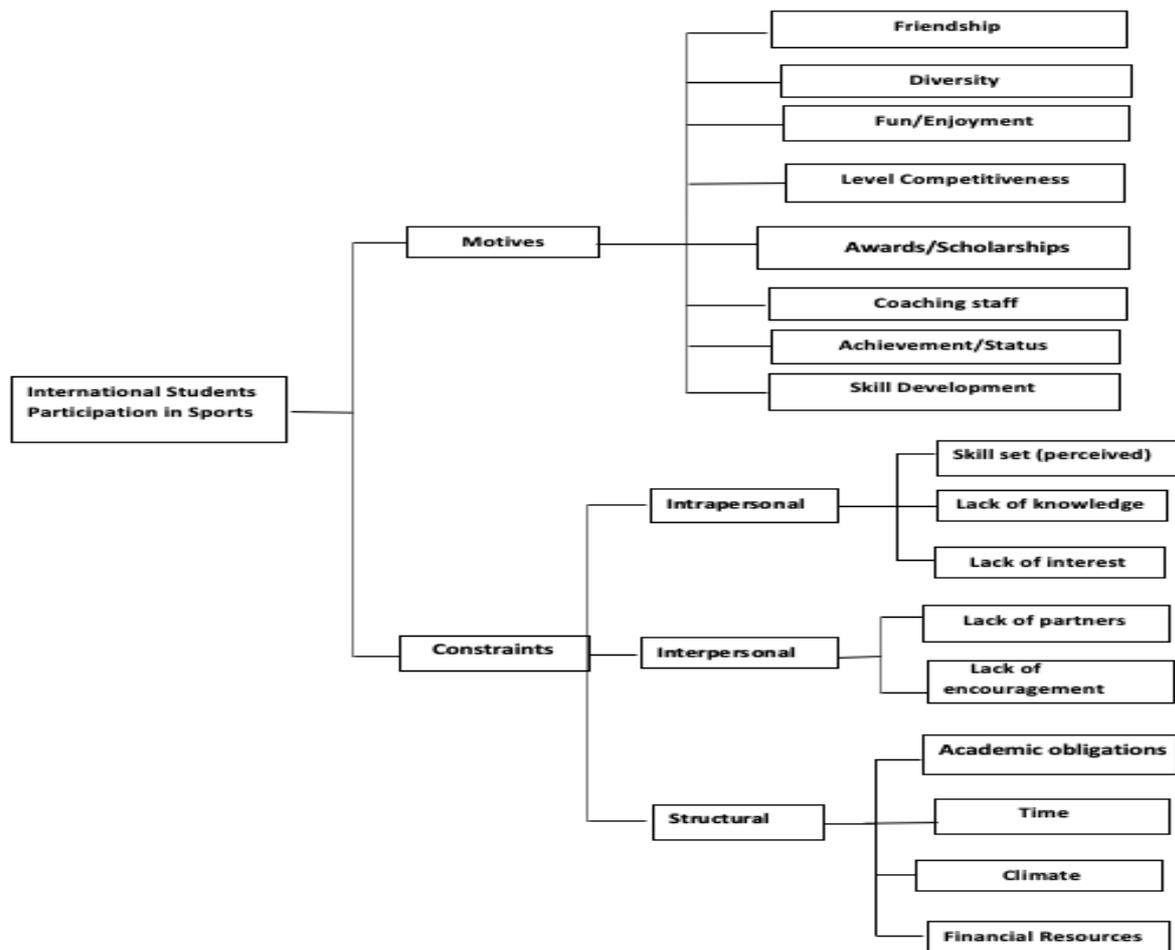
Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework below synthesizes the concepts that are relevant in explaining the research topic. In Figure 2, Mthethwa (2017) outlined the main factors influencing individuals' participation in physical activities. Along with literature, this framework was modified to incorporate the constraints as well as motivations that may impact ISAs decisions when choosing to participate in sports. Importantly, according to

Mthethwa (2017), the motivations and constraints highlighted are case-specific, which indicates that these may impact students in several ways. ISAs may be influenced by one constraint or motive or by a combination of both. Understanding these concepts outlined in the framework may help this institution in their decisions to acquire ISAs as well.

Figure 2.2

Motives and Constraints for international students’ participation in sports.



Note: This framework shows the motivations and constraining factors influencing sports participation by international students. From “Factors Affecting Participation in Sport and Recreation of Students Staying in Residences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal” (Master’s Thesis) by M.M., Mthethwa 2017. *Master’s Degrees (Biokinetics, Exercise and Leisure Sciences)* 30.p. 4. (<https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/handle/10413/14788>).

Summary

In Chapter two, past literature and relevant theories are applied to support the researcher's assumptions and research questions. Globalization and internationalization have sparked a rise in the number of international students who have decided to study abroad instead of their home countries. These processes may also influence ISAs, who seek opportunities to participate in sports. In Canada and the United States, such opportunities are available. Globalization and internationalization have made the role and benefits of international students extremely relevant in the quality of sports competitions and strategies employed by sports associations and institutions in higher education. International students are influenced by these organizations in many ways but may experience constraints and have different motivations influencing their decision to participate or not in intercollegiate sports. Hopefully, this current research has contributed to the existing scholarly body of research about ISAs' participation in intercollegiate sports.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Introduction

Despite having a significant increase in the number of international students in Canadian universities, these universities have not incorporated many international student-athletes (ISAs) into their intercollegiate sports programs. Intercollegiate sports have become an essential component in higher education and have many opportunities for international students (Danylchuk & Maclean, 2001). To meet this increased interest, this qualitative research aimed to unearth the factors that influence international students' participation in intercollegiate sports at the western Canadian university. As such, I investigated four research questions:

- What are the international students' perceptions of intercollegiate sports?
- What motivates international students to participate in sports?
- What are the benefits of international students' participation in intercollegiate sports?
- What are the factors hindering international students' participation in intercollegiate sports?

In this chapter, the rationale for the choice of research methodology is explained. This chapter also includes the purpose of the study and research questions, theoretical perspective, research design and approach, participant selection and recruitment, the method of data collection and procedure, analysis of the data, researcher's positionality and bias, and the ethical considerations.

Theoretical Perspectives

This qualitative research was conducted using both the constructivist and constructionist lenses. According to Chamaz (2006), constructivism is "a perspective that addresses how realities are made" (p. 187). They emphasize that all reality is subjective, and knowledge is constructed when individuals attempt to understand their experiences and

reflect on them (Bada & Olusegun, 2015; Creswell, 2013). The constructivist lens was followed because it allowed international students' voices to be the focal point of the research enabling them to construct their understanding of the different characteristics of their experiences of intercollegiate athletics in a western Canadian university. Additionally, my experience as a former student-athlete and international student helped me to co-construct knowledge with the participants.

The participants also constructed and made meaning of their experiences in a group setting. Constructionism was derived from constructivism. Chamaz (2006) explains

Constructionism:

As a theoretical perspective that assumes that people create social reality(ies) through individual and collective actions ... they what people at a particular time and place take as real, how they construct their views and actions, when different constructions arise, whose constructions become taken as definitive, and how that process ensues.
(p 189)

This definition implies that that knowledge is socially situated and collectively constructed within group settings. Subsequently, this research intended to establish relationships with participants and make conclusions about the experiences of international student-athletes and how these students developed meanings about their experiences. A qualitative research design was the most suitable for achieving the purpose of the study.

Research Design

The research was concerned with how people make sense and meaning of their realities. Therefore, a qualitative research design was chosen for this study to best answer the researcher questions presented in Chapter one (Cohen et al., 2018; De Vaus, 2001).

According to Creswell (2007), "when studying individuals, qualitative researchers conduct a study with the intent of reporting these multiple realities" (p. 18). Besides, I decided to use

qualitative research based on the assertion that most educational researchers use the qualitative method for two reasons. Firstly, it is exploratory, so it enables researchers to inquire or seek information, in a natural setting to interpret the meanings that individuals align with their experiences (Creswell, 2007). Motives, reasons, values, and assumptions are were generally my interest; hence Mertler (2019) suggested that qualitative research would be best to guide my study. Secondly, qualitative research also allows for the collection of large sums of data from a small group of individuals. The small sample size was used in this research to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives and not for generalizability (Creswell, 2007; Mertler, 2019). Since the aim of the study was not to generalize, the reasoning behind selecting the cases met the goals of the research. This qualitative research helped me to extract enough pertinent information from the participants while attempting to understand their experiences.

For this research, a case study approach was chosen. This approach allowed me to share an in-depth explanation and analysis of several cases, provide an understanding of international students' experience with intercollegiate sports and provide new insight into this field of study (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2006). According to Creswell (2013) "the case study method explores 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" (p. 97).

At the advice of Yin (2006), I decided to select several cases to produce more data and compare cases. This multiple case study considered each participant as a case. The cases were chosen from a post-secondary institution to generate essential data for this research. Additionally, with a multiple case study, I was also able to gather more data from each case by identifying similarities and differences between their responses. This claim is supported

by Yin (2003), who explains that when researchers choose to do multiple case studies, he or she can analyze the data within each situation and across different situations.

According to Zainal (2007), “case study research, through reports of past studies, allows the exploration and understanding of complex issues. It can also be considered a robust research method, particularly when a holistic, in-depth investigation is required” (p. 1). However, case studies are often filled with complexities. There are some nuances involved in case studies that may help address these complexities. For example, Yin (2003) explained that there are three categories of case studies: descriptive, explanatory, or exploratory. Descriptive case studies are used to describe a phenomenon and the real-life context in which it exists (Yin, 2003). He stated that explanatory case studies are used when researchers seek to answer questions that sought to explain the speculated causal links in real-life situations. Unlike descriptive and explanatory case studies, exploratory case studies are used to explore and prelude any phenomenon that has not been thoroughly investigated or have no clear outcomes (Yin, 2003). For this research, an exploratory case study was the most suitable as research on international students in intercollegiate sports in Canada has not sufficiently been explored. Thus, this study served to provide more insights on the current issues as it relates to international students’ participation in intercollegiate sports.

To ensure that I collected enough data from the participants in the study, I utilized two methods of collecting data. I chose interviews and a focus group discussion for collecting data during this case study. Advised by researchers, these two methods were the most suitable for collecting data in case studies, and the utilization of multiple ways helps to increase the validity of the research (Kumar, 2011; Zainal, 2007).

Participant Selection

The purposive sampling was used to select participants for this research. The main criteria for the targeted participants were international students who participate in recreational

sports on and off-campus but were not currently international student-athletes (ISAs). From the targeted population, nine participants were chosen to provide a sample size large enough to sufficiently describe their experiences in-depth as it relates to the topic (Creswell, 2007; Yin 2003). This sample was chosen, keeping in mind that “qualitative research requires that researchers purposefully pick a limited number of participants as the selection cannot be random” (Mertler, 2019, p. 79). This approach allowed me to intentionally select qualified participants who had in-depth knowledge of intercollegiate sports and international student experiences in Canada (Creswell, 2007). The criteria for choosing the participant for this research were as follows:

- A student who neither holds Canadian citizenship nor permanent residency status.
- International students who are actively engaged in recreational/competitive sports either on or off-campus.
- International students who participate in recreational/competitive sports on and off campus but are not currently members of this institution intercollegiate team.

Acquiring all participants during the summer break proved to be daunting. Hence, I used the snowball technique to reach the targeted participants. This technique was employed to locate participants based on the recommendations of other study participants (Mertler, 2019). In the initial stages, I was able to identify a few qualified participants who had met the selection criteria and asked them to direct me to other participants who were also eligible.

Participant Recruitment

After I received permission from the ethics board to recruit participants as well as approval from the Campus Recreation Coordinator, I attended several intramural sessions and distributed the letters of invitation to potential participants. The selection process initially

resulted in six participants. In an attempt to increase my sample size, I recruited more participants through the snowballing technique at the recommendation of a few of the participants who had already confirmed participation. After this recruitment concluded, nine participants met the criteria and agreed to the partake in the study.

A sample of nine is considered sufficient for the scope of the research with the limitations of the case study method (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). Having nine cases in a multiple case study was beneficial as it allowed me to communicate directly and develop personal relationships and trust with the participants. At the same time, I was trying to understand their experiences and feelings. This small sample size allowed me to engage with participants who had profound insights and were knowledge-rich in the topic (Creswell, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Sources of Data Collection

One of the advantages of using a case study is that you can use more than one method to collect data. Therefore, for this research, I collected data from the nine participants using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

Interviews

Interviews are commonly used to collect data in qualitative research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Hence, I chose interviews because they were an effective method of obtaining rich data about a topic or problem (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Interviews are useful when exploring perspectives and experiences about a research topic (Johnson & Christensen, 2015). Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. For this research, I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews, which contain a set of pre-determined close-ended and open-ended questions (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Close-ended questions have pre-determined responses as oppose to open-ended questions that allow participants to expound freely to questions given during the interview (McMillan &

Schumacher, 2010). Due to the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews are also flexible, I was able to ask participants follow-up questions during the sessions.

Interviews can generate a lot of information, but for qualitative research, it is best to combine methods to improve the quality of the research. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), combining methods is essential because the limitations of one method could be complemented by including one or more methods to increase credibility and validity. Therefore, along with semi-structured interviews, some participants also participated in a single focus group discussion. By using these two methods, I was able to triangulate the data collected. The process of triangulation was discussed in more detail in the section on trustworthiness.

Focus Group Discussions

My second data collection method was a single focus group discussion. I chose this method because it complemented face to face interviews very well. Focus groups are also dynamic group discussions utilized to gather data (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). These discussions are usually small and have no more than 10 to 12 participants, and they typically last between 1 to 2 hours (Mertler, 2019).

Kitzinger (1995) explained that the researcher is the facilitator when focus groups are being held and does not ask each person to respond to questions. Instead, participants are encouraged to communicate with each other, ask questions, exchange anecdotes, and comment on each other's experiences and opinions. Focus groups have many advantages, such as being able to collect more data and stimulate new ideas from participants at one time. Besides, they are useful for providing detailed information in a relatively short time frame (Johnson & Christensen, 2015). Mertler (2019) also mentioned that participants could feed off each and could spark more information than a face to face interview.

Questions of significant value to the research that were not adequately responded to in the interviews were reused in the focus group discussion with a few modifications. These modifications were done to accommodate the group setting as the responses in the interviews were more personal, and responses in the discussion were more about the group dynamics (Caillaud & Flick, 2017). I compared individual interview responses and group discussions to see if these corresponded or conflicted with each other. Comparing results obtained through both methods enabled me to triangulate data in the analysis process (Caillaud & Flick, 2017). A focus group discussion is a group unit of analysis, and I sought to find out group consensus or shared responses on specific questions rather than focusing on individual utterances (Caillaud & Flick, 2017; Morgan, 1997). As a result of using a focus group discussion, I collected new and additional data from the participants.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection was done in two phases: phase one was the semi-structured interviews with each participant, and phase two was a focus group discussion with five participants who also did the interview. On a case by case basis, follow-up interviews were also conducted after the initial interviews for member checking, filling gaps, and triangulating.

Phase one- Nine face to face interviews were conducted in a private room on their campus, and each of the participants was interviewed for an average of 45 minutes. The interviews were conducted in July of 2019. The questions that were asked to each individual can be found in (Appendix F). The interviews were semi-structured with primarily open-ended questions, which encouraged and allowed participants to share their stories and experiences. Likewise, during the interviews, I was able to build rapport with the participants. The first set of questions asked was to learn more about their background and to get familiar with them as well as building trust.

Moreover, I was able to collect detailed information from each participant about the experiences and views on intercollegiate sports. The initial and follow-up interviews allowed me to answer my main research questions. These interviews were audio-taped, and the interviewees were informed that they could refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any time. In addition to this, interviewees were assured of the confidentiality of how the data would be handled. They also were given a pseudonym to ensure their anonymity. The interviews were also the audio-taping device, and I had a journal that was used to take additional notes.

Phase Two- A focus group discussion involving five of the participants from the face to face interviews was then conducted. Initially, I tried to get all nine participants in the focus group, but because of the summer holidays, participant commitment was challenging. This process delayed the commencement of the focus group discussion by two months, at which time I was only able to confirm five participants. Once we agreed on a plan, the discussion was held in a quiet room on their campus for one hour and forty minutes. During the discussion, my participants constructed and made meanings of their experiencing in a group setting. This discussion allowed me to collect a group perspective on the research topic and was beneficial in triangulating and confirming the data (Caillaud & Flick, 2017). Another advantage of the focus group was that I could re-address questions and points from the interviews that were not fully explained or expounded on during the group discussion. I reused five of the questions from the interviews in the focus group discussion, and I found that some participants gave extended responses in the group dynamics than they did in interviews.

Much like the interviews, participants were informed that the focus group discussion was going to be audio-taped and that they could discontinue their participation in the interview at any time. Participants were also assured that I would take the utmost caution to

maintain the confidentiality of the discussion. They were also informed that, due to the nature of a group discussion, complete confidentiality could not be guaranteed. Participants were, therefore, encouraged to be respectful of each other's privacy and refrain from repeating what was discussed in the group. Moreover, they were advised against disclosing the identity of other participants and were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement, which they agree to provide.

The data (transcripts, consent forms, and notes) were stored securely in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator's (Janet Okoko's) office. Data were also stored electronically on a password-protected computer and backed up on a secure server at the University of Saskatchewan. The data will be kept for a minimum of five years following the guidelines of this post-secondary institution.

Data Analysis

This section outlined the methods and procedures that were used to analyze the data. According to Yin (2003), the data analysis process consists of examining information, categorizing, representing, formulating, and interpreting data to produce empirically based findings. Data analysis also helped to substantiate the claims, answered research questions, and assisted in concluding results. Qualitative data analysis is concerned about non-numerical and subjective data rather than statistics (Mertler, 2019). When analyzing qualitative data, interpreting and analyzing are intertwined and often integrated with the data collection process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Mertler, 2019).

After the interviews were conducted, the audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim for analysis. After the transcription process, each participant was emailed a copy of their transcripts so that they could member check (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). To member check, participants were given the opportunity to edit, add, remove, or clarify the information to avoid misunderstanding in the data analysis. Besides, each participant was sent a form

requesting their signature for approval and use of information in the study. The data analysis process was started when their consent was received.

The audio recording and written notes collected during the interviews and the focus group discussion were transferred and stored on a password safe device until they were then transcribed and coded. A code, in qualitative inquiry, is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldana, 2012, p. 3). Coding is “the process of analyzing qualitative text data by taking them apart to see what they yield before putting the data back together in a meaningful way” (Creswell, 2015, p. 156). It is also the organization or grouping of data based on similarities (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Mertler, 2019).

While many qualitative researchers often used computer software to help analyzed and code data, manual coding is another option. Saldana (2012) pointed out that manual coding provides researchers with a sense of closeness and ownership of their data. Thus, I opted to code manually, besides the quantity of the data was manageable, and I was better able to get acquainted with the participants’ responses. The journal notes became handed because I was to cross-checked participants’ responses, clarity information, and make confirmation. The notes were also significant because it reminded me of the profound statements or phrases which participants mentioned during the interviews, which helped in the coding process. To enhance the coding process, the advantage of doing a multiple case study was that I could use two kinds of analysis. At first, a within-case analysis was conducted where an in-depth examination of each case was done. The within-case analysis was followed by cross-case analysis where all cases were compared to find common themes and to identify differences among all cases.

Even though many qualitative researchers traditionally generate their codes directly from data (inductive coding), others often create pre-codes or priori codes from literature

(Johnson & Christensen, 2015). Interviews and focus group discussion questions were designed with the guidance of a few pre-codes from found in the literature. This study did not rely only on pre-codes. Therefore, during the coding process, I also extracted additional interesting words, sentences, phrases, or codes that were relevant to the research questions before arriving at the themes. I also consulted my journal notes to help in the identification of salient codes. This decision was influenced by McMillan and Schumacher (2010), who recommended that researchers should make notes as interesting findings emerge, sort the notes, and then identify themes. Notes were then parsed by categories representing overarching themes (related to perceptions, motivations, benefits, and challenges), which were labeled in line with the research questions of this study.

Establishing Trustworthiness

One of the critical elements of research methodology is trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is the extent to which data collected in research is accurately measured and presented to readers (Mertler, 2019). Establishing trustworthiness was essential to validate this research procedure. In qualitative studies, trustworthiness is not as straightforward as it is in quantitative studies where it is examined based on internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Considering that qualitative research cannot be easily measured with these four factors, trustworthiness was established with four equivalent criteria: transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Mertler, 2019).

Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the results of a study can be applied or replicated in various situations (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Mertler, 2019). The criterion of transferability is aligned with the ability to generalize findings, which is often challenging in qualitative studies (Mertler, 2019). Therefore, to support the transferability of this research, I provided a

thick description of events that took place during the interviews, focus group discussion and data analysis so that the readers could gather a full understanding of the research steps. In addition to this, the purposive sampling technique was used to select participants for this study. By providing detailed descriptions and using purposive sampling, it supports the transferability of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Participants chosen by purposive sampling must meet specific criteria to participate in the study and provide a specific type and amount of data and hence can provide thorough descriptions.

Credibility

Credibility involves establishing that results were accurate or believable from the participants' perspectives (Mertler, 2019). To address credibility, all participants were allowed to member check by reading through their transcripts to see if they were represented accurately. After going through this process, participants gave permission by signing the transcript release form (Appendix H). Additionally, I followed up with a few of the participants after the interviews to seek additional insights so that I was able to answer the research questions adequately.

Dependability

Dependability is equivalent to the reliability and stability of a qualitative study (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). To establish dependability, I provided an audit trail where I was transparent with readers of my research. The readers can follow the steps I took during the research. Carcary (2009) pointed out that this is easily achieved when my audience can precisely track the decision taken during the study. I used a journal to keep records of respondents' answers, other relevant information, and as a result, I was able to check the data collected.

Confirmability

Confirmability is objectivity and the extent to which others can confirm the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). To reduce the impact of the potential bias, I might have had on the research; I used an audit trail to support confirmability. I ensured that the findings accurately represented the views of my participants rather than my biases; hence having an audit trail was necessary. The audit trail allowed me to check the participants' responses easily and to ensure that I did not infiltrate the results.

Data Triangulation

Trustworthiness in this study was also established through data triangulation. Triangulation is the qualitative cross-validation among multiple data sources, data collection strategies, timeframes, and theoretical schemes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). With triangulation, there is the use of various methods of data collection. Triangulation allowed me to cross-check information with those in the interviews and those in the focus group discussion. Thus, it brought richness to the data collected and findings, as well as increasing the reliability and validity of the results.

I ensured that the research findings were valid by triangulation and established transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability. I was objective, carried research without biases, and represented the data accurately, openly, and honestly. Additionally, to enhance validity, I peer briefed, and member checked or got feedback from participants, utilized journal notes, self-reflected on my biases, and used two methods of data collection to triangulate the data (Mertler, 2019).

Researchers Positionality

Positionality is a researcher's standpoint that describes his or her position and the context of their study, which can be considered useful for research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I am currently an international student who has grown up in a

multicultural society with some similarities to Canadian culture. In my country, sports play a significant role in our culture and the development of people from young to old. I have been involved in sports since I was a child, representing all the schools I have attended from kindergarten to university. In university, I was a student-athlete, sports representative, writer, and coordinator. Competitive sports participation contributed immensely to both my personal development and overall university experience in the past. At the University of West Indies, Mona, in Jamaica, competitive sports play a vital role in the life of students and spectators alike. For three years as an undergraduate, I represented this university in soccer (football), basketball, and field hockey. I was also the sports representative for Rex Nettleford Hall, which was the largest dormitory on campus at that time. Then I subsequently became a member of the University's Guild of Students sports arm.

The university teams were very diverse as students were from all over the Caribbean and occasionally exchanged students from countries all over the world. Being a part of these teams was beneficial to both my personal and professional lives. For example, I developed my tactical skills in playing sports, built long-lasting friendships, learned about other cultures, and gained a sense of belonging with my teammates. After graduating from university, I migrated to Japan, where I became a teacher and incorporated many elements of sports in my classroom. Furthermore, my knowledge of sports also helped me to develop lasting bonds with my students while being a teacher in Japan. While teaching in Japan, I not only played sports with my students in the evenings but also helped to coach their basketball and soccer teams. In my decision to combine my passion for sports and teaching, I decided to focus on sports in higher education. Moreover, these experiences informed my research as I offered an insider perspective to intercollegiate sports for s. It also allowed me to relate more closely to and gain insights into the views of my participants.

The western Canadian university in my research was chosen because of the diverse student population and vibrant school atmosphere. Another feature that sparked my interest in the university was the prolific sports program. This university has done well over the years in several sporting events such as hockey, soccer, football, and basketball. Although there is a significant and continuous growth in the number of s at the western Canadian university, the increase is not reflected in their intercollegiate sports teams. Many s participate in intramural events organized by the recreational department and in other competitive sporting events off-campus. Still, they are not as involved in becoming members of the various intercollegiate teams that represent the university in regional and national competitions. Consequently, these issues influenced my interest in the topic. Hence, I decided to explore the underlying reasons for insufficient representation and participation of s and, subsequently, how the increase in s could benefit the university and other students.

I chose the emic approach to conduct this research as I was a who participated in intramural games as well as shared a similar experience as the participants. My participants and I shared related opinions about the lack of information and lack of diversity in their intercollegiate sports programs. The emic approach or perspective examines the scene through the lens of the research participants and their understanding of their social reality (Gall et al., 2007; Scarduzio, 2017). An emic researcher is an insider; as an insider, I currently have similar experiences as my participants, and therefore, I had some potential biases about international student's experiences in intercollegiate sports in Canada.

My assumptions and prior knowledge about the factors that influence s from participating in intercollegiate sports did not interfere with my judgment, nor did it affect my decisions throughout the research process. Assumptions can lead to biases, which could be harmful to research integrity. According to Gall et al. (2007), bias occurs when a researcher influences the result of a study by continuously ignoring, fabricating, and manipulating

specific facts about a phenomenon. Bias in research could happen anytime throughout the research process. Pannucci and Wilkins (2010) explained that bias might appear at any stage of research, including sampling, research design, data analysis, and publication. I ensured that I maintained the research integrity and ensured every material produced was valid and reliable by being truthful and ethical.

Above I discussed my positionality and the biases that I might have brought into this research. As this was apparent, I took the initiative to be reflexive, and I intentionally differentiated between the accurate reporting of information and my assumptions. McMillan and Schumacher 2010 (as cited in Pillow, 2003), states that researchers should ensure several strategies are used in their studies to accomplish reflexivity. One strategy I used to achieve this was being self-aware about the impacts I might have on interpreting and reporting of factual information that my audience is meant to convey.

Ethical considerations

The research met all the ethical standards required by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Saskatchewan and Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. In case study research, ethical concerns have continued to be debated and often require the researcher to develop their considerations (Gall et al., 2007). However, Mertler (2019) outlined the four areas of ethics that must be considered in research: voluntary and informed participation, protection from harm, the right to privacy, and honesty with professional colleagues. These are also requirements of the university where my participants attended. I was also mindful not to manipulate findings or document information observed or write opinions that were not mentioned by the participants (Metler, 2019). I, therefore, maintained objectivity during interviews, focus group discussion, ongoing interactions with participants, and interpretation of data. Furthermore, I ensured that all four areas of ethics were maintained.

Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent

Voluntary participation was the primary ethical concern of this study. All participants were notified beforehand about the interviews and focus group discussion. The participants were briefed on the purposes of the research as well as interview questions. They were advised that participation in the research was voluntary and were allowed to withdraw at any time during the study without incident. All participants signed a letter of consent before interviews and focus group discussions were held. I also received permission from the participants to use an audio-recording device to collect the data.

Besides, the participants were all allowed to review, make suggestions, and clarify information on the transcripts. I also sent each participant a copy of the transcript release form, which required a signature. After I received a signed copy of the transcript release form and the transcripts from the participants, I started to analyze the data.

Protection from Harm

Protection from harm is one of the core principles of research. The researcher must ensure that the participants are protected from mental or physical harm (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Fortunately, studies conducted in educational research seldom, if ever, cause severe harm or injury to participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). This research involved minimal risk, and this was clearly outlined in the consent forms given to the participants. Participants could be at risk at any stage of the study, notably when data is being analyzed, interpreted, and reported. I protected all the information of the participants by maintaining confidentiality and anonymity: participants' anonymity was secured as each was given a pseudonym. This procedure minimized any potential risk to the participants or the outcome of the study. After reading the forms, participants agreed to risk before giving their approval. I also provided information on the resources available on campus if they felt any discomfort, such as stress.

Privacy

No identifiable characteristics were revealed in this study without the permission of the participants. To protect the participants' anonymity, they were all given pseudonyms instead of their real names. Some of the participants suggested their pseudonyms, while others asked me to choose an appropriate name for them. These pseudonyms were used in the transcripts and data analysis. In this report, I omitted the participants' names, some background information, and other data by aggregately representing the data so they could not be identified. I included some direct quotes from the participants' interviews, and additional quotes were general ideas of the participants. This tactic was done to ensure that I did not expose their anonymity.

The information collected was stored for safekeeping in a cabinet in the principal researcher's office. Gall et al. (2007) expressed that it is often difficult to maintain anonymity and privacy because even when names are withheld, cites might be identifiable. The site of the study was a private room on their campus. All information was confidential to maintain the integrity of the research process.

Summary

This chapter outlined the research method used to answer the research questions. This study employed a qualitative case study as the best means to understand the experiences of s. Information on the theoretical perspectives, research design and method, participant selection and recruitment, sources of data and procedures, and analysis was provided. The methods used to collect data from the participants were semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion. The data collection and analysis procedures were in alignment with the ethical guidelines provided by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Research Ethics Board. The research was conducted after receiving approval from the board before data collection.

The data was also analyzed manually in the gathering of information on the factors that influence s from participating in intercollegiate sports.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Findings

Chapter four presents the results of this study on the factors influencing the participation of international students in intercollegiate sports. Using a multiple case study, data was gathered from nine international students using face-to-face interviews. Five out of the nine participants were later selected to participate in a focus group discussion. Data presented was in response to the following research questions:

- What are the international students' perceptions of intercollegiate sports?
- What motivates international students to participate in sports?
- What are the benefits of international students' participation in intercollegiate sports?
- What are the factors hindering international students' participation in intercollegiate sports?

This chapter begins with a background section, which has demographic information and a brief introduction to each of the nine participants. The next section focuses on the topical themes found in the data. Before arriving at the main themes, some pre-codes¹ were identified as they reoccurred in both the pre-existing literature and participants' responses. After pre-coding, four overarching themes were generated and were organized according to the research questions. They were presented under the following subheadings: (1) perceptions of intercollegiate sports; (2) motivations for sports engagement; (3) benefits of intercollegiate sports participation; and (4) challenges for international students. Under each sub-heading were several subthemes that help to substantiate each overarching theme. The chapter ends with a summary.

¹ This study relied on pre-codes derived from the literature on motivation, and leisure constraints

Background

Demographic Information

The study included nine international students from one university in western Canada. Each participant was considered a case and given a pseudonym to protect their identity. Below, Table 4.1 provides demographic information of the participants, which includes their pseudonyms, gender, age, level of study, year of study, and region of origin.

Table 4.1

Demographic Information of the Participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Level of Study	Year of Study	Region
Rebecca	Female	20	Undergrad	2nd	South America
Walter	Male	24	Undergrad	4th	Africa
Solomon	Male	28	Graduate	1st	Africa
Michael	Male	19	Undergrad	2nd	Africa
Kane	Male	21	Graduate	1st	Africa
Max	Male	21	Undergrad	2nd	Caribbean
Roger	Male	30	Graduate	1st	Caribbean
Joseph	Male	22	Undergrad	2nd	Africa
David	Male	24	Undergrad	3rd	Africa

The study had only one female and eight males. One participant was under 20 years of age, six were in their 20s, and one was 30 years old. At the time of the study, six of the participants were undergraduates; four were in their second year; one in their third year, and one in their fourth year, and three were first-year graduate students. The participants also

represented three regions and five countries. This demographic information was all significant as they impacted how participants view themselves as well as the intercollegiate sports in Canada.

Introducing the Participants

The research targeted international students who participated in intramural games, city competitions, and other recreational sporting events. These events were targeted because there was a larger portion of international students participating in these events compared to intercollegiate games. The participants' introduction was based on responses to questions about the rationale behind their decision to study in Canada, their knowledge about and interest in intercollegiate sports. The profiles of each participant are as follows.

Case 1- Rebecca

For Rebecca, Canada was a place where she could explore more opportunities for a better future. Rebecca expressed that the decision to choose her university was based on three factors. Firstly, the university offered the best program in her field, so she wanted to further her studies at the western Canadian university. Secondly, the university was affordable in comparison to others in larger provinces such as Ontario. She declared, "I could not afford the tuition elsewhere, so I chose this university." Thirdly, she was aware that the university had a women's soccer team, which was a key influencing factor.

Rebecca was born in a country where sports played an integral part in her life and had dreams of becoming a professional soccer player. As a result, she researched the university's athletics program and discovered the women's soccer team. Rebecca saw this as an excellent opportunity to contribute to the university. She was successful in her efforts and became a member of the team; however, this ended prematurely due to a knee injury. Rebecca has since participated in intramural games due to her injury, but she still anticipated to return to intercollegiate sports in the future.

Case 2- Walter

His decision to choose the university was based on having the support of relatives living in the city who also gave him pertinent information about the university's reputation. Walter also stated that the university was within his financial budget, and it was cheaper than other universities in Canada. For Walter, the university's diverse population and the number of international students were appealing. He believed that the large international student population would help him to connect with other students who could relate to his experience.

Walter indicated that he knew about the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the organization which governs intercollegiate sports in the United States. However, he had limited knowledge about the U Sports organization of intercollegiate sports in Canada. When he became a student at the western Canadian university, he became involved and gained exposure to intercollegiate sports, for example, going to games with his peers. Walter stated, "I saw the word U Sports on a ticket when I went to my first soccer game here with my friend and later researched the organization." Subsequently, in his second year, he tried out and made the soccer team, but was unable to participate because of other responsibilities such as school and work.

Case 3- Solomon

His decisions to study at the western Canadian university were based on the university's reputation and program quality. Solomon stated, "The university is ranked among the top 20 in Canada. He added, "I also received information about the university's reputation and programs through alumni and friends." Moreover, he also had family members within the city who provided great feedback about the university's reputation as well.

Additionally, he explained that the school's population and surrounding areas were also quite diverse, which students from different countries and cultures. He stated that

“people from my home country and several other countries lived within the city.” With those essential variables considered, Solomon decided that the university was an excellent place to study. His other deciding factor was the affordable tuition; the western Canadian university was one of the cheapest in Canada.

When asked about intercollegiate athletics, Solomon stated that he did not know about intercollegiate sports or U Sports in Canada prior to enrolling at the university. “I did not know about it before I got accepted. However, after I got admission to the school, I received an email about the university and sports. These emails did not have much detail, though.” Solomon also stated that he has never tried out. He said:

When I came to the university I registered late, and I arrived in winter, by that time, the season had ended. Therefore, I could not try out or anything. I have thought of trying out for the soccer team, but the feedback from peers and my observations have not been good. Hence, I partake in other sporting events on and off the campus.

He also added that he often watched college games such as hockey, Canadian football, and soccer games when time permitted.

Case 4- Michael

Michael indicated that affordability was the primary determining factor for choosing the western Canadian university. He explained that the tuition and cost of living in the city were more affordable when compared to Toronto and other bigger cities. Moreover, he noted that his friends who were enrolled a year prior encouraged him to choose the university. Besides, he mentioned that the city was small and had fewer distractions, which means he could concentrate more on his studies. These factors helped him to choose his current university.

Michael expressed that he was not aware that intercollegiate sports were a feature of higher education in Canada. However, when he became a student, he found out about intercollegiate competitions and went to watch some games. When asked about playing intercollegiate sports, he said, “I do not have the skills to qualify for the teams. I do not think I am the best out of everyone.”

Case 5- Kane

Kane explained that academic scholarship availability was the main reason behind his decision to study at the western Canadian university. He stated, “I had to choose between three universities, and it was down to the university that offered the best academic scholarship package.” This university offered him the best full scholarship and stipend to cover all fees over the two years for his master’s. Kane further added stated that he chose the university because it had a good reputation and many international students. He added, “I did my undergraduate here, and I knew it ranked highly in terms of reputation and program besides, I liked that many international students started to enroll here.”

Kane stated that he had a slight idea about the U Sports when he was applying to this university. He said he received a brochure and saw some information and went to the website. Kane explained that he was more knowledgeable about intercollegiate sports in the United States, even after becoming a student. He also asserted, “If my friends did not inform me, I did not know, same for tryout dates or practices I never know when they are held, no information provided.” He further added, “a few of my peers have tried out, but I have yet to try out for the soccer team. I have too many obligations too.”

Case 6- Max

Max admitted that his first option was to enroll in a university in his region. He explained, “there were several universities in my country with good programs and reputations

that I could have easily attended, but my sister convinced me to move to Canada.” Max stated that his sister persuaded him and his parents to send him to western Canada to study. She explained that “studying in Canada would result in far better opportunities than back home.” He said that he finally chose the western Canadian university because his program of choice was available, and the tuition was cheaper than in other bigger cities such as Toronto and Vancouver. He also stated that the cost of living was more affordable than those cities.

During the interview, Max further stated that he had stopped playing competitive sports in grade 12 back in his home country. He also mentioned that he did not know Canadian universities had intercollegiate sports. Max also added that he had never tried out for the university’s team. “I did not know about intercollegiate sports here, and I found out in my second year. I had no interest in sports at all until when I decided to compete in intramural futsal competition.”

Case 7- Roger

His decision to choose this university was based on peer advice. He explained that his friends from his home country that were living in Canada encouraged him to make the move. Roger also explained, “I had a good career back home, but I wanted to improve academically.” He researched the western Canadian university and was impressed by the university’s reputation, programs, and tuition affordability. He explained that Canada has become attractive to many foreigners and seemed very multicultural as well.

He indicated that he was talented at soccer and could play other sports but had no interest in playing intercollegiate sports. He said, “during my undergraduate years, I competed in intercollegiate sports back in my home country and had much success.” However, when asked about competing in intercollegiate sports in Canada, Roger also stated that he was unaware of U Sports before coming to this country. Furthermore, when he became a student, he found out about it through other students. Concerning intercollegiate

sports tryouts, he exclaimed he had no interest in such activities. However, he chose to work with the recreational office and play intramural games.

Case 8- Joseph

Joseph explained that he had no intention of moving to Canada; however, a decidedly attractive opportunity was presented to him. He stated that he was previously an international student-athlete in another country where he earned an associate degree. After completing the program, he received a two-year work permit. Despite being able to acquire employment, Joseph found that the opportunities that were available to him offered minuscule financial benefits. Other social issues also compounded this; he explained, “as an immigrant, I faced many challenges, such as racism, limited access, and opportunities. I then spoke with my colleagues, who encouraged me to apply to the western Canadian university for a second chance.”

Regarding his decision to study in Canada, two factors were important. Firstly, getting into a credible university. He explained, “I had to make a quick decision. For one, I needed to study at a university with a good reputation.” His colleagues also informed him before coming to Canada that this university had good programs and that it would be the right choice. Secondly, “I wanted to go somewhere where I could play soccer.” In addition to that, he knew there was a large diaspora of persons from his country within the city. When asked about tuition costs, Joseph explained he was not concerned about tuition when applied. Besides, he received financial assistance from his family for tuition.

Joseph explained that he had an inkling that there was an intercollegiate association in Canada. He stated, “when I was an international student in another country, I competed in intercollegiate sports. Thus, I assumed that Canada might have had some kind of college sporting opportunities as well.” When Joseph became a student, he sought more information through friends and other supports on-campus. A few of his friends encouraged him to

message the coach for a training session with the soccer team. He decided to try out, and he impressed the coach. He explained, “I made the team, but since the season had already started, I was ineligible to participate. I got the opportunity to train with the team a few times but stopped due to personal reasons.” He also hinted that he hoped to start retraining with the team in the upcoming season.

Case 9- David

David had been in Canada for four years, where he completed one year in another province before transferring to his current university. He clarified, “I had to make a quick decision to switch my program, but it was easy to choose this university because it was highly ranked in my field of study.” He also stated that options were also limited, so he did not focus on the financial aspect or tuition cost.

David was the only participant who is a former ISAs in Canada. As a past ISAs, he had prior knowledge about U Sports and intercollegiate sports. He played intercollegiate soccer, and even though the team was not highly ranked, it was an enjoyable experience for him. David stated that the western Canadian university had a better soccer team because they have performed at the regional and national levels. Though he enjoyed being an ISA, he no longer participated in intercollegiate sports. When asked the reason behind this decision, David explained, “I have considered trying out, but I do not believe I am fit enough at this time.”

The participants provided information on the reasons behind their choice to study abroad, their knowledge about sports in Canadian universities, and their interest in intercollegiate sports. Although the participants were not international student-athletes (ISAs) at the time of the study, some of the participants were able to provide unique information from the perspective of someone outside of the intercollegiate sporting system. While three of the participants provided insider perspectives as they had direct interactions with the

players and coaches at some point prior to my research. The analysis showed that participants shared similar and different views, which was shared through this section varied responses about their experiences and understandings. These differences added value to the data collected for more in-depth analysis because of such a variety of responses.

The following section offers an analysis of the interviews and the focus group discussion that resulted in four overarching themes. The themes generated were perceptions, motivations, benefits, and challenges associated with intercollegiate sports. Furthermore, the information collected helped to improve the understanding of factors influencing the participation of international students in intercollegiate sports.

Perceptions of Intercollegiate Sports

Findings presented in this section were in response to the research question, “what are the international students’ perceptions of intercollegiate sports?” The participants shared their views on intercollegiate sports and their current university’s sports program. Their views focused on the program delivery, coaches, sporting events, teams and players, and their achievements. The perceptions were also derived from their opinions on international students in Canadian intercollegiate sports. I divided their responses into positive and negative perceptions surrounding intercollegiate sports. The positive perceptions included the opportunities to learn about new sports and program achievement. On the other hand, negative perceptions involved bias and discrimination, limited diversity, and ageism.

Positive Perceptions

Opportunities for New Learning

Exposure to Canadian sports was perceived as a positive viewpoint of intercollegiate sports in Canada. Most of the participants in the study were unfamiliar with Canadian sports, such as ice hockey and football. Being introduced to these sports provided opportunities for the students to learn about these sporting events. Some participants also mentioned that the

availability of familiar sports, like soccer and basketball, provided learning opportunities. These learning opportunities arose because Canadian versions of these sports were somewhat different in style and technique from those in the participants' home countries. Walter, in particular, expressed gratitude for such opportunities:

As international students, we get a chance to participate in new sporting events. The athletics program offers and participates in a wide array of sports. The availability of many different sports allows international students to be introduced to sports unpopular to them, such as hockey, Canadian football, and wrestling. Soccer, and track and field, and to a lesser extent, basketball are popular sports in African countries, and I think around the world.

He also mentioned that it gave people who gravitate towards lesser-known sports such as hockey and Canadian football a chance to participate as either players or supporters on a bigger stage. Walter further stated that the athletics program is effective in doing this and creates another means of engagement for international students.

Solomon also mentioned that before moving to Canada, he did not watch much basketball. However, since he moved to Canada, he had learned more about this sport as he started to watch the university's team and National Basketball Association League (NBA) and that he developed a better understanding of the basketball moves and the rules as well.

Some of the participants explained that some sports are universally played with the same rules, but different countries have their own nuances, such as styles of play and techniques. Hence understanding the Canadian way of playing certain sports provided new learning opportunities for both Walter and Solomon.

Solomon's learning opportunity was in relation to Canadian sports philosophies. He explained that the philosophy of how soccer is played in Canada was something new and different from what he was accustomed to:

I notice that when I watch Canadian soccer players, they are better at spacing out the game. They are more grounded in-game tactics and discipline on the field, so while we might be more skillful than Canadians, I have realized that is their advantage. So, learning the Canadian way of playing soccer is a good asset for international students.

Michael, however, experienced a different learning opportunity because, rather than playing intercollegiate sports himself, he witnessed changes in his friends who were ISAs. He expressed that, “since they have joined the university’s team, they have improved, they are more disciplined and fit.”

All nine participants expressed gratitude for these opportunities as it provided them with learning and engaging aside from academics. Solomon and Roger both expressed this gratitude in profound ways. For Solomon, the primary benefit of sports opportunities is for the individual who plays them, as “the social and physical aspect of life education does not only include academics. There are other interests that we gravitate towards, such as sports.” He further expressed that these form of activities in which students’ engagements helps to improve their experiences in higher education abroad. Roger expressed that he appreciated the student engagement efforts of the university because it demonstrated that they have a wide array of programs, both academic and non-academic. He said, “I think students prefer universities that offer a wider variety of programs are available for them to express themselves and engage in while studying ... it is a valuable experience for students both in and out of the classroom.”

In the focus group discussion, three of the participants talked about their learning experiences gained from attending their university’s hockey and Canadian football games. Participants were able to not only learn about the sports themselves but also the diversity in how sports are played across countries. These conversations were about the length of the

games, halftime shows, similarities and differences to other sports, and also about the challenges faced by players and supporters in different weather conditions.

Program Achievement

Another positive attribute mentioned by the participants was the progression and success of college athletics in their university and Canada in general. The participants expressed that the level of competitiveness, wins, and championships were considered as factors of achievement. The participants also compared their university's performance with other universities.

David, who previously participated in intercollegiate sports at another university, stated that the sports teams at this current university were doing exceptionally well. He observed the performance of the men's soccer team, men's and women's basketball teams, and went to watch them a few times. David added that this university has a smaller athletics program than several other universities in Canada like those Ontario. Yet, they have done far better than them in many sports. David pointed out that "the men's soccer team has gone to the Canada West quarterfinals a few times, and the women's basketball team have been crowned national champions. My former soccer team did not even make it far in regional the competition."

Kane also felt that the men's soccer team and men's basketball team were consistently performing well. These were the only teams he had any knowledge about. He explained that those teams have been doing well at the regional and national levels. Kane said, "I am aware that both basketball teams have won the national championship in the past, and I think they are capable of winning in the future."

Solomon expressed that after going to a few soccer and basketball games, he had observed some quality displayed by the players. He said, "the soccer games I have gone to were competitive, and some players were skillful." Solomon also added that initially, he did

not attend the games, but after seeing how well the team was doing and he decided to support them. He said, “since I began working at the games, I became more familiar with how well the university’s hockey and Canadian teams have done too.” Joseph also added that U Sports is a competitive and good platform. When speaking specifically about the university, he stated:

The coaches have managed to build good teams. The soccer team notably has a talented group of players. In the competitions, I have observed the competitiveness of the team when they compared to other universities. When I trained with the team, I met some talented players too. The team did not win last year, but they went very far in the competition.

Rebecca also shared a similar view on the female soccer team as the other participants. She said, “the athletics program has produced some good teams like the female soccer team. When I went to try out, the ladies were really good.”

Michael added that he was impressed with the athletics program’s success. He was also an avid supporter of the men’s soccer team and had attended several games. He expressed, “the games are competitive and fun. I often go to watch my friends who play for the university.” Michael also commented, the men’s basketball team has done well too, I do not watch them much though.

Walter had a lot of positive opinions about intercollegiate sports. Walter explained that the team’s competitiveness, performance, and fans have improved over his four years as a student. Walter was a devoted supporter of several the university’s sports teams, but more so the men’s and women’s soccer teams. He also expressed that Canadian football and hockey were the more popular teams at the university. Walter said, “these teams have a good record of accomplishment, highly competitive, they have many won titles. Not to mention the fans, they have a larger fan base compared to other sports.”

Walter also gave another perspective on the athletics program:

I noticed that since we have been doing well that we have had more fans, for instance, in soccer. It is a great feeling to see student-athletes and fans engaging at the sporting events. However, this was not so when I initially started to support these events.

When I enrolled in my first year of university, many students did not support the games, nor did they know about the events. It is nice to see such a change.

Negative Perceptions

There were some negative comments shared about intercollegiate sports. This sub-theme was conceptualized based on the participants' experiences and observations of the intercollegiate sports program at the western Canadian university.

Biases and Discrimination

Several of the participants expressed a sense of exclusion in sports programs. For example, Solomon expressed that while the intercollegiate program would be a significant opportunity for him, he has heard of some biased practices by coaches from his peers. He stated, there have been speculations implying that there was a preference for undergraduates and domestic students for sports teams. Solomon said that he was told this by both undergraduates and graduates that played intercollegiate soccer. He continued, "I was told the coaches have their preferences, do not waste your time." Joseph also shared this, "I think they prefer domestic students than international students." The participants believed that due to this bias, some students would not have the chance to participate in intercollegiate sports. This perception indicates that such behaviors displayed by coaches would dissuade students from wanting to participate or even try out for the program.

When further probed, Solomon commented that:

If the school gives the perception that has a preference (bias) for domestic students, it creates a challenge for outsiders. International students will lose enthusiasm to

attempt to try out . . . , and you start having preconceived ideas of who is allowed to participate and who has the better opportunity to get in for sure.

Joseph reiterated the same points as Solomon. He added that:

I was not too keen on the management side of the program because they are corrupt.

The coaches seem to be biased and do not want to give international students a chance to highlight their talents. Even if they make the team, they barely get to take part in the games. The coaches show too much favoritism.

Some participants pointed out that the coaches and those in charge of the athletics program were closed-minded. They said that the coaches displayed little interest in recruiting or inviting international students to become a part of the program. Some of the participants believed that the coaches were stuck in their old ways. For instance, Joseph explained that the coaches were not open to adding new players or techniques. Similarly, Walter and Kane expressed that the university sports administrations and coaches must address the external view of the students. Walter and Solomon also recommended that the university sports administrators and coaches should change the narrative of the sports program from being bias or not open-minded.

Kane further added, “I know several students who are very talented but do not make the team because the coaches are not so accepting of other styles of play and tend to overlook those players.” Rebecca also agreed that “coaches must be open and inviting to international students. They should invite more international students to tryouts. If they do, international students will no longer be fearful when approaching coaches about trying out for the team.” These statements indicated that perceived closed-minded behaviors are discouraging for international students.

Participants believed that since international students were essential assets to the university, they should be given equal opportunities. Walter supported this notion, “the

university is funded by international students who pay high tuition fees; therefore, they should be treated fairly and should be allowed to participate in sports.”

He further added:

International students need to get their money’s worth and enjoy what the university has to offer. They should not be excluded or get limited opportunities. Other than getting a diverse range of student-athletes, skills, and talent, the university must remember, it is essential to keep their primary shareholders happy.

Joseph supported the above statement:

International students pay higher tuition than domestic students but do not have the same chances. This factor is very controversial if you are spending a lot of tuition you should be given equal opportunities such as athletic scholarships and a chance to participate in intercollegiate sports.

In the focus group discussion, participants expressed that coaches were closed-minded towards the inclusion of international students. Research participants believed that this would discourage international students from wanting to try out for the teams. One participant explained that perceived biases have made him avoid trying out for intercollegiate sports.

The participant said:

The coaches seem to be stuck in their ways, and we have talented players; they should be more open-minded and accepting. It appears that they have too much preference. Some people go and try out, and they give them silly reasons why you cannot make the team. Like one of the coaches told my friend, he was too skinny or something like that for his soccer team.

Another participant expressed how they did not feel welcome or accepted, so they avoided trying out. The participant explained that “if I have the talent, and I see that they’re not accepting people who are like myself on their teams, I am not going to try-out.”

Limited Diversity

A substantial proportion of participants expressed that the program displayed a lack of diversity. The participants commented on the limited number of international student representatives on the teams. In terms of limited diversity, they also spoke about the style of play, techniques, and diverse skills. Under this sub-theme, international students' presence and skillset were discussed.

International Students' Presence. When asked about the perception of the athletics program, the participants did not hesitate to mention the limited number of international students. Walter said, "I only knew of one or two international students who played soccer, and maybe only two international students were a part of the basketball team." He continued, "the university is missing out on potential talent ... when I participate in intramural and city competitions. I see a lot of qualified and talented athletes." Rebecca also recalled meeting only one international student from Australia during the soccer tryouts, but everyone else was from Canada. Rebecca also expressed, "I want to see us represented. If prospective students from my country see diversity or me playing on the team, they will feel they have a chance to make the team."

Solomon was more detailed in his observation; he stated that the impression he has of the athletics program was one with little inclusivity. Solomon described his experience:

The athletics programs offer multiple sports such as soccer, volleyball, track and field, basketball, hockey, and so on, yet you do not see much diversity. I can speak from a black person's perspective; you can see a limited representation of black students. The maximum I have seen is two and three.

He further alluded that such practices were discouraging and could pose a challenge for international students.

Joseph shared a similar view:

A program that lacks diversity indicates a lack of credibility. I am not fond of this at all; it is too obvious; it seems as if the coaches want to stick with domestic students.

They need to fix this; there are many talented international students here on campus.

He further commented that once they improve this, it will eliminate the perception that international students are at a disadvantage to joining sports teams. Moreover, “more international students and ISAs would be attracted to the athletics program if they see deliberate changes and more inclusions.” Furthermore, Joseph advised that “the university must become more serious and be more concerned about the lack of international students in the sports program. International students can bring many opportunities and positive results to the university.”

Walter offered a distinct perspective on the lack of international students in intercollegiate sports. He explained:

The blame should not be solely levied on the universities themselves. U Sports association should be blamed as well. U sports do not have a lot of international students, and this is evident in most of the competing university programs. U Sports need to revamp, improve, promote, and make it known worldwide that such high-quality intercollegiate sports associations exist in Canada. More international students are coming to Canada, so this is something they can tap into in the coming years.

The focus group members shared their perceptions of international student-athletes’ participation. One participant painted a visual image when he said:

I have seen the team photos that represent the last 8 to 10 years and going through the pictures of different sports, and you would not see much diversity. I was so disappointed, and I remember one day when I stood there, and I was counting and saying to myself, this could not be. I saw one or two persons per team. I was like it

must be more than this.... So, after coaches go through their selection process of a team of 25 or 30 students, you only find one or two blacks or other races to be qualified for your intercollegiate teams. That is disproportional... I did not see any Chinese or Indians on the teams either, yet they make up most international students' population.

Additionally, during the focus group discussion, an interesting debate occurred among the participants about the reluctance of coaches to admit international students. Some felt that while coaches might want talented athletes that are already prepared, a great coach is one who is patient and can develop players. Below is the conversation — participant A, B, C, to follow this discussion sequentially.

Participant A said:

I realized everything starts from like the grassroots here, you know, they start training at a very young age and have sophisticated competitions like Timbit soccer Canada. You go for five years of playing in the small leagues. Academies start taking you from under 15 years in Canada, athletes here are prepared. So, at the university level, athletes are expected to have learned or mastered many skills prior. Skills many of us did not get a chance to learn in our home countries Coaches do not have time to develop our talent These coaches would go for players that are already trained. They do not want to recruit international students But also, they do not have the patience to teach international students their style of play. They already want somebody prepared and ready.

Participant B chimed:

As you said, they want someone who is already prepared. They want talent that can be easily identified than the hard talent that needs guidance. But if they give the international students enough time to learn, they will adapt and fit in. We can adapt to

their demands and get fit and training I know I feel like it comes down to opportunities. Opportunities to display that we are just as good or even better.

Participant A again interjected:

Canadian student-athletes have sports resumes. For example, I saw somebody's soccer resume I had never seen anything like that before. He had videos of him playing soccer from he was a child straight up to now International students do not often have a resume or get to create one if you have a soccer resume, you do not need to prove yourself, but for us, we must.

Participant C gave his point of view, which opposed participant A:

What you are saying does not apply to all international students For example, I have a few colleagues who have done their master's and Ph.D.'s in universities in Europe and was able to get into teams The perception of someone should not come into play in terms of selections of players; it should be about what you can provide for the team, and inclusiveness in general and unless you offer them the opportunity to show what they can do; you will never get the best out of them.

I'll give you another clear example. The Ballon d'Or winner of 1996 was George Weir before going to Europe, the best he had played for was a team in South Africa Arsene Wenger, who was a popular coach, gave him the opportunity to showcase his skill. Yes, he was untrained, but with a little bit of patience, he was able to show his truest potential So, perception is one thing, but it should be more about what you can provide or get done.

While most of the participants in the focus group expressed their dissatisfaction with regards to the low admittance and presence of ISAs in intercollegiate sports, one participant expressed:

Though the number of international students on the teams is low, things are changing. Over the years, I have seen this number grow like in basketball and sometimes soccer. Before, it was not always like this... One of the good things they have got studies like this now bringing awareness to us, you know, hopefully, this gets taken into somebody who can like push how we can improve in it.

Limited Skillset. The participants also pointed out that it is crucial to have a diverse skill set and style of play. They believed that intercollegiate teams at their university are missing out because they did not have enough players from different backgrounds and skillsets.

Max stated that the program would benefit more from having a diverse group of players with their skills, as this is a practice all over the world. He shared his views:

It is a frequent practice in the NCAA, English Premier League and Spanish league and even the NBA. They get talent from all over to make their team better.... During intramural games, you see a lot of students from diverse backgrounds and who have different skills and come together and play. This practice is something I hope to see at the college level at this university.

Kane had a similar take on the issues. He espoused that he was disappointed with the limited diversity on most of the teams. Kane shared:

Diversity is a major driving force when it comes to growth and development sports or anything. Different people have different life experiences, which makes them who they are. When they join forces, they can become very dominant. This is how communities are built. This is also why Canada has become the great nation it has been likewise the United States. This is as a result of them having a diverse population. The university is modeling this in many ways but, in some areas, more than others.

Kane further expounded that the addition of international students brings diversity in representation, style of play and skill, and talent. He shared that international students can bring contemporary ideas to the program. He further stated, “soccer, for example, has the same rules but is not played the same way all over the world, so having a wide range of styles can improve the program and give the team an advantage against others.”

In David’s opinion, “the more diversity the team has, the better the outcome.” He further explained:

The team is good, but I think they need to add some new talent. If they start adding more diversity to the style of play, it could improve the skill of players. The aim is not to be too predictable. Adding more international students will could definitely help ... Canadian students can learn from international students and vice versa.

Rebecca also pointed out:

That the Canadian style of football is satisfactory and fun to watch, but the way we play back home is more about skills. It is about the tricks you can do within the game. I do not see it much from Canadians. Distinctive styles of plays can give teams an advantage.

Ageism

Ageism is one of the sub-themes that emerged in the study. Understandably, the age of athletes is usually considered in sports. In sports, age is generally aligned with the ability to perform, vitality, and longevity. Two of the participants expressed that they sensed discrimination due to age as well as the length of master’s programs (which generally last for two years). Both participants commented that most master’s students were usually in their mid to late 20s or older.

Roger, who had been a coach, ISA, and referee in the past, said he found age discrimination to be present in the intercollegiate teams at the western Canadian university.

He said, “international students are usually graduate students and are also generally older than undergraduates, and I did not see many of them playing for the university.” Solomon added that, from a graduate student perspective, the coaches might overlook him because of his age. “Most graduate students are in their mid-20, which is significantly lower than what it probably was in the past. Mid- 20s is not old; in my opinion, but coaches might view this as such.” He further stated that coaches often prefer younger student-athletes who can contribute to the program for an extended period. He also said undergraduate student-athletes usually compete for up to five years, which coincides with the length of an undergraduate program.

Solomon also reiterated that the act of using age and the duration of a program of study as determining factors in choosing participants for intercollegiate sports is unfair. He expressed, “international graduate students should be given the opportunity as they might be older but could be more talented than those in the sports program. He further stated that he understood coaches’ views on the age of athletes as younger students might be better for coaches’ long-term goals. However, he stated that “if a student has the ability and is eligible to participate based on the rules of the sports organization, then they should be allowed to play despite their age. Roger also agreed that he did not try out for the program because he knew that he would not have a chance of making the team as he was older than the average student-athlete. He said, “I am an older student; coaches are seeking fresh, young, and talented students.”

In the focus group, however, participants had a different outlook on the topic of age. The participants spoke about peak age – the age at which an athlete performs at maximum level - and performance in sports. The participants expressed that people peak at different ages. One participant stated that “some athletes peak in their younger years while others peak when they are older.” Another participant added, “older students, despite their ages, could positively contribute to the program.” An overview statement from this group discussion was

that irrespective of your background or your history or your age, the selection of players should be made equitably based on what they can contribute to the team.

The analysis revealed some profound findings related to international students' perception of intercollegiate sports. The participants highlighted some positive and negative attributes which shaped their views of the athletics program at their university. The positive perceptions were around team success and introduction to new sports. These perceptions are those influencing factors that could attract international students. On the other hand, the negative perceptions pertained to bias and discrimination, lack of diversity, and the concern of age. Feelings of being excluded or unwelcome were dominant, which could dissuade international students from wanting to partake in intercollegiate sports in Canada.

Moreover, my interactions with the various interviewees demonstrate that understanding social contexts and nuances and how they impact international students are of importance to the university and sports program. Gaining a deeper understanding of said factors is key to creating a conducive environment which fosters diversity while encouraging collective growth and development.

Motivations for Sports Engagement

This theme was aligned with the question, "what motivates international students to participate in sports?" They were also asked to share what would motivate them to participate in intercollegiate sports. Several internal and external factors motivated the participants by internal factors such as passion and fitness and external factors such as social recognition and rewards. Motivation explained the decisions and choices made concerning sports participation by international students in this study. Passion, opportunities to participate, fitness, and health, and other motivational factors were the sub-themes discussed under this theme.

Passion

The sub-theme passion was found to be a significant motivational factor for sports participation. The participants explained that they developed a passion for playing sports due to the early introduction to certain sports by their families. All the participants attested to this despite being from different countries and backgrounds.

Walter and Michael shared similar views about the importance of sports in African countries and being introduced to various sports at an early age by their families. They further shared that passion for sports was developed as a result of this. Playing multiple sports was a part of their livelihood, and it gave them something to look forward to; hence their passion continues to motivate them to participate in sports even during their university studies in Canada.

As a result of being introduced to sports at an early age, the participants expressed that they developed a passion for playing sports. Even though the participants played other sports, all of them had an intense passion for playing and being engaged in various aspects of soccer. The research participants were all involved in competitive sports at some point in their lives before moving to Canada. They noted that they participated competitively in high school, university, city competitions, and semi-professionally. They also reported that though they have busy lives in Canada, they designate time weekly to participate in sports. Participants expressed that they are here for academic purposes, but their passion for engaging in sports is always there. Kane, who is a master's student, said, "my thesis is most important, but I love soccer so much." Rebecca also spoke about her passion for continuing to play soccer because she wants to be a professional athlete.

Solomon described his passion, "I love playing soccer, going to games, and discussing soccer. So, for me, it is not just about playing all the time. That's how passionate I am about every aspect of the game." He further expressed that he developed a passion and

interest in basketball when he moved to Canada. He cannot play the sport, but he enjoyed watching the game on television, going to the game, betting with friends, and talking about basketball. Joseph also expressed that he has a passion for playing soccer and wanted to become a professional player. When he was not playing soccer in the city, he explained that he often traveled outside the city to play. He expressed that he is driven and competitive, and others also realized his passion.

At the time of the study, all the participants played intramural competitions, and five out of nine competed in the city soccer leagues. Passion is the primary motivational factor that drives these international students to participate in sports, and if they were to become ISAs.

In both the focus group and interviews, participants expressed that they were avid supporters of weekly televised soccer tournaments in various places in Europe and the United States. Others enjoyed debating, betting, and bantering about sports. One of the participants in the focus group explained that when he got severely injured, the first thing he asked the doctor was if he would be able to play soccer again. He expressed that while he was sidelined due to injury decided to go into coaching. He further expressed, “my passion for soccer kept me wanting to be involved. I had the opportunity to coach a few teams.” One participant explained that passion is the reason he plays now without monetary compensation. Another participant supported this idea and said, “I am sure that if members in the focus group had the chance to play in Europe for a year without pay, they would go. That is passion. The other participants supported this idea.”

Opportunities to Participate

The sub-theme opportunity to participate in intercollegiate sports while studying in Canada was another motivating factor for the participants. International students wanted the chance to participate in Canadian intercollegiate competitions while studying. Most of the

participants expressed that their primary motive for choosing the western Canadian university was predominantly academically related. However, after finding out about intercollegiate sports, they would love the opportunity to partake in both that is earning a degree and participating in sports.

Rebecca stated that the opportunity to participate in intercollegiate while attaining a degree was a motivational factor. She said:

I want to be a professional athlete, so the opportunity to participate in intercollegiate sports would help me to achieve my dream. I would get the chance to do what I love, which is playing soccer. Plus, I get to earn a degree. Having both a degree and the opportunity to play sports would be my back-up plan in case either fails.

Solomon also added:

The opportunity to participate in college sports while earning a degree is very significant. My main motivation is to get a job and stay in Canada afterward. It (college sports) will help me to get where I want to go because I see myself also doing something in sports.

Walter explained:

The chance to play is a significant motivation. If you come here as an international student and you get the opportunity to play intercollegiate sports, that would be great for your university experience. I know we all come here to study, but sports also help us to transition and develop as individuals.

Joseph also explained that he had the opportunity to play intercollegiate sports in another country. He explained, “prior to coming here, I played university games, and within my first year, I was scouted to play in a top city league. That was a great opportunity and achievement for me as an international student.” He also spoke about the opportunity to develop as a player and venture into professional sports.

In the focus group, participants also spoke about the opportunity to participate in intercollegiate sports as a motivational factor. One participant said, “back in my home country, we do not have all these facilities and opportunities in our universities. I remember in high school, I wanted to continue to play sports, and they took that away from us.”

Another participant explained:

Only a selected few get to participate in college sports, so if given a chance, I would feel special and like I belong to a specific group on campus. This is a huge motivation because you get the opportunity from your small developing country to showcase your talent in a first-world country.

Another participant also mentioned earning a degree, “the main reasons for studying abroad is a get a degree the opportunity to participate in college sports is a plus, but the degree is the ultimate goal.”

Fitness and Health Benefits

Participants in the study explained that they were motivated to play sports because it helped to keep them healthy and fit. Some participants listed keeping in shape and stress release as the leading health and fitness benefits. Five of the participants pointed out playing sports helped them to de-stress. Other participants expressed their dislike for the gym for fitness, and hence playing sports was their substitute. Rebecca, for example, stated:

I do not like going to the gym. In the gym, it is monotonous. It is boring because you are doing the same exercises and you feel a lot of pain. Once you are running around, playing, and kicking, even if you do not do it well, like you are actually exercising without even noticing, it keeps you in shape, and you get healthy without realizing.

Walter also shared the same views. He said, “all my friends go to the gym except me. I play sports to keep in shape and get my body right.” Roger also added, “it helps me to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle.”

In the focus group discussion, health and fitness were also mentioned. One of the participants explained, “basically, you are doing something that you believe is good for your health at the same time doing something you enjoy.” Besides, it not only about physical health; it is about mental health because being alone in Canada can be tough.” Another participant stated, “you are carrying out the form of physical education. I could be lazy sometimes when I need to exercise but doing what I enjoy and being able to perform some form of exercise motivates me to do this.”

Other Motivation Factors

Other significant motivation factors mentioned were social recognition, to be seen as role models, to have fun, enjoyment, to gain popularity, and to get financial rewards. Roger expressed that if he had decided to participate in intercollegiate sports and succeed as an ISA, then he would gain social recognition, which would extend to his home country. People in his home country would then emulate him and may feel that they, too, could replicate his accomplishments. Walter also shared similar views, and he stated that being a role model is one of his motivations. He expressed, “if I can inspire someone from back home, that would be rewarding.” He further explained that “seeing me succeed could motivate them to excel and do great things.”

In the focus group, one of the participants gloated that he loved the idea of gaining popularity. “I love the attention, glitz, and glam of being an athlete. I would not mind becoming famous. Being a star athlete would be my motivation.” Another said, “the spotlight would be important if you are involved in intercollegiate sports. That means you are on top of your game.”

All participants explained that money is a huge motivation. They shared that as international students, they have to find ways to survive and maintain themselves financially abroad. Walter stated that “money would take away his worries for the next four years of

studying.” In the focus group discussion, some of the participants explained that student-athletes receive financial compensation towards tuition fees, food, free gear such as jerseys and shoes, and other supplies for school. These are important and attractive to student-athletes. Rewards in the form of scholarship appear under the theme of motivation and benefits. This theme scholarship was expounded on under the sub-heading benefits of international students’ participation in intercollegiate sports. A strong relationship between some motivational factors and benefits was reported.

In summary, the participants highlighted several factors that motivated their decision to partake in sports. Passion as a factor superseded other motivating factors, however other variables such as fitness and health, opportunity to participate, social recognition, popularity, being role models, fun, enjoyment, and financial rewards play a significant role. Participants indicated that these motivational factors could also play an essential role in their decision as international students to participate in intercollegiate sports in Canada. Findings also suggest that motivation influences behavior and actions.

Benefits of Intercollegiate Sports Participation

The theme was developed to answer the question, “what are the benefits of international students’ participation in intercollegiate sports?” Participants were asked questions related to the benefits for international students and the benefits to the university. Most of the participants believed that the inclusion of ISAs in intercollegiate programs not only benefits students, but the university and its sports programs were set to gain from this in general. The benefits they mentioned can be summarized into six sub-themes: scholarships, marketing, exposure and recognition, talent pooling, skill development, building relationships, and parental influence.

Scholarships

The sub-theme scholarships was identified as one of the core benefits of intercollegiate sports participation. In the interviews, five participants mentioned the advantages of receiving scholarships. They believed that athletic awards or scholarships would aid international students to a great extent, for example, offsetting tuition fees. They further stated that the availability of scholarship has benefits for the university as well. With scholarships, the sports program will be able to attract new talents. The results reported that scholarships were the main driving force behind international students' participation in sports.

Walter shared:

If I had a scholarship, I would be more motivated to do college sports. They need to offer more incentives The university will benefit if scholarship enforces that I student-athletes in that they have to perform well academically and in sports. This binding system presently exists but not widescale. Offer international students more rewards for playing for the university.

Max shared about the benefit of financial awards:

Well, for one, there is the possibility of getting a scholarship that can help with your tuition. International students can be granted scholarships by performing well on their team. Offer them the avenue to come to a foreign country and earn an international degree and continue to play sports. That is a win-win.

Kane expressed that:

Scholarships would help to offset their fees. In the NCAA in the United States, for example, scholarships are awarded even in the lower sports divisions, and the value of these scholarships are sometimes more than those offered to players in Canadian college sports. For most international student-athletes, if not all, athletic scholarships

are the main reasons for studying abroad. I currently have an academic scholarship for my studies, which has helped a lot, and without it, I would not be able to survive in Canada. Studying abroad is very expensive, and not all international students are wealthy.

In a similar token, Joseph pointed out that the athletics administrators could provide scholarships to attract international students like what they do in the United States and Europe. He explained that coaches could do this, especially if they want to improve all sports competitions in Canada and their university teams. As aforementioned, scholarships and athletic awards will more than likely attract the most talented athletes and encourage international students to participate in intercollegiate athletics.

In the focus group discussion, scholarships or acquiring money was seen as one of the main benefits for the participants. Receiving a scholarship is paramount to these international students. They reported that if they were able to garner scholarships, they would do intercollegiate sports. International student fees and tuition increases significantly every year, and with a full or partial scholarship, this funding would help them immensely. The participants pointed out that with an award, they would not need to work, and they could balance their time between athletics and academics.

In the discussion, participants expressed that the availability of scholarship as a benefit for the university. The participants agreed that scholarships are often used to attract potential student-athletes. The availability of athletics scholarships also meant that the sports program would become more attractive to top athletes. One participant expressed that if they give top athletes adequate funding, these student-athletes might help to improve the sports program.

Marketing

Participants in the study thought that most international students did not know that the western Canadian university participated in intercollegiate sports. Hence more marketing of intercollegiate sports competition needs to be prioritized or enhanced. Most participants suggested that the addition of international student-athletes could play a crucial role in promoting and publicizing in intercollegiate sporting opportunities and other programs offered. These students could be included in global promotion strategies. Solomon supported this idea; he said, “including ISAs will result in visibility and positivity. Use them in promotion and marketing strategies. We often see international students on posters here promoting academic programs, use them in intercollegiate sports. That gives the university free promotion.” Walter echoed something similar:

It could also attract students from overseas who are making decisions on the school that is the best fit for them. The student-athletes themselves could also gain publicity or given a voice when they are allowed to participate in intercollegiate sports.

Including these students in the marketing plan is not only a positive promotion for the sports program but also the university overall.

Rebecca stated that sports could help to market the university to prospective students from her country. She expressed that she attended many university expositions in her home country, and there was limited representation from Canadian universities. She explained, “the university and sports administrators can help to market the university and attract prospective students. Recruiters could include ISAs to promote university programs, both academics and athletics. They should bring student-athletes when doing overseas promotions.” Furthermore, she added that sports played an integral role in my society. As a result, the university could promote their academic programs as well as college sports opportunities to attract them.

She then expressed that coaches should tap into internal (within the university) promotion and marketing. She commented, “intercollegiate sports are not being promoted effectively at the university. I often rely on my friends to get information on what is going on.” She further explained that the official athletics website exists but not well known, and not every student will take the initiative as she did to research college sports.

Solomon added that the university must promote their sports program as an inclusive program. He mentioned that:

From a public relations perspective, the world is becoming more inclusive of all races and ethnicities, and you want people to have the belief that they can get equal opportunities to play. The same way international students are used to promote academic programs and outreach; they should also be involved in promotions for collegiate sports.

For the university, Roger added:

The university will be able to highlight that they were inclusive with culturally friendly and diverse programs. Such efforts may appeal to prospective students choosing the western Canadian university as the best choice for studying abroad.

There should be more advertisement for the intercollegiate sports program.

Kane also agreed that “the inclusion of international students can also be useful in attracting new upcoming talent who would like to play and become students of this university. The university can incorporate this into their marketing strategy.”

The also participants expressed that the western Canadian university does not market extensively in their home countries as other Canadian universities in bigger cities. Like in one of the interviews during the focus group discussion, another participant spoke about the university’s limited overseas presence. The participant shared, “before coming to Canada, I went to about five expositions in my country, and this university was only present at one.” Other participants also suggested that the university should tap more into non-traditional

markets as there are many talented and smart students who can contribute immensely to their growing international student population. They further implied that universities that include ISAs in their sports program would be more likely to attract a lot more students. One of the participants claimed, “the moment you start investing in international student-athletes, your job is almost halved because students will come to you without you always having to go to appeal to them.”

Exposure and Recognition

The sub-theme exposure and recognition reoccurred in the data analyzed. Participants in the study explained that exposure and recognition could be of great benefit to international students and intercollegiate sports in Canada.

Walter stated that getting recognized for being a talented soccer player would benefit him and the university. He explained:

If I played soccer for the university and made significant contribution to intercollegiate sports, I would like that to be highlighted. This will not only get my name across, but the university would be recognized for producing talented and skillful athletes. This would also give the sports program notoriety and exposure.

He also added about exposure:

Some student-athletes want to take their talent farther than intercollegiate sports, so they need avenues to display their talent. If you live in Vancouver, for example, you could be scouted for the Vancouver Whitecaps. The city recognizes that there is talent in the university. Something like this is needed in this city or province. Having this could bring attention and exposure to the city, attracting more international students, etcetera.

Solomon also opined that “gaining recognition for being a top-class or elite athlete is essential. Furthermore, getting recognized for doing something you love, and doing it well is

would provide a great feeling for the athlete, their peers and family. Kane also agreed that intercollegiate sports provided an outlet to be known and scouted. Scouting could lead to them becoming professional players.

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I agree because when we hear intercollegiate sports, we recognize the United States as the primary destination for ISAs. U Sports does not have the recognition or popularity like the NCAA in the global market, adding international students could help them to become more known outside of Canada. This initiative should be one of the aims of U Sports.

Talent Pooling

Talent pooling is a successful practice used all over the world of sports, for instance, in soccer, basketball, and baseball leagues. Talent pooling occurs when players with different skills or talents are recruited and brought together to strengthen a team. When asked about the benefits of adding ISAs, participants mentioned talent pooling might help to diversify the teams not only in skills but also from social, cultural, racial, and religious perspectives. The participants expressed that the university will benefit from this practice if they included international students in their program. They reiterated that this would be an excellent approach for the athletics program and could also help them to become more competitive and win more regional and national titles.

According to Solomon:

You cannot underestimate the influence of international players in terms of their style of play and the value they may bring to the university in general and the sports programs. For example, the United States and Germany have given many opportunities for international students to join their teams, and it has been positive. The university should follow this model to attract people.

David shared that the sports the men's soccer could benefit from this since they have won the title in a few years. He expressed that athletes from different countries have different skills, thereby bringing diverse talents together. He explained:

For instance, African players are strong and have speed, South Americans have flare, style and are flashy while players in Europe have excellent technical abilities these features make each of their soccer styles unique. So, coaches could bring all these talents and combine them to advance their teams. The players and programs will benefit a lot — diversity of players and skills. The more variety the team has, the better.

When asked about the benefits, Roger also added:

Including different talented players from various places will more than likely bring positive results to the sports teams. They can share their skills as well as their cultures. Also, intercollegiate sports could bridge the cultural gap; for instance, international students from different countries have their own cultures that they can share with their Canadian teammates, which can help everyone to become culturally competent.

Roger also stated that they could improve the standard by being open to new talent, new skills, and merging these with what already exists.

As well, Max shared his views on the benefits of talent pooling:

Diversity of people means a team with individuals from varying backgrounds advantageous for teams. The diverse skills and talents that they possess could be used as a tactic on the field and could be an advantage for coaches. Such variety will help student-athletes to perform and develop better and richly.

This idea was also supported in the focus group discussion. One of the participants believed that the formula for getting better results includes combining and fusing ingredients (players). He explained:

I could tell you that a significant percentage of the people who play city games or who show interest in these games are international people. Some are students, Canadians, permanent residents, and some are temporary residents, all who might be here for various reasons. From diverse backgrounds coming together ... it can only be positive when you try to create diversity. So, skills and in general, and you will get better.

Skill Development

Another essential benefit identified by some of the participants was skill development. Skill development is vital for the improvement of skills and becoming an elite athlete. They highlighted the importance of honing their skills and becoming better at their sport. Participants further acknowledged that how some sports are played in their home countries are sometimes different from those in Canada. Many athletes are talented, but with continuous training, they can develop their skills and become better athletes. David shared his views on skill development:

It can help to develop the skills that you have by adapting to new styles of play.

Through intercollegiate sports, you can learn the Canadian style of play. The coaching staff might be better than back home so they can help you develop your skillset and knowledge about sports.

Kane stated that players could learn to play with others who have different skillsets and talents, and they can learn to play and win together. Furthermore, he explained, “international students can showcase their talents and abilities. During this time, they can develop their skills and reach a particular goal.” Solomon stated, “in my opinion, it can help to develop their skill level and help international students to become better players. I have hopes of becoming a professional athlete, and intercollegiate sports could help me immensely.” Rebecca expressed that playing in intercollegiate sports will help to develop her skills and talent. “I can also help my team to be better but have unique skills and help them to succeed in competitions.” Michael shared his view:

Many international students ... have raw, untrained talent, and learning how to play in a team in Canada could help them to develop. Aside from having skills, they often lack technicality, but with the training, they could also develop into better athletes.

Skill development was also discussed among the focus group participants. Skill development can happen in several ways from individual training, through coaching, or by learning from teammates. In the discussion, it was reported that:

No matter how good of a footballer or basketball player you are, when you are on that field, there is something that you are going to learn from someone else. And there is also something that you are going to impart to your teammates So is that a knowledge exchange that can only make you get better at your sport.

Also, in the focus group discussion, the participants mentioned that not only do individuals develop skills necessary to succeed as an athlete, it also teaches skills that help them outside the field. Participants acknowledged that not all intercollegiate athletes aspire to go into professional athleticism but pursue sports because of other benefits such as working in the area, developing teamwork skills, leadership skills, cultural competency skills, among

others. Some of the participants also stated that it helped students with time management and working towards goals, which also has long term benefits. One participant said:

Just being on a team teaches you lifelong skills, like leadership skills, time management, or working within a group. Even if you do not end up going pro or anything like that, you would have benefited. From intercollegiate sports participation, you will learn skills that are valuable in the workplace and life.

Teamwork and collaboration skills are necessary for the workplace just as much as on the field. The opportunity to work in diverse environments will help them in the global world.

The example described above by this individual is similar to what is expected in the workforce. Teamwork skills augment the chances of success in sports or the workforce. Success is often achieved because persons with different skills and abilities come together for the greater good of the organization or team. Moreover, some of the participants mentioned student-athletes could develop skills necessary both on the field and within the classroom.

Additionally, depending on the athletes' aspirations, they could go either the route of becoming a professional athlete or the path to earning a degree. ISAs will have a backup plan if either fails. One said, "in the case that the sports section of their life is not working out, it might grant you opportunities to grow as a person." Participants agreed that this makes student-athletes well-rounded. It is also essential to complete the degree since injuries might occur at any time, and athletes will eventually retire from competitive sports. One participant said, "if something happens or you get injured, you can fall back on your degree. Besides, in the sports world, many former athletes end up working in the field as reporters, sportscasters, coaches, and others."

Building Relationships

Emphasis was placed on the importance of building relationships with other individuals. It became quite evident when speaking with participants that it was vital for them to have a relationship with others during their post-secondary experience. This factor was brought up initially in the interviews, but participants did not share enough information on this topic. However, in the focus group discussion, the participants reiterated the importance of building relationships with teammates, opponents, coaches, and other individuals. Under this theme, the two sub-themes developing friendships and networking were discussed .

Developing Friendship

Like talent pooling, friendships are essential in sports. International students believed that intercollegiate sports would help them to forge meaningful friendships with teammates but also make friends when they travel to other universities to play. Through friendships, ISAs could learn from and about each other, and it helps with continual development, not only through skills, but also help them to become culturally competent, learning new languages, and developing long-lasting relationships. Walter, for example, mentioned that you get to meet other athletes and build friendships. He said that he also enjoyed going around the city and meeting people. Walter also commented that over the years of being a student, he had developed lasting friendships with students from his soccer team. Solomon also mentioned that he felt more comfortable talking with his teammates than his classmates.

These experiences and other similar comments indicated that sports made it easier to bond with people in a foreign country through participation in sports. One participant in the focus group said that most of their closest friends were not in their program of study; instead, they were members of his city league team. Another person explained that they had developed genuine friendships with people they met at intramural events. Another comment was that the university would as well because, through their sports programs, they can

facilitate meaningful opportunities for students to interact and engage with students outside the classroom setting.

Networking

Seven out of nine participants mentioned the importance of networking. Friendship was distinguished from networking as the participants described the former as a cordial relationship, and the latter was more related to a professional sphere. The participants mentioned the importance of networking but did not emphasize it as much during the interviews. Max was the only person who expounded on the topic. He stated that “student-athletes get a chance to network not only that they get to meet other opponents, meet coaches, organizers and can be seen by top-ranking officials in college and other professional events in Canada.”

In the discussion, the sub-theme networking was also restated. The participants explained that one of the main benefits of sports is that it can open doors and transcended borders. The participants mentioned that networking could have its benefits in the long run, whether student-athletes want to become a professional athlete or want to work in the field of sports. One of the participants said that networking is the most significant benefit of intercollegiate sports participation. He narrated:

Networking opens doors for student-athletes both within their city, university, but also when they travel around to play Sometimes, you meet a business partner, someone who can offer you a job or internship further down the road. Also, you can meet someone who can give a good recommendation for you in the future.

The sub-themes reviewed in this section revealed international students’ opinions on the potential or anticipated benefits of ISAs in collegiate athletics. The benefits of international students’ participation in intercollegiate sports could serve all stakeholders,

including international students, domestic students, the sports program, and the university, overall.

Challenges for International Students

This theme was aligned with question four, which was, what are the factors hindering international students' participation in intercollegiate sports? Response to this question mainly came from the participants' explanation about their decisions to not be a part of the athletics program at the time of the interview. Findings suggest a plethora of factors preventing them from partaking in collegiate sports. Under this theme, were six sub-themes; time constraints, financial challenges, academic workload, lack of recruitment, lack of awareness, and parental influence were highlighted.

Time Constraints

All the participants expressed that the sub-theme time is the most impeding factor in potential intercollegiate participation endeavors. Time constraint is one of the downsides to collegiate sports participation. Most of the participants work while going to school, which is a significant commitment so that they can offset their fees and other responsibilities aligned with their overseas university experience. Time and scheduling demands of intercollegiate programs often create a problem for international students.

All the participants, for example, Michael, expressed, "intercollegiate sports requires a considerable commitment and would take time away from working and academic engagement." Participants emphasized that international students' time is often divided into three sections. Firstly, students have many classes, tutorials, and assignments. Solomon explained that most students take five courses per semester and five classes a week. This commitment is demanding and stressful. However, some participants shared that they took three courses per semester, which was the minimum number of courses international students could take in an undergraduate program. In contrast, graduate students can take two courses.

Joseph, who is one of two participants who wanted to become a professional soccer player, stated that he took three courses per semester so that he would have enough free time to play soccer and work part-time. Rebecca also stated that she was willing to prioritize and change her management habits to pursue intercollegiate sports seriously.

Secondly, they have to work, and most participants worked as they were permitted to only work part-time throughout the school year in Canada. Part-time employment in Canada is 20 hours a week as stipulated by law, but that is for working off-campus. They explained that work is also available on the university grounds and could be done concurrently with off-campus work. Thirdly, personal time was too valuable to international students, which included playing sports during their free time, hanging out with friends, and doing other social activities. The participants participated in weekly sports competitions. The participants shared that the time reserved for intramural events on-campus was once or twice a week, which was manageable. Participating in sports once or twice a week was the same amount of time allotted for those who competed in city leagues and tournaments. Joseph expressed that on some special occasions, he would travel out of the city and do weekend tournaments.

The participants elucidated that training was not rigorous, and sometimes they did not reserve time for preparation for short competitions or other recreational events. David pointed out, “we do not do much training; most times, we show up to the games and do a brief warm-up.” On the contrary, they pointed out that as ISAs, they must commit to hectic weekly training schedules, competing, traveling.

Graduation Deadline

Another time factor was graduating deadlines. Participants expressed that they felt pressured to complete their programs on time. Solomon explained that most undergraduate programs run for four years, while master’s programs are for two or three years in Canada. International students expressed wanting to complete their degree at the earliest point as

possible. David stated that “international students prioritize academics because they have a deadline to graduate.” In a follow-up interview with Solomon and another with Walter, both commented that student-athletes usually take an extra year or two to complete their degrees. Solomon further said, “if international students do not complete on time, they have to extend their study permits, and that would cost them more money. Not to mention a longer time to graduate because of intercollegiate sports participation.”

Student-athletes, on the other hand, do not work but have a dual role of being an athlete and student, which usually results in them graduating at a later date. In the discussion, the participants expressed that most student-athletes took up to five years to complete their degrees. They further stated, undergraduate and graduate ISAs would then be required to extend their permits and would not graduate on time.

Financial Challenges

Like the time constraints, participants mentioned financial challenges. Financial difficulties affected international students’ academic and non-academic journeys. Primarily, the majority of participants commented on the expenses of studying at the western Canadian university even though it was amongst the cheapest in Canada. Besides, their fees were higher than those of domestic students, and this resulted in them experiencing financial hardship.

Inadequate Financial Support from Family

Financial hardship not only affected them but their parents back in their home countries. In a follow-up meeting with Walter, he expounded that most international students receive insufficient financial support from family back home. He further explained, “studying abroad is costly for international students. The expenses place significant burdens on our families back home, and therefore, students have to look for another source of income to

survive.” As previously stated, international students chose this university and city because it was affordable to live and study. However, it was not without financial burdens.

All the participants, except Kane, were not on academic scholarships. Rebecca and David did not work and had adequate family support from back home. Joseph explained that he received financial support but only for tuition. All the other participants did not have enough financial support from family back home, and hence, they had to work to cover their expenses. Due to this, international students were unable to prioritize sports over their finances. Walter highlighted that coaches have expectations and requirements of student-athletes. He explained that “intercollegiate sports include a tight schedule, extensive and intense training, and an extensive game roster with traveling obligations. These are typically compulsory; however, it is often impossible for international students since they have to work.”

In the focus group discussion, all five respondents reported that financial issues might hinder many international students’ desire to participate in intercollegiate sports. For one, it is challenging for their parents to send money. They spoke about the currency conversion between their home countries and Canada, which was significantly weaker than the Canadian dollar. Participants mentioned that their parents had to borrow loans from other family members and banks to fund their education abroad.

They further pointed out that, therefore, they had to work and not partake in college sports. Four of the participants were currently working, and one was on an academic scholarship. Again, as mentioned earlier, international students are permitted to work off-campus 20 hours throughout the school year, and they could also work on-campus. Working, going to school, and participating in intercollegiate sports appeared to be an arduous task for international students. One of the respondents told a profound story about how challenging it was for their family to cover all their international fees. This respondent shared:

For a fact, this hindered me from playing intercollegiate sports I mean, there is a perception that international students are rich or wealthy because we pay more tuition. However, nobody asks what does this mean for international students? For me, this means that my parents are paying and having to borrow a lot of money ... It meant another added struggle to finish my degree. My parents informed me that they could only assist with tuition. They said you are not in ****, you are in Canada where you can work, make your rent and pocket money. This meant I must get a part-time job.

The other participants nodded and laughed in agreement when the person spoke about the perception of international students are rich. This comment and other statements brought up in the study supported what was revealed in the face to face interviews. Making money to take care of themselves throughout their university studies obviously would impede their desire to participate in intercollegiate sports. Likewise, working would supersede in this context.

Limited Availability of Athletic Awards

From another perspective, the participants explained that the unavailability or the limited availability of athletic financial awards and scholarships posed another challenge for international students. Walter shared that:

The biggest challenges international students face is the cost of tuition if they can help international students to offset that they would attract them more. I am a talented soccer player who can make the intercollegiate soccer team, and I could play professional sports, but the cost of my tuition hinders my aspiration.

Based on the analysis, there is no guarantee of a scholarship or grant, and therefore, there was no incentive to participate in intercollegiate sports. Max stated that he had not tried out for the athletics team because he worked and went to school weekly. He expressed that he would try out if there were some financial incentives. He stated, “there is no guarantee of a

scholarship for me to quit my current job.” Likewise, Joseph also narrated that international students do not get paid or have access to many scholarships to help them throughout the university. On the other hand, some domestic students get a full scholarship to play most sports at this university.

Joseph pointed out that since there was no guarantee of athletic scholarships, hence international students are disadvantaged. Financial rewards motivate international students, and without such incentives, they often felt like there was no reason to become athletes. He further added that the distribution of athletic scholarships should be equitable so that international students could also benefit. Walter also added that “domestic students had athletics awards that covered first to fourth or fifth year in university. International students do not get to showcase their talent much even to be considered for scholarships.” Rebecca, who stated that she would try out for the new upcoming season, said that, as an international student-athlete, she hopes to qualify for a scholarship that could help to finance her academics.

In the focus group discussion, the participants also agreed that the limited availability in athletics awards was possibly one of the key reasons for the low presence of international students. Participants pointed out that their tuition was 20,000 CAN a year, but most of the awards here are 3,500 CAN a year, which is not enough to pay a term worth of fees. It was also mentioned that Canadian intercollegiate sports more than likely have lost out on top athletics to the United States since they have a vast resource of full scholarships to attract those athletes.

Academic Workload

Another significant challenge for international students was the pressure of academic workload. Participants in the study expressed that given the volume of their assignments, it would be challenging to couple this with intercollegiate sports participants. When speaking

about academic workload, they also mentioned that this is why they preferred to participate in intramural games and off-campus activities rather than intercollegiate sports. They expressed that those kinds of activities were chosen based, voluntary, and done in their free time, and they had enough time to do their assignments and go to classes. Some of the participants reported that the demand for intercollegiate sports competitions might thwart them from devoting enough time to their academics. With intercollegiate sports, a chunk of or most of their time would be dedicated to them being athletes. The participants mentioned prioritizing academics because the workload is heavy.

Most of the participants expressed that their main priority during their university tenure is their academics. Walter explained that “the workload can become a lot and limits their free time. Plus, even if I made the team, the workload would be too hectic for me to handle.”

Michael explained that his main task here was to complete studies, and intercollegiate sports might hinder this. He contended that he has a lot of assignments that are often hard to manage or finish on time. Similarly, Max also pointed out how academic workload and other factors combined made it difficult to participate in intercollegiate sports even if he wanted to. Max reinforced this statement, “a heavy academic workload with several obligations can be a severe problem. Some students are not good at multitasking; they cannot be students and athletes, and they will either make playing sports a priority or school a priority.”

A few of the participants pointed out that language ability can pose a problem for non-native English speakers coming to studying in Canada. Lower English proficiency also creates academic pressures. Roger stated that students who are non-native speakers of English might have a hard time managing their academic workload. In essence, it takes a longer time to complete their assignments. He said that “meeting assignment deadlines on top of having other responsibilities can be challenging in a new country. Collegiate sports would

add another strain, and students might not want this added burden when they already have to cope with so much.”

Graduate students Solomon and Kane also explained that, from their perspectives, most of the master’s students do not have enough spare time to engage in intercollegiate sports given their heavy workload. Solomon pointed out that, “many students are often working on their thesis and also working as research assistants for their professors. Some have many assignments to do, as well.”

Lack of Awareness

Another significant constraint found in the analysis was the lack of awareness or knowledge about intercollegiate sports at the western Canadian university and Canada in general. As previously stated, more than half of the participants in the study were unfamiliar with U Sports and were also not aware of the sports program before studying abroad. The only acquired knowledge about the program after they became students.

Four of the participants felt like outside of the College of Kinesiology, the other colleges were unaware or lacked the necessary information about the sporting opportunities on-campus. Rebecca expressed that “we rarely know what is happening, everything is hidden from us. It is like secrecy.” Some of the participants observed that many of the student-athletes were from the College of Kinesiology. Participants expressed that it is quite understandable that most of the student-athletes are from the college as they were studying something related to the sports field; however, other potential talented athletes might exist in different colleges. Roger concurred that awareness was indeed a problem, “international students were not generally aware of intercollegiate sports activities on-campus.” Joseph also expressed that there should bring more awareness of the sports program. He further stated that “it was a struggle to get in contact with the soccer coach.”

Intercollegiate athletics play a significant role in high education. Walter stated that “intercollegiate sports should be more talked about on-campus to bring awareness and increase popularity.” David added, “administrators should provide more information so students can become aware of the universities’ sports program and when the games are held or when they can try out.” Rebecca stated that “everything is word of mouth; I am yet to hear a broadcast about tryout or games.” Max also felt that more could be done:

They should advertise the tryouts in the schools’ newspapers. We have one, yet I have never seen any tryout dates. The lack of information, and it is not highly publicized. I have never seen any advertisements or posters around the school.

Roger exclaimed that “if the program is not advertised properly, students might miss out on the opportunities. The university must advertise for the intercollegiate teams.” David proposed that they “should try to get it to televise and show the game in the international students’ lounge. There is a need for more exposure and awareness of the team or sports programs as they have been doing well over the years.”

Like other participants, Kane expressed that the university needs to advertise sports more as it is a big part of its university culture. He further shared:

More advertising of the sports programs, as well as tryouts, should be done so that they can attract more students to the program When I became a student at the university, I knew a bit about the sports teams, but I did not know where and when they had games I ended up attending games because I knew a few players Once they improve this, it can help to accumulate more fans and spread a buzz about sports like soccer and basketball on-campus and around the city.

All participants in the focus group discussion reported about the lack of awareness of intercollegiate sports. The participants expressed that the athletes participated in several intercollegiate events, but only some were highlighted on-campus. It was revealed that

hockey, Canadian football, soccer, wrestling, and to a lesser extent, basketball was known to them. They further expressed that without knowledge, students will miss out on opportunities to be engaged in intercollegiate sports as either athletes or fans. One participant said that one of his friends, who is an ISAs, kept him abreast about the soccer schedule. Participants all agreed that they learned about intercollegiate events by chance, word of mouth, or after games ended when it is printed in the university's newspaper. The participants reported that not all students read the paper or know about the website; hence, they needed other methods for reaching the wider student population. Announcements, placing the information in the monitors in the areas populated by all students such as the international students' office and the lounge and cafeteria areas, were seen as good hotspots. These ideas confirmed what was discussed in the face to face interviews.

Like in the face to face interviews, participants reported a feeling of division between the athletics department and the general school populace. Participants in the focus group expressed they did not know much about the athletes, for example, names. Participants shared comments such as, "I do not know even know who the starting quarterback is, he could be in my class, and I would not recognize him. I do not know any of the players." The participants expressed that they felt their voices were not heard as there was no one representing the interest of international students and intercollegiate sports.

Student Support

Three of the participants complained about the limited resources and support available for international students who have an interest in intercollegiate sports at the university. They were dissatisfied with the international students' office. As mentioned briefly above, Joseph visited the international students' office to inquire about intercollegiate sports and found them to not be of much help. Joseph, Rebecca, and Solomon further expressed that information provided by the office was known information, which is not

enough to help international students with their concerns about athletics programs. Neither can they help them if they experience any issues regarding the opportunities, tryouts, or coaches. Moreover, if they have any problems arise, the onus is on the student to solve them. Students have different interests, so this is imperative.

Recruitment Practices

Recruitment was a reoccurring sub-theme in the data analysis. Recruitment strategies are essential in acquiring international student-athletes. All participants expressed disappointment about the recruitment efforts and approaches of coaches at the western Canadian university. Many of the participants' highlighted that it is expensive to recruit ISAs as they do in the United States; however, they are alternatives to solve this issue. Some of the participants stated that if it is more cost-effective to minimize recruiting overseas, the coaches can recruit international students on-campus. Walter expounded that:

The university itself is looking at cost-effectiveness, so they tend to recruit domestic students and do not prioritize recruiting international talent. The university might not have enough money in their intercollegiate budget to travel to several countries. So, I understand why they do not invest much in ISAs. I admit though, that more needs to be done.

Correspondingly, four of the participants agreed that talent exists within the western Canadian university international student body. Some comments mentioned were that "coaches should recruit on campus as many talented international students played intramural games. These talented athletes who do not participate in intercollegiate sports dominate these intramural sports." In the focus group discussion, students provided various perspectives on the recruitment strategies and the reasons behind their efforts. Some of them also recommended recruiting on campus; others suggested that coaches should try to recruit international students who play in the city tournaments. The participants indicated that on-

campus recruitment could help the university to cut overseas recruitment costs. One shared, Coaches, can communicate with prospective ISAs via social media. The participants also shared that several students have competed semi-professionally before arriving in Canada. If they were granted the opportunity to play, they could positively impact the performance of the teams. One participant in the focus group described the recruitment process:

Recruitment, I think that it is a mess. It is a bunch of confusion. We do not know anything. You do not understand how it works. Like you do not know when you can try out for the teams. We do not know how or when tryouts are. Thus, we do not know where to go. If you email the coach, it makes no sense sometimes. Even if you go to the international student office, for example, they do not provide any useful information about tryouts, etc.

All participants in the focus group agreed that there needed to be improved with recruitment practices. However, one of the participants shared that recruiters and coaches might have a different outlook on the recruitment of ISAs. He expressed:

You have to understand that as these people would also look for costs and benefits If I am going to recruit a star from anywhere, for example, Usain Bolt from Jamaica to run from my school, I need to know that that athlete will take my school to the next level Besides, the university is not going to fly officials to Kenya to look for athletes; they are not that big. It is a gradual thing, you know.

Parental Influence

Some of the participants agreed that one of the hindrances of playing intercollegiate sports were parents. Parental standards and expectations may be significant deterrents to intercollegiate sports participation. The majority of the participants explained that their parents expected them to do well academically, and if they were to underperform, they would encounter problems with them. Their parents' values and expectations of them supersedes

most other aspects. As stated earlier, seven of the participants were dependent on their parents for financial support. Without such support, it would have been difficult to survive while studying abroad. Participants explained that they would oblige to their parents' demands if they were told not to participate in intercollegiate sports. In the interview with Rebecca, she expressed, "I have many responsibilities, so I am not going to drop one class because I am on the soccer team; my parents would not let me. That's important to them because they pay my fees, you know?"

In the focus group discussion, the sub-theme parental influence resurfaced. One participant explained:

If your parents said that you could not play soccer, then you have to obey them For one, they are paying your fees You are not entirely responsible for yourself. The downside of them not wanting you to play is that you would not have time to advance your skills or compete seriously or have dedicate enough time to pursue professional aspirations. Some parents are aware that intercollegiate sports take up a lot of time, and they often want you to focus on schoolwork.

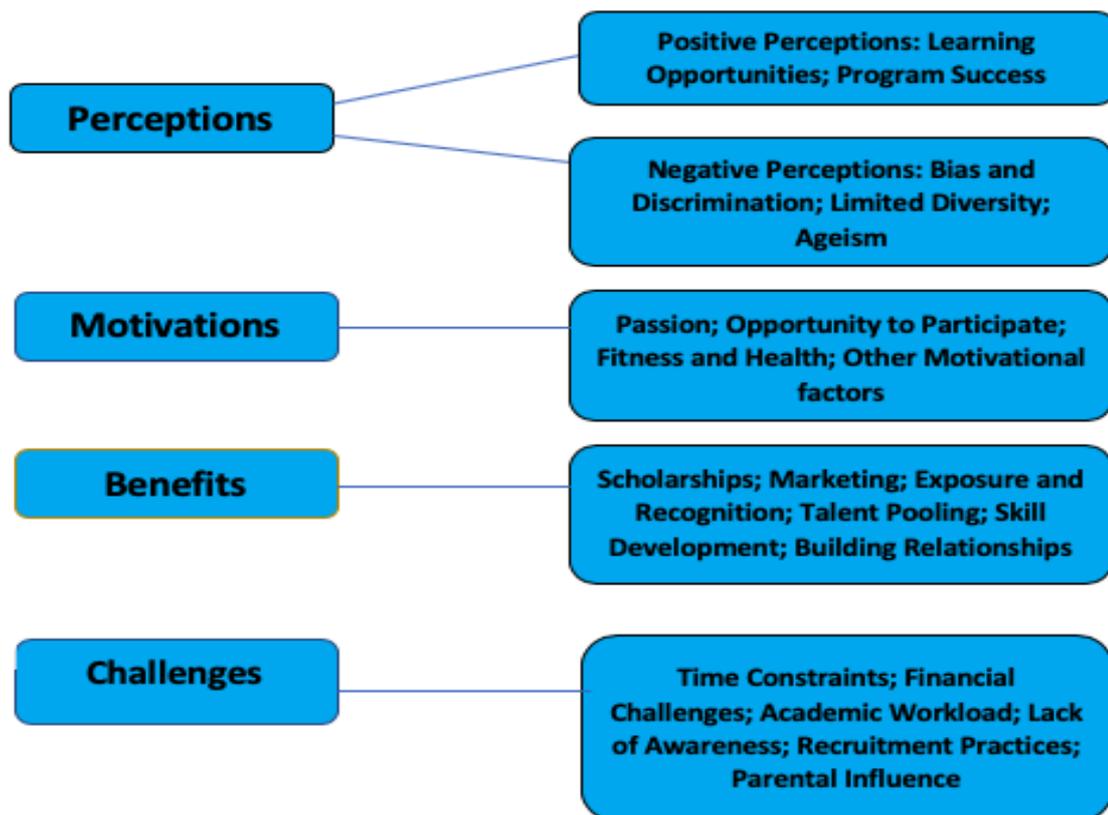
Here the challenging nature of intercollegiate sports participation was highlighted. It was found that intercollegiate sports, unlike some recreational or intramural events, are closer to professional sports, which required much time, focus, dedication, among other obligations. More importantly, students are expected to balance athletics and academics. Another participant explained that parents might be apprehensive because intercollegiate sports participation might end up in program extension and meant that they would have to pay an extra semester or year's tuition.

Findings under this theme revealed that the pursuit of intercollegiate sports is one with many challenges, especially for international students. Each participant described their stories on these difficulties. Findings also showed that while they desired to participate in

intercollegiate sports, numerous factors needed to be taken into consideration, such as time, finances, recruitment, awareness, or the lack thereof and other priorities. Noteworthy at the time of the research, all the participants played some form of sports, whether competitive or recreational, but not intercollegiate sports.

Figure 4.1

Themes and Sub-Themes Related to Factors Influencing International Students' Participation in Intercollegiate Sports



Note. Themes and sub-themes identified from the results are shown.

Summary

This chapter presented the four major themes which were organized and discussed according to the research questions. I presented themes as they consistently appeared across the interviews and focus group discussions. Quotes from the participants were provided and

use to substantiate the overarching theme. Data revealed how the participants perceived their experiences of international students' participation in collegiate sports in a western Canadian university. By using participants' own words through extensive quotes and information from the interviews and focus group discussion, the researcher provided a profile of the experiences of the participants.

The first theme, perception, focused on the participants' experience and knowledge of intercollegiate athletics programs. This theme included both positive and negative opinions of the university programs based on the observations and experiences of participants in the study. The second theme, motivation, focused on those factors that influence or encourage them to continue to participate in sports. Also, how these same motivations might drive or dissuade intercollegiate sports participation. The third theme benefits of intercollegiate sports participation focused on the impacts of international students' presence in intercollegiate sports. Also, how international students could benefit from partaking in intercollegiate sports in Canada. The fourth theme, challenges, discussed the impediments to international students' participation in intercollegiate sports.

The next chapter, the Discussion of Findings, will explain the connections between some of the results and the literature, explore themes further, and propose further research into this timely and relevant topic.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

This study explored factors underlying the participation of international students in intercollegiate sports in a western Canadian university. The following research questions guided the study:

- What are the international students' perceptions of intercollegiate sports?
- What motivates international students to participate in sports?
- What are the benefits of international students' participation in intercollegiate sports?
- What are the factors hindering international students' participation in intercollegiate sports?

A search of the literature regarding international student-athletes in Canada yielded few results. Due to the lack of relevant studies, my review focused on studies mainly from the United States and was utilized to understand the present situation of international students participating in sports in Canadian universities. To gain a better understanding of this situation, this study was also guided by the principles of leisure constraints theories (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford et al., 1991; Hubbard & Mannell, 2001) and motivation theories (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Pederson, 2002; Wilkins et al., 2012).

After reviewing relevant literature, a qualitative multiple case study was employed to answer the research questions through face to face interviews, follow-up interviews, and a single focus group discussion. The research process allowed me to gather and analyze participants' responses, and report on several factors that influence international students' participation in intercollegiate sports.

In this chapter, I compare my results about the factors influencing the participation of international students in intercollegiate sports with the literature reviewed in Chapter two. In

the discussion, I address all research questions aligning them with a specific sub-heading/theme: (1) perceptions of intercollegiate sports, (2) motivations for sports engagement, (3) benefits of intercollegiate sports participation and (4) challenges for international students. Each sub-heading has sub-themes that were represented in the data. In the subsequent sections, I provide a conclusion of the study, which is then followed by the implications for theory, practice, and research. The chapter ends with recommendations for post-secondary institutions involved in intercollegiate sports.

Discussion of Findings

This section discusses four main themes revealed from the findings and explains how these four themes address the research questions. The four themes are perceptions of intercollegiate sports, motivations for sports engagement, benefits of intercollegiate sports participation, and challenges for international students. These themes are found through data analysis and are grounded in the literature.

Perceptions of Intercollegiate Sports

Participants' opinions on intercollegiate sports were positively impacted by learning opportunities and program achievement and adversely influenced by bias and discrimination, limited diversity, and ageism. These perceptions were derived from their observations and experiences related to program delivery and achievements, coaching staff, sporting events, teams, and players at their current university.

Positive perceptions

The findings revealed the positive perceptions that international students have about intercollegiate sports. Two main ideas reoccurred as positive perceptions: opportunities to learn about new sports and program achievements. Some of the participants expressed that the introduction and opportunity to learn new sports were appreciated. In the participants' home countries, soccer, basketball, and track and field were the most common sports.

However, in Canada, they were introduced to hockey and Canadian football, which gives the students sports to learn about, play, and opportunities to support new sports. One of the participants mentioned that rugby was played in their country, and, given the similarities of how the sport is played, they could transition into Canadian football if granted the opportunity to play.

Opportunities for New Learning. The study revealed that the availability of organized sporting competition at the university level was perceived positively. One of the participants expressed that the structure and organization of intercollegiate sports associations and competitions were at a more advanced and competitive level within Canada than in his home country. At the western Canadian university, participants felt that coaches and amenities for collegiate sports were of better quality than previously available. Other studies confirmed that international students relish the opportunity to participate in high-quality competitions that have advanced facilities and coaches (Foo, 2015; Geiger, 2013; Grbac, 2014; Lim et al., 2017; Love & Kim, 2011; Popp et al., 2011; Weston, 2006; Zonder, 2013).

A few of the participants, for example, Solomon, commented that he gained a new interest in sports like basketball and hockey since he moved to Canada. Previous studies have found that international students developed a growing interest in certain sports because of the availability of sports teams, media coverage, and large stadiums (Kutintara & Min, 2016). Other participants in my study also shared their positive experiences of learning about and attending Canadian football games. These opportunities can provide students with new knowledge and outlook on sports that are unfamiliar to them.

Program Achievement. In the study, participants also spoke highly of the western Canadian university's intercollegiate team achievement. The quality and competitiveness of intercollegiate teams were described as an acceptable standard. Previous studies conducted by Lee and Opio (2011) and Hong (2018) found that before international students consider

pursuing study and intercollegiate sports participation abroad, they often research the performance levels, the competitiveness of teams and sports, and diversity of teams before deciding on the most suitable university for them. Similarly, Lee and Opio (2011), Magner (2010), and Mixon et al. (2004) express that successful teams, and sports programs attract international students, ISAs, and fans.

Findings from Grbac's (2014) study also showed that international students choose their best-fit universities based on the competitiveness and performance of sports teams. Like Grbac's (2014) findings, the participants in this study also identified the competitive nature of intercollegiate sports in Canada as one of the reasons they would participate in collegiate sports and continue to support games. However, a conflicting study conducted by Popp et al. (2011) claimed that domestic students, rather than international students, gravitated towards intercollegiate sports because of their competitive nature, team achievement, and the reputation of the institution. Even though Popp et al.'s (2011) conclusions on the influence of competitiveness disagree with the findings of my research, many other scholars such as Lee and Opio (2011), Magner (2010) and Grbac (2014) reported similar views as my participants. These agreed-upon findings imply that ISAs consider the success of sports programs and competitiveness when deciding on sports participation, as they find pride in affiliating themselves with achievements of the university they wish to represent or attend.

Negative Perceptions

Findings from the interviews and focus group discussion indicate that the negative perceptions of intercollegiate outweighed the positives. The significance of these perceptions was in line with previous research; the participants shared that bias and discrimination, the limited diversity and ageism in intercollegiate sports have implications for the lack of participation of international students (Danford and Kidd, 2018; Hirko, 2007; Lee & Opio, 2011).

Bias and Discrimination. As presented in the previous chapter, some participants expressed concerns regarding bias and discrimination. While there is limited research on this issue in the Canadian context, concerns about bias and discrimination in sports still exist. A study on multiculturalism and federal sports policy in Canada provided convincing evidence of racial and ethnic discrimination in some Canadian sports at all levels (Frisby et al., 2013). In their research, they highlighted that some groups of students were prohibited from partaking in certain sports and even bullied because of their country of origin and religion. Some of the participants in my study shared similar views as they believed that coaches display bias and discriminatory practices by not including certain international students in their sports teams. Danford and Kidd (2018) claimed that there is implied potential bias in Canadian intercollegiate sports. They further acknowledged that discrimination and bias exist in the wider Canadian societies, and universities should help to curb these social problems.

In contrast, there is a larger volume of research on bias and discrimination in intercollegiate sports in the United States. For example, Lee and Opio (2011) and Hirko (2007) explained that bias, prejudice, and discrimination are factors that often discourage international students from participating in collegiate sports. Other researchers shared an opposing view; for example, Kutintara and Min's (2016) study on the influence of United States sports culture on international students revealed that racism does not always influence team selection. Instead, they found that sports cultures and sports requirements in countries vary; for instance, coaches may require specific team coordination skills for players to make the teams. However, international students who do not display such skills will find it challenging to get into teams. Though this claim may be plausible, participants from my study, such as Solomon and Kane, believed that coaches should be open to training international students who do not possess all the skills they may require.

Limited Diversity. The participants in my study lamented that the limited presence of international students in intercollegiate sports paints a negative image of Canadian universities. The analyses revealed that three of the participants had tried out for the teams and reported that there seemed to be a preference for domestic students or Canadians in intercollegiate sports. Other participants who had not tried out for intercollegiate sports explained that they did not because they had preconceived negative opinions, received advice from peers, and observed that domestic students were mainly seen on the teams. Another participant shared that he had not seen enough students in the team photos with whom he identified racially. A study by Danford and Donnelly (2018) reported on this lack of diversity and racial representation in the U Sports in Canada; they expressed that most of the U Sports student-athletes were white.

Furthermore, they urged U Sports to eliminate the idea of white privilege in intercollegiate sports. One of my participants would not participate in intercollegiate sports due to his observations of team rosters; this inhibition demonstrates the importance of perceived diversity. The literature suggests that diversity, or the perception of its existence, plays an essential role in the decision of international students to participate in intercollegiate sports (Hirko, 2007). My findings deduce that perceived diversity provides a sense of belonging for international students, assists with the development of their identity, and encourages self-actualization, which aligns with previous studies related to diversity (Allen et al., 2010; Grbac, 2014; Hirko, 2007).

The international student diversity that exists within Canadian university classrooms should be reflected in intercollegiate sports. My findings imply that even though the number of international students is increasing in the western Canadian university, this has not transcended through all areas of the university. Several studies report that due to globalization and internationalization efforts of higher education, international students'

presence in Canada has drastically increased (Anderson, 2015; AUCC, 2014; Grbac, 2014; Macready and Tucker, 2011; Sa & Sabzaleiva, 2018). As a result, Canada is now one of the top four destinations for international students (Le, 2017). This study revealed that despite the increased presence of international students in Canada, the subset ISAs is rarely represented in the literature on Canadian intercollegiate sports and higher education (Clemencon, 2014; Grbac, 2014).

Previously, Grbac's (2014) study on ISAs in U Sports brought awareness to the issue regarding the limited presence of international students in Canadian college athletics. This study, five years later, revealed that much has not changed in terms of the visibility of international student-athletes in intercollegiate sports in Canada. Grbac (2014) also found that the small ratio of international students in Canadian intercollegiate athletics was a reflection of U Sports, resulting in the limited presence of ISAs in universities. One participant in my study expressed the same views as Grbac (2014), stating that the larger sports organization that is the U Sports should also be blamed for the limited presence of international students in Canadian intercollegiate sports. While this may be true, the other participants believed that at the university level, more could be done to diversify intercollegiate teams.

Moreover, the limited engagement and participation of international students in intercollegiate sports in Canadian universities show that more can be done to increase the visibility of ISAs. Increasing the visibility of ISAs will raise awareness and allow international students to express that they can be a part of a system that embraces diversity, and by extension, them. Further, my study and other studies confirm that the presence of international students in Canadian sports signals a positive perception of the inclusivity of all students (Grbac, 2014; Hirko, 2007; Lee & Opio, 2011; Weston, 2006). Several participants expressed that they chose the western Canadian university because of its large population of international students. Perhaps if Canadian universities increase the ISAs enrolment, more

international students will gravitate towards these institutions and more ISAs will be attracted to their sports programs.

The participants further expressed that the landscape of intercollegiate sports in Canada needs more ISAs to help diversify the pool of students. On the contrary, this notion has been faced with scrutiny by other groups. Weston (2006) pointed out that ISAs inclusion in intercollegiate sports has been met with resistance by parents, students, scholars, and other stakeholders who have found this to be unfair to domestic students who stand the possibility of losing the benefits of scholarships, exposure, and recruitment. Sporting associations in Canada, such as U Sports, have included caps or limitations on the number of international students per sport and teams (Bradshaw, 2018). While this implies that they are securing opportunities for domestic students, both Bradshaw (2018) and Weston (2006) believed that there is still a space for ISAs in intercollegiate sports. It should be noted that the power to change these regulations falls solely on the Canadian sporting associations like U sports and not on the individual universities.

Ageism. The research findings on the impacts of age were not anticipated. Two participants expressed that age discrimination is a hindering factor in sports participation. Both participants were between ages 28 and 30. They reported that they realized, through interactions with peers and observation of the team rosters, that teams were skewed towards young student-athletes. International students who are at the master's level would primarily be affected by this as they are often older and have programs lasting up to two years. These participants expressed that, because of age discrimination, international students might fear trying out for various teams. This fear is that they may be overlooked because of their age, even if they possess talent. Due to this perceived idea, they also showed less interest in trying out for intercollegiate sports teams and instead focused more on recreational sports. Also,

both participants acknowledged that coaches might prefer to avoid older students as they might not have the stamina or the longevity as younger student-athletes.

Even though age was not a primary focus in the literature search, a study conducted by Polman and Moore (2011) on constraints to leisure participation reveals that the fear of age discrimination can negatively impact engagement in sports. Furthermore, their findings suggest that young adults and older adults often avoid rigorous sporting activities and have issues of self-perceptions of their talent as well as concerns about their age. Ageism is also an intrapersonal constraint that impacts individuals' motivations to engage in sports (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Polman & Moore, 2011). Though only two of the participants spoke about age, I found this factor to be profound and a new perspective to look at when considering the limited presence of master's students or older students.

Based on participants' direct and indirect interactions with coaches, teams, and players, my findings, coupled with the literature, suggest that perceptions play a significant role in international students' decisions to partake in sports. The within-case analyses and cross-case analyses revealed that the responses of participants who participate in intercollegiate sports in the past matched with those who had had not tried out for intercollegiate sports. This finding implies that there might be some truth to their perceptions. Further, the results indicate that positive perceptions of intercollegiate sports have the potential to encourage international students to be involved and afford them the chance to learn new sports cultures. On the other hand, negative perceptions may affect the willingness of international students to participate in intercollegiate sports.

Motivations for Sports Engagement

Participants shared their motivations for engaging in sports and how these motivations can play a role in their decisions to participate in intercollegiate sports. Many motivational factors stimulate one's interest to engage in sporting activities. The findings demonstrated

that motivations for participating in sports were multidimensional, while participants shared similarities. However, they also had some unique experiences; the different views provided insights into reasons for participation and non-participation in sports.

Motivation to participate in sports. Intrinsic motivation factors, such as fun, passion, and sense of accomplishment, are highlighted. Passion is found to be a primary motivational factor for participation in intercollegiate sports. Passion was not anticipated to be such a significant motivational factor in the initial literature review, but it is proved to be an instrumental factor for participants in this study. However, intrinsic motivations, fun, such as accomplishment, and passion were not substantial motivational factors on their own, but when combined with extrinsic factors, participants reported a higher desire to participate. For example, participants in the study were asked if their willingness to participate in sports was influenced by passion only; their responses indicate that passion alone was not sufficient. However, when combined with tangible rewards such as scholarships, participants exude higher motivation.

Additionally, it revealed that motivations also influence how participants evaluate the potential to intervene with other commitments, complicating their ability to manage their work-life balance. Previous studies found that motivations enable participants to navigate the extent to which they participate in sports or when they participate in leisure or physical activities. (Hubbard & Mannell, 2001; Jackson et al., 1993; Kay & Jackson, 1991). Likewise, the participants expressed that they assessed the potential benefits and incentives versus commitments and challenges they might face before becoming ISAs. Therefore, the negotiation process can either encourage or inhibit participation in sports. As such, intrinsic factors alone are not enough to influence international students to participate in intercollegiate activities. For example, passion, combined with tangible rewards provides stronger motivation.

Rewards and other financial incentives are extrinsic factors that appear to be the strongest motivation to participate in intercollegiate sports. Researchers suggest that extrinsic motivational factors play a more dominant role when deciding to participate in intercollegiate sports than intrinsic factors (Foo, 2015; Geiger, 2013; Grbac, 2014; Kondric et al., 2013; Kutintara & Min, 2016; Lim et al., 2017; Love & Kim, 2011; Popp et al., 2011; Zonder, 2013). By comparison, my findings imply that participants display a blend of both motivations rather than one motivation dominating the other. These findings are more aligned with Pederson's (2002) claims, that extrinsic and intrinsic motivations are not always separate or dichotomous and that more of a continuum of motivations exist.

Opportunity to participate. Intercollegiate sports offer international students a unique opportunity to gain experience in a foreign country as both a student and an athlete. This study, supported by that of Kutintara and Min (2016), discovered that opportunities for participation could influence international students' sports participation. Some of my research participants shared that they want the same opportunities as domestic students to participate in intercollegiate sports without restrictions surrounding administrative policies or negative perceptions.

Like Grbac (2014), some participants expressed that graduating with a Canadian degree while performing well in athletics in college was of significance to international students. However, it became apparent that international students prioritized their academics. This idea is supported by Bale (1991) in his book on ISAs in American Universities; it was reported that one of the most significant motivations for ISAs to compete abroad was their desire to gain an education, followed by the opportunity to participate in intercollegiate sports. Grbac (2014) also revealed that international student-athletes in his study chose Canada because they believed that Canada has high academic standards as well as good intercollegiate programs. One participant expressed that this could make student-athletes

well-rounded. Moreover, intercollegiate sports could serve as an option for those students who may choose to become professional athletes.

As was found in the literature, the participants advocated for holistic development, which entailed being verse both academically and in sports (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001). Again, the participants in this study were not currently ISAs; instead, they participated in recreational and other competitive events off and on campus. They, however, provided information about the motivational factors that they believed would influence other international students to participate in collegiate sports.

Motivations for coming to Canada. Many international students are particularly drawn to the United States, given the opportunities for careers in athletics. However, this study suggests that intercollegiate sports were not a significant motivational factor for coming to Canada and that participants' primary motivation and decision to study abroad was to earn a degree in a Canadian university. When questioned about intercollegiate sports, only two participants considered becoming ISAs before moving to Canada. This finding attribute to the fact that most of the participants were unaware or had limited knowledge about the intercollegiate sporting opportunities in Canada (Clemencon 2014; Grbac, 2014). Again, my study was limited by the absence of international student-athletes.

Participants highlighted that motivational factors such as tuition affordability, good academic programs, good reputation, opportunities, knowledge about the region and cost of living, personal recommendations, social links, and the presence of other international students contributed to their decisions to study in Canada. There have been numerous studies that report these factors as necessary for international students' decision to study abroad (Chen, 2008; Clemencon, 2014; Grbac, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Wilkins et al., 2012). These are also considered as pull-factors that usually exist within a host country (e.g., Canada), which attracts international students to the university, which best suits them

(Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Wilkins et al., 2012). These non-athletics pull-factors were confirmed in my findings.

Motivations are significant in decision making for international students. The study shows that international students displayed a variety of motivations. Students are influenced by a mixture of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Additionally, international students are also impacted by pull factors existing in the host country; the majority of the participants were attracted to academic pull factors rather than athletic pull-factors. These findings can be used to explain the limited number of international students in intercollegiate sports. Students cannot decide to participate when the information is limited.

Benefits of Intercollegiate Sports Participation

The theme benefits discuss question three, which focuses on the benefits of international students' participation in intercollegiate sports. The study revealed that there is a vast number of benefits that international students, domestic students, and higher education institutions can gain from intercollegiate sports in Canada. The findings also suggest that the inclusion of international students can benefit all stakeholders involved, that is, the university, sports programs, and all students. Consistent with previous studies, the findings suggest that international students play a significant role in intercollegiate sports and bring several benefits, such as improving athletic competitiveness, contributing to successful athletic programs that enhance institutional reputation and image, as well as improving the diversity on campus (Grbac, 2014; Hirko, 2007; Lee & Opio, 2011; Weston, 2006).

Scholarships. Findings showed that scholarship was one of the main benefits of intercollegiate sports participation. Athletic awards and scholarships are one of the main reasons why many international students decided to study abroad and participate in sports. This finding is consistent with other studies such as that of Geiger (2013), who expressed that scholarships serve a dual purpose to student-athletes since they give them chances to

participate in sports and pursue degrees that might not have been available in their home countries. Participants indicated that if they were to receive scholarships, they would be opened to the idea of becoming ISA. With tuition being significantly higher for international students, having a scholarship would be paramount for their participation in intercollegiate sports. Scholarships would help them to offset their tuition fees and other expenses. Scholarships have the potential to give international students the leverage to focus on being students and athletes without extra responsibilities, such as working. Bearing this in mind, scholars advocated for the increase of scholarship to attract international students (Geiger, 2013; 2014). Other studies suggested that U Sports has lost out on potentially talented student-athletes because of limited and inadequate scholarships (Ainsworth-Vincze, 2007; Ali, 2014; Geiger, 2013; Grbac, 2014).

Exposure and Recognition. Other benefits of intercollegiate sports participation identified were exposure and recognition. The visibility of international students in intercollegiate sports in Canada is minimal. To date, there are only a few studies that focused on the scope and number of international students in U Sports in Canada (Clemencon, 2014; Grbac, 2014). International students have recognized this low visibility and expressed that exposure and recognition for their talent are needed in intercollegiate sports in Canada. Exposure may result in awareness Canada-wide and even globally if international students' participation increases in these intercollegiate competitions. Such exposure in intercollegiate sports may open avenues for endless possibilities and growth for those athletes, whether they plan on pursuing professional sports or not. Like Weston (2006) stated, international students are ambassadors in intercollegiate sports. Exposure allows international students to showcase their talent and grants them the recognition they deserve. Being student-athletes in Canada can result in them and the university, receiving much attention. One of the participants suggested that as ISAs, they could also receive appreciation or respect in their home

countries. Due to this, other prospective students might consider choosing the western Canadian university as their choice study and participate in intercollegiate sports.

Also, recognition for providing diverse or multicultural athletic programs is beneficial to universities' image and reputation. Hirko (2008) pointed out that multicultural sports programs are not only important to students but the university at large. The participants in this study corroborated with Hirko's (2007) findings, as they expressed that the university could be recognized as being inclusive, producing champions and talented athletes. This inclusion could also reflect positively on the school culture and sports culture in the university and intercollegiate sports in Canada.

Marketing. In this global arena, marketing efforts are essential for universities to compete for international students (Chen, 2008). Internationalization also pressures universities to develop new strategies; one strategy suggested by participants in the study was the inclusions of ISAs. Participants in the study explained that ISAs are an essential subgroup of international students that universities can include in their marketing efforts to demonstrate that they have diverse sports teams. To increase the visibility of their sports programs, the university must promote on a broader scale. International students' presence in college athletics can assist the university in engaging in such endeavors. Universities with successful college athletics programs have recognized the need to include international students in their marketing strategies. According to Chen et al. (2010) and Mixon et al. (2004), successful athletic programs have long been used as a marketing strategy to not only attract student-athletes but also generally high-quality students. Therefore, universities must ensure that marketing efforts aimed at attracting international students provide opportunities for both academics, sports, and other social engagement.

Talent Pooling. International students believed that they would benefit from playing

in a team with players with diverse skills and talent if they participate in collegiate sports. This finding indicates that it is valuable in creating teams with diverse groups of student-athletes. In agreement with previous studies, this study found that players from different countries have different skillsets and techniques that they bring to teams and they train together players, and this can be advantageous when playing against others (Grbac, 2014; Hirko, 2007; Thibault, 2009; Weston, 2006). Similarly, Kutintara and Min (2016) expressed that international students studying abroad bring a variety of sporting backgrounds and interests.

Additionally, Bale (1991) and Weston (2006) explained that ISAs help to diversify teams, as well as strengthen and heighten the teams' chances of winning. Talent pooling is valuable, and it has been done in numerous sports realms, such as, in the NCAA, NBA, and various soccer leagues in Europe and the United States. Several participants reiterated the successes of some teams and organizations across the world after they engaged in talent pooling.

The findings also suggest that talent pooling within intercollegiate sports provides notable benefits and success for intercollegiate sports teams. According to the participants, players from different regions have different skills and techniques, which can be advantageous to teams. Hosick (2010) and Weston (2006) are staunch supporters of this idea. They claim that ISAs presence often helps to develop the level of play, facilitates better competition, and increases levels on the playing field in intercollegiate sports. Researchers have found the NCAA has benefited from the presence of international students for many years (Bale, 1991; Weston, 2006). Furthermore, the quality has improved as these students are some of the best athletes from their home countries. Bearing this in mind, the inclusion of ISAs in the western Canadian sports teams and U Sports has potential benefits institutions and the competitions at large.

Skill Development. All the participants expressed the benefits of skill development in sports. They shared that skill development is an interactive exchange where team members can learn from each other. This learning can build team camaraderie as well as help to develop the skills of the players, as also suggested by (Weston, 2006). Some of the international students have raw talent, which needs nurturing to become better players. It was the opinion of the participants in the study that players would develop transitional skills, such as teamwork and leadership, that would help them in their future endeavors. These opinions correspond with the findings of Weaver and Smith (2015) and Rathwell and Young (2018), they indicated that intercollegiate sport provides opportunities for the development of interpersonal, cultural competency, leadership skills, and teamwork skills that are important on or off the field.

Furthermore, the addition of ISAs helps universities and student bodies to build skills to become more culturally competent (Allen et al., 2010; Grbac, 2014; Hirko, 2007). The participants in the study shared this view as well; they expressed that ISAs' presence in intercollegiate sports can increase cultural competency skills that will not only be beneficial on the field but also in the classroom. Scholars such as Hirko (2007) suggested that multicultural programs in higher education include integrating diversity content, providing equitable pedagogy, implementing ways to reduce prejudice, improving cross-cultural understandings, and empowering social structures. This social-cultural exposure through intercollegiate sports may accelerate the breaking down of racial and cultural barriers because of the extended amount of time training and competing with teammates.

Building Relationships. The findings revealed that another benefit of intercollegiate sports is the development of interpersonal and social relationships. Such relationships enable international students to gain a sense of group identity and belonging with their teams (Rathwell & Young, 2018). Moreover, it revealed that these relationships help international

students to adjust and feel accepted based on the connections made between international and domestic students. Ali (2014) supports these findings as they focused on the importance of a sense of belonging and the development of friendship for international students through playing sports. Also, Pierce et al. (2011) explained that friendship and creating social links with others helped international student-athletes to adjust and cope with living or studying abroad. Some of the participants indicated that most of their friendships developed based on playing sports and forming bonds with other players, as opposed to friendships developed with colleagues in their academic programs. Kang (2014) and Rathwell and Young (2018) also highlighted that social links are created and fostered through interpersonal relationships, which build bonds and a vehicle for participating students to overcome challenges. Intercollegiate sports aid the transition throughout their university years. One of the participants expressed that they develop stronger bonds with teammates; they are all passionate about the same sports and have a sense of belonging with teammates.

Participants expressed that networking for international students goes beyond intercollegiate sports. Networking creates an avenue for potential business opportunities, getting recommendations, or getting job opportunities in their respective fields of study. The findings are supported by Rathwell and Young (2018), who focused on the importance of making connections with others through their involvement in intercollegiate sports in Canada. This factor further highlights the current and future positive impacts of building relationships with others as student-athletes.

The findings on benefits denote that international students believe that they can gain a lot from participation in intercollegiate sports. Likewise, the university can benefit from the inclusion of more international students in their programs. International students have the potential to increase the social and cultural diversity of university populations; these cross-cultural exchanges can improve the learning environment and help domestic students to

develop relevant intercultural experience and other skills related to professional development. These skills are both beneficial in the classroom and sports.

One of the assumptions of the study was that it is necessary to include international students in intercollegiate sports in Canada. This section, along with supporting literature emphasized the advantages and benefits of adding more ISAs. Therefore, having a better understanding of these results. It is implied that the amount of benefit attainable influences the participation of international students in intercollegiate sports.

Challenges for International Students

The theme, challenges for international students, addresses research question four (4), which was to determine the hindering factors that affect international students' participation in intercollegiate sports. As indicated by Crawford and Godbey's (1987) Leisure constraint theory, the reason for the lack of participation in sports and leisure could be categorized as structural constraints, interpersonal, and intrapersonal constraints. Participants identified several constraints, including financial challenges, time constraints, academic workload, lack of awareness, recruitment, and parental influence.

Financial Challenges. Structural factors such as money and other financial issues were also identified as barriers by the participants in the study. As stated, international students have higher tuition and student fees than domestic students, and due to this, studying abroad is considerably more expensive than studying in their home countries. This results in financial challenges, which reoccurred as the most dominant constraints faced by international students. Previous studies have highlighted that most countries and governments have entered internationalization due to economic benefits that international students provide (Anderson, 2015; Macready & Tucker, 2011; Sa & Sabzaleiva, 2018). While this is true, the majority of the participants expressed that contrary to popular belief, most international students are not financially stable and are from poorer backgrounds. International students

usually get support from family back home, but it is usually not enough to cover all their expenses. As a result, international students often work to maintain themselves. Due to the cost associated with universities abroad, international students prefer to work and participate in recreational activities rather than spending all their efforts to participate in intercollegiate sports.

On one hand, the findings revealed that these financial constraints could be minimized with the provision of funding, such as scholarships, grants, and other incentives. In line with other studies, the participants highlighted that the scholarships for international students are scarce and inadequate in the U Sports (Geiger, 2013; Grbac, 2014; Miller & Gretchen, 2003; Won, 2017). Participants pointed out that tuition fees are significantly higher for international students; these students pay up to 20,000 a year at the western Canadian university. Past students have also reported that Canadian Athletic Financial Awards (AFA) amount to about 1,500 to 4,000 CAD (Ainsworth-Vincze, 2007; Miller & Gretchen, 2003; Won, 2017). Scholarships compared with tuition fees are extreme, and international students would still face financial challenges.

Time Constraints. From the results, it was clear that time was a momentous structural constraint for intercollegiate sports participation. Past studies on constraints sports participation on international students found that demands and expectations of being both a student and an athlete results in them having limited time for other activities (Cho & Price, 2016; Shifman et al., 2012). Moreover, many international students need time to balance employment and academics. Research indicates that students find it challenging to participate in intercollegiate sports due to their workload and the time that must be expended to properly train and commit to sports (Cho & Price, 2016). Intercollegiate sports demand a significant amount of time for training, traveling, and competing, which international students cannot afford.

Another concern my participants shared was that it was particularly challenging for them to balance their lives and perform well academically while remaining committed to a sporting endeavor. Participants also dealt with the challenge of upholding their academic eligibility in Canada and graduating on time. In the constraints-effects mitigation model developed by Hubbard and Mannell (2001), they explained that negotiation skills and motivation are essential in reducing time constraints. When individuals want to do something, they will take the necessary steps to overcome challenges. They also suggested asking for help and managing time properly will help to reduce this constraint. Rathwell and Young (2018) reported mixed responses from the participants in their Canadian study about such time constraints. Some participants shared that student-athletes had difficulties with time management, but others coped with such demands because they practiced prioritizing, stress management, and goal-setting skills. Even so, many international students explained that time limitations are barriers to participate in intercollegiate sports.

Academic Workload. Another structural constraint revealed by the study was the pressures of academic workload. The study showed that the participants had a high volume of assignments both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Due to the number of assignments, it was often challenging for them to multitask. One participant explained given the academic workload, and it is often challenging to be student and athlete. My study was not the first study in Canada to highlight the negative impacts of participating in intercollegiate sports. Rathwell and Young (2018) also found similar results in their research as students found it challenging to manage assignments with commitments of being a student-athlete. My study also found that international students are also affected by such challenges. Similar studies mentioned that academic workload was a significant structural constraint, as student-athletes found it hard to balance schoolwork and participation in leisure activities (Cho & Price, 2016; Polman & Moore, 2011).

The participants in the study revealed that they would love to participate in college sports but have prioritized their academic endeavors. The extra responsibilities associated with being ISA posed a significant challenge. These findings indicate that the primary goal of most international students is to pursue their academics rather than intercollegiate sports.

Lack of Awareness. The study reveals that limited awareness and knowledge are constraints to sports participation. Many participants in the study reported that they were not knowledgeable about the intercollegiate sporting opportunities before they became students. As aforementioned, only two students were aware of intercollegiate sports in Canada. Most of the participants in the study were unfamiliar with U Sports. This finding corresponds with a study done on U Sports (then referred to as CIS) by Grbac (2014), who also found that most international students did not know about U Sports or intercollegiate sports in Canada. Grbac (2014) also highlighted that the U Sports hinted about its relaunch in 2017, which they have since done. The findings of my study suggest that much has not changed since the new initiative and policies were reformed. Participants shared that U Sports is still unknown to most international students, and students lack awareness of it on a large scale.

Although the lack of awareness about sporting opportunities could be a structural constraint, it can also be classified as an intrapersonal constraint. Being uninformed of available sporting opportunities can restrict the participation of individuals. Hashim (2012) found that due to the information gap, several talented students do not participate in intercollegiate sports. He further explained that a consequence of this is that many talented students are not targeted. Therefore, knowledge is needed for people to make decisions. Participants exclaimed that if they lack knowledge about intercollegiate sports, they will miss opportunities to become members of teams or support the events as fans. Hence, if the information is not accessible or promoted well, international students will not be privy to these opportunities.

Recruitment Practices. The reports that recruitment practices were impediments to sports participation. The recruitment of international students has been a significant practice not only in the United States but in other countries with similar programs (Jara, 2015; Zonder, 2013). In addition to the recruitment program being expensive, Geiger (2013) stated that many Canadian universities struggle to fund their sports program. The western Canadian university has done a commendable job of recruiting international students to boost their internationalization efforts and their academics. In the area of athletics, however, the effort made by the university has been minimal. Only a few researchers have explored or investigated the recruitment of international students in Canada. According to Grbac (2014), less than 600 students in U Sports were international students; in the case of this institution, less than 5 % of their student-athletes were international students. Like participants in my study, Hong (2018) and Grbac (2014) believe that Canada has suffered from the loss of top athletes because of inadequate recruitment efforts.

Participants in the study expressed that their institution could be at a disadvantage because coaches are not recruiting effectively and may have overlooked talented international athletes. Recruitment of ISAs can help to increase the university's popularity, increase revenue through viewership, and boost the sports program (Grbac, 2014; Jara, 2015; Zonder, 2013). The participants highlight the idea that overseas recruitment can be expensive; this finding is supported by Jara (2015), who also expressed that the recruitment of ISAs is often costly. To reduce cost, the participants in my study expressed that recruiting existing international students on their campus is a viable alternative. This option is said to be feasible because they believe that talented athletes, who are playing in intramural games and city leagues, attend this institution. Recruiting these students could potentially add value to the sports teams of the university. Hence, intramural events could be explored as a recruitment source for coaches to scout prospective talent.

Parental Influence. The study found that parental influence was a hindrance to sports participation. Most of the participants revealed that their parents had a significant impact on their university-related choices, such as their academic and career endeavors. For example, some parents might foresee intercollegiate sports as a hindrance that can affect their children's academic performances and, as a result, might not permit them to participate. Therefore, parents might pressure their children to prioritize academics and to complete their studies on time rather than to partake in demanding activities that may not be viewed as essential to their education and future endeavors.

Climate. Climate condition was a significant factor that was present in the literature on structural constraints but was surprisingly not reported as a constraint or barrier by the participants. All participants in the study were from regions with warmer climates. Hence, I anticipated that this could be a potential barrier or hindrance to their participation in intercollegiate sports. However, contrary to the literature, my study showed that climate was not significant to participation. This new perspective could be due to improved awareness and information available on the internet about living in Canada. This finding also implies that students are adjusting well to their new environments and climatic conditions.

In summary, participants expressed a willingness to participate in intercollegiate sports when responding to questions about perceptions, motivations, and benefits. However, when responding to questions on constraints, they shared stories of the limitations associated with participating in intercollegiate sports. Although they shared information on interpersonal and intrapersonal constraints, they seem to be more significantly affected by structural constraints.

Reconceptualization

A variety of factors influence international students' participation in intercollegiate sports. The motivations are those pull factors that may encourage participation, and the

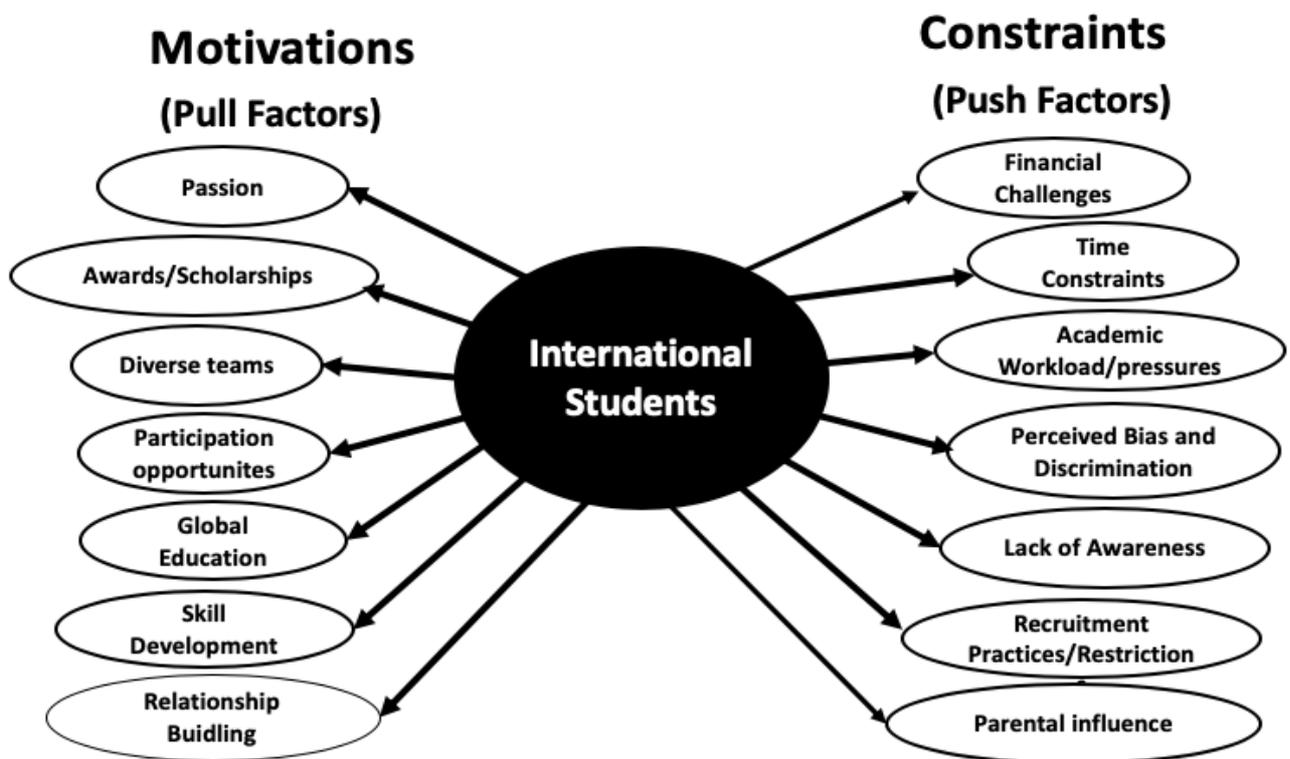
constraints are those push factors that could deter participation. This reconceptualized model was developed based on a combination of factors found in previous literature, and others found in this case study to explain factors that contribute to international students' participation in intercollegiate sports. The model below is not linear as international students may still experience positive motivation and opt-out of participation and also have limitations but choose to pursue intercollegiate sports. Mthethwa's (2017) Motives and Constraints model presented in Chapter two did focus solely on international students. This model, however, creates a more explicit depiction of what my participants in the study experienced as international students. Those factors or findings are not unique to international students; international students are seen as a more vulnerable group. International students are more susceptible because they are living abroad, have restrictions from an immigration and university standpoint, and those international students interested in intercollegiate sports may face restrictions from sports organizations such as U Sports.

The motivational factors found in this study corroborated the literature. Examples of these include awards and scholarships, friendship building, skill development, and diversity (diverse teams). Mthethwa (2017) suggested that coaches are instrumental in the acquisition and motivation of students. However, in this case study, participants perceived coaching practices and behaviors as unfavorable, and therefore there has been a shift from coaches being motivators to a constraint. The model now includes the opportunity to participate as a motivational factor, not only to compete but to learn skills from teams and work in a skillful talent pool of student-athletes from varying sports backgrounds. The opportunity to participate in sports while earning a global degree are motivational push factors for international students. Passion emerged as a significant motivational factor and driving force for international students to participate in intercollegiate sports.

Constraining factors such as time constraints, financial challenges, academic constraints, and lack of information or awareness reoccurred as they did in previous literature. In this reconceptualized model, factors such as perceived bias and discrimination concerning coaches, parental influence, recruitment practices, and restrictions were included as constraints. These were significant constraints that were seen to have affected the level of international students' participation in intercollegiate sports in this study. In the Mthethwa's (2017) model, factors such a climate was seen as a substantial deterrent to sports participation; however, this was not mentioned in this case study.

Figure 5.1

Reconceptualized model of factors influencing international students' participation in intercollegiate sports.



Note: This framework shows the motivating and constraining factors influencing intercollegiate sports participation by international students.

Conclusion

With limited research in the Canadian context on international student-athletes, my study serves to contribute to filling the knowledge gap. This study sought to explore the factors influencing international students' participation in intercollegiate sports in western Canada. The focus of the research was based on identifying those motivational and constraining factors that help international students in their decisions on whether to participate in intercollegiate sports. International students in the case study, constructed or made sense of their experience of intercollegiate sports in similar and different ways. Their insights suggest there are many factors related to perceptions, motivation, benefits, and challenges that may have contributed to the limited presence of ISAs in Canadian intercollegiate sports. Again, the aim of this study was not to generalize but to make inferences to this particular issue related to international students at the western Canadian university that was studied.

Firstly, the findings show that while international students were highly motivated to participate in sports and believe that they could contribute meaningfully to the sports program, they are often experience many challenges. They are motivated to participate in intercollegiate sports because they are passionate about sports and found that their participation can be beneficial to not only themselves but also domestic students and the university overall. On the downside, the study reveals that international students are significantly impacted by structural constraints such as time commitments, lack of financial assistance, and academic pressures. These constraints impede or hinder their desire to represent the university.

Secondly, the results illustrate that there is a relationship between international students' motivation to participate in intercollegiate sports and the perceived benefits of being student-athletes in Canada. For instance, international students prioritize academics but are

passionate about participating in sports. Besides, the participants expressed concerns about the constraints to sports participation. For them, if the benefits of participation superseded the constraints to participation, they would be more likely to be ISAs. However, if the challenges outweighed the benefits, they were less likely to be ISAs. Therefore, universities should consider these factors and devise plans that would help to minimize challenges, such as providing incentives, grants, or scholarships that would reduce their financial difficulties significantly.

Thirdly, participants highlighted the positive and negative perceptions of intercollegiate sports, which impacts decisions. The study also reveals that international students perceived that participation in intercollegiate sports benefits their personal growth, academic performance, and non-academic aspects of their post-secondary experiences. In alignment with negative perceptions, my participants expressed concerns about the perceived discrimination in the selection of student-athletes and the lack of diversity in the sports program. The comparative case analysis of both international students who tried out and those who didn't try out for intercollegiate sports reveal similar negative perceptions of this sport program. These factors may contribute to the limited participation of international students in intercollegiate sports.

The motivations and constraints experienced by international students may not be unique to them. However, I chose to focus on them because the circumstances around studying and participating in sports in a new country might be challenging. All students face challenges, but for international students, these difficulties may be frequently encountered, given that they are in a new environment.

The findings also suggest that while the university has done considerably well with integrating international students in their academic programs, these efforts have not achieved similar results in intercollegiate sports. From the study, it was evident that more can be done

to integrate international students in these programs. Additionally, inclusive efforts focusing on diversity should be visible in all aspects of the university, not only in the classrooms but also in social settings such as college athletics. Such visibility can help the university and athletics department to promote an equitable and fair environment where international students and others, in general, can feel a sense of belonging. Creating inclusive environments with students of different backgrounds, cultures, languages, beliefs, races, and ethnicities will inevitably have positive impacts on domestic and international students ranging from academic, social, and professional development. It is advantageous for all students to study, learn, and participate in social activities in diverse settings. Fair, equitable, and inclusive sports programs will help universities to identify, understand, tackle and eradicate discrimination, biases, and other negative influences that limit students from growing and learning, so they may fully contribute to society.

Implications

After conducting my study, findings were synthesized to uncover key themes and factors influencing international students' participation in intercollegiate sports. The findings can bring implications for theory, practice, and future research.

Implications for Theory

The findings of this research build on the push-pull motivation theory, which is often used by scholars in higher education to examine the global movement of international students. The research findings suggest that potential international student-athletes (ISAs) have similar motivation to international students considered within past studies. Similarly, the findings in this research demonstrate the applicability of leisure constraints theories in a new context. That is, understanding the experiences of those international students who may want to become student-athletes in Canada.

However, theories used in this research and others have not adequately explained the factors, such as lack of diversity, financial challenges, passion, ageism, lack of awareness and parental influence that contribute to these students' various experiences in the Canadian context (Grbac, 2014; Polman & Moore, 2011; Shifman et al., 2012). This study raises an issue of the necessity of a new theory that can fully explicate the experiences, motivations, and constraints of ISAs in Canada.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study suggest several practical applications for educational administrators, sports administrators, and coaches. International students' understanding and experiences can impact future enrollment trends of not only international students but also international student-athletes. Educational administrators who become aware of these influential factors will be able to adopt policies that are flexible and that support international students to study and participate in intercollegiate sports at the same time. Furthermore, educational administrators and athletic administrators can work in tandem to improve the student body experience, particularly for international students who face unique challenges.

Also, the information generated in this research can be of value to individual sports administrators and the U Sports officials. International students are choosing to study abroad based on the opportunities available to them to develop academically and athletically. With the advent of internationalization and globalization, a growing number of international students has started to choose Canada to further their tertiary education. Moreover, Clemenccon's (2014) and Grbac's (2014) studies also confirmed the ISAs are also scoping out sporting opportunities in Canada as well. Therefore, more effort should be channeled to the recruitment of ISAs.

Additionally, the results reveal that while there are positive attributes and perceptions of intercollegiate sports at the western Canadian university, more needs to be done to eliminate

or minimize the perceived negative views of international students. One way to achieve this is by conducting and operating sports programs in such a way that team selections and practices reduce the idea that preference and prejudice exist. Using such qualitative data generated from this study can help guide decision-making, institutional programming, and strategic policy development.

Implications for Research

Intercollegiate sports in Canada has not garnered much attention as the United States, despite being in existence for more than 100 years (Kim & Love, 2011). Over the years, the college athletes in Canada who participate in national competitions such as the U Sports have exhibited quality in terms of skills and performance. As a result, researchers explain that intercollegiate sports in Canada have the potential to gain prominence globally, like their counterpart, the NCAA. However, they need to increase their international appeal to attract prospective student-athletes from across the world (Clemencon, 2014; Grbac, 2014; Rathwell & Young, 2018). With a worldwide appeal, international students will become more aware of these opportunities in Canada. Research on the presence of ISAs in intercollegiate athletics in Canadian higher education institutions remains relatively limited in comparison to the other international students (students who are solely in Canada to study). Therefore, this study concludes that more research needs to be done in this area. To date, ISAs remains a relatively unknown subgroup of international students in higher education in Canada, as most of the literature only focuses on international students' academic experiences and adjustment (Clemencon, 2014; Grbac, 2014).

This research does, however, offer various avenues of entry to study further. I also hope that my efforts can help to fill the gaps and provide a more in-depth understanding of issues related to ISAs in Canada. For example, a comparative cross-university utilizing this framework could be informative as all the participants came from a single western Canadian

university. Consequently, more comparative studies are needed across different universities in Canada to compare the views and experiences of international students. Future researchers could also use a quantitative approach to ascertain information on the number of international student-athletes who are currently participating in the U Sports competitions. By doing this, it would be easier to track the number of ISAs that have gone through the intercollegiate sports system.

Another area that future researchers should consider is the level of awareness about Canadian intercollegiate sports on a global scale or amongst the international students' population across universities in Canada. More than half of the participants in my study were not aware of intercollegiate sports or U Sports prior to their arrival in Canada, and the literature reviewed in Chapter two supports the lack of research in this area. Therefore, future research could conduct a quantitative study focusing on the level of awareness by international students and how their awareness impacts their decisions to participate in intercollegiate sports in Canada.

Recommendations

This study was conducted in western Canada and is essential because it adds to the limited literature available regarding intercollegiate sports in Canada. This research provides insights into factors that influence international students' participation in collegiate sports in Canada. Based on the findings of this research, I listed recommendations that could help the university in addressing issues related to intercollegiate sports at the western Canadian university.

- 1) University administrators should take advantage of all the opportunities available to advertise and bring awareness to their academic and social programs. For example, international/overseas expositions. These expositions are great avenues to create future awareness of the sports programs to prospective international students.

Representatives and administrators could provide students with information about intercollegiate sporting opportunities in Canada, relevant contact information, and websites where other pertinent information can be found.

- 2) Overall, the research participants expressed satisfaction with the efforts made and support provided by the university to ensure that international students have valuable post-secondary experiences. For example, the international students' office at the western Canadian university often organizes events where international students are given the opportunity to watch intercollegiate games on the university grounds. While these efforts are commendable, participants believed that the office should consider expanding that services towards supporting international students who show interest in intercollegiate sports. This service could facilitate smooth communication between the interested students and the sports administrators and coaches on issues, such as recruitment, tryout dates, scholarships, and other relevant information. This action could also help with the recruitment of international student-athletes.
- 3) There is a need for an international students' sports representative at the western Canadian university that would be in charge of bridging the gap between international students and the university administrators, sports administrators, campus recreation coordinators, and coaches. General duties could include providing support and information to international students about sporting opportunities, whether intercollegiate or intramural games, their issues, and other concerns. This representative could also help in the recruitment of international student-athletes.
- 4) From my experience in Jamaica and being involved in sports at all levels of my academic life, I have observed used by tactics used by coaches to scout or recruit student-athletes. During my undergraduate years in Jamaica, coaches would often recruit students for their sports teams by attending intramural games or sports days to

identify potential athletes. Intramural games offer an opportunity for all students to gain exposure and showcase talent in their various sports (McClellan et al., 2012; Shifman et al., 2015; Ward, 2015). Coaches can use the opportunity to view matches and scope out the talent. This way, the coaches can also be visible and more involved with students. They can engage with prospective student-athletes and offer them the chance to try out or train with the team. This practice could also create a new line or a direct line of communication and information transfer between prospective ISAs and coaches. Recruiting within the university can also help universities to cut the cost of overseas recruitment and travel expenses associated with such activities.

- 5) The study revealed that to a large extent, international student-athletes need financial assistance to study abroad while participating in intercollegiate sports (Geiger, 2013; Grbac, 2014, Love & Kim, 2011; Popp et al., 2011). Bearing in mind that some international students may struggle with having to pay higher tuition fees, coaches, and sports administrators could offer a scholarship or grant to student-athletes. Financial awards or stipends will assist international students who desire to study and participate in sports abroad to take advantage of such opportunities offered to them.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Course Certificate of Completion

**PANEL ON
RESEARCH ETHICS**
Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE



Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Marsha-Ree Lawrence

*has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement:
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)*

Date of Issue: **3 April, 2018**

Appendix B: Certificate of Approval



UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN

Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) 10-Jul-2019

Certificate of Approval

Application ID: 1260

Principal Investigator: Janet Okoko

Department: Department of Educational
Administration

Locations Where Research

Activities are Conducted: This research will be conducted on the ██████████ Campus grounds,
Canada

Student(s): Marsha-Ree Lawrence

Funder(s):

Sponsor:

Title: Factors Hindering International Students Participation in Intercollegiate Sports

Approved On: 10/07/2019

Expiry Date: 09/07/2020

Approval Of: Behavioural Research Ethics Application

Letters of Invitation

Consent Forms (interview and focus group)

Interview Questions

Focus group questions

Transcript Release Form

Acknowledgment Of:

Review Type: Delegated Review

CERTIFICATION

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2 2014). The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this project, and for ensuring that the authorized project is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month prior to the current expiry date each year the project remains open, and upon project completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: <https://vpresearch.usask.ca/researchers/forms.php>.

*Digitally Approved by Patricia Simonson, Vice Chair
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
University of Saskatchewan*

Appendix C



Department of Educational Administration

University of Saskatchewan

Email to the Campus Recreation Coordinator

Good afternoon, my name is Marsha-Ree Lawrence, and I am a master's student in the Department of Educational Administration studying under the supervision of Dr. Janet Okoko. I am requesting permission to recruit potential participants for my study titled "Factors Influencing The Representation of International Students in Intercollegiate Sports." The purpose of this present research is to explore and provide a deeper understanding of the factors influencing international students' participation in intercollegiate sports.

I was informed earlier this year by the Campus Recreation Coordinator that due to privacy constraints and restrictions, the names and email addresses of students who participate in intramural events are not accessible to the public. I was also informed that there is no distinction between international students and domestic students in the system. Your permission granted would allow access to interact with the students and introduce my research with your consent.

There is a growing body of international students on campus, and their perspectives about the factors that influence international students' non-participation in intercollegiate sports need to be heard. These students have in-depth knowledge and can inform the institution on their motivations, constraints, and the benefits they can bring the university's sports program. Considering this, I am seeking permission to recruit and hand out my letter of invitation at the intramural events organized by Campus Recreation. I will be recruiting students who meet the following selection criteria:

- Student who neither hold Canadian citizenship nor permanent residency status.
- International students who are actively involved in recreational competitions either on or off campus.
- Students who participate in recreational/competitive sports on and off campus but were not currently members of this institution intercollegiate team.

Please see the attached Letter of Invitation for more details about this research. If you require any more information regarding this research, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor Dr. Janet Okoko. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding this research may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975.

Thank you

Marsha-Ree Lawrence

Appendix D



Department of Educational Administration

University of Saskatchewan

INVITATION TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear ()

My name is Marsha-Ree Lawrence. I am a master's student in the Department of Educational Administration in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. I am conducting a research titled "Factors Influencing The Representation of International Students in Intercollegiate Sports." The purpose of this research is to explore and provide a deeper understanding of the factors influencing international students' participation in intercollegiate sports. This research is guided by the following questions:

- What are the international students' perceptions of the current state of intercollegiate sports?
- What motivates international students to participate in intercollegiate sports?
- What are the benefits of international students' participation in intercollegiate sports?
- What are the factors hindering international students' participation in intercollegiate sports?

The selection criteria of the research require the participants to be:

- Student who neither hold Canadian citizenship nor permanent residency status.
- International students who are actively involved in recreational competitions either on or off campus.
- Students who participate in recreational/competitive sports on and off campus but were not currently members of this institution intercollegiate team.

If you agree to participate in this research, you will be guided through an informed consent process. The process will provide you with information about the voluntary nature of your participation and your rights as a participant. You will then be required to sign the informed consent form and participate in an interview and a focus group discussion. Each interview will take about 60 minutes and will be audio recorded with your permission. You will also be asked to participate in a follow-up focus group discussion that will last about 90 minutes. The interview and focus group discussion will be carried out at a safe and convenient location for both you and me (the researcher).

There is no incorrect answer to the questions that you will respond to during the research. What is essential is your opinion. Again, participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw from the research at any time or refuse to respond to questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. All data collected from you will be kept private and confidential. Under no circumstances will your details be passed on

to any organization or company. This research is for academic purposes only and is not associated with the government.

If you have any further questions about the research, please feel free to contact my supervisor Janet Okoko via email at janet.okoko@usask.ca or phone 306-966-7611 or me via email at msl317@usask.ca.

I would also like to seek your assistance in recruiting participants for the study. If you know of any other international students who meet the criteria of this research and would be interested in the study, please pass on this letter to them for consideration.

Thank you for considering this research opportunity.

Regards

Marsha-Ree Lawrence

Appendix E



Department of Educational Administration

University of Saskatchewan

Interview Consent Form

Research Title: Factors Influencing The Representation of International Students in Intercollegiate Sports.

Researcher: I am Marsha-Ree Lawrence; M.Ed. student, in the Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, (306) 881-6001, email: msl317@usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Janet Mola Okoko, Assistant Professor at Educational Administration Department University of Saskatchewan, email: janet.okoko@usask.ca or phone 306-966-7611

Dear Participant: You are invited to participate in an interview.

The purpose of this present research is to explore and provide a deeper understanding of the factors influencing international students' participation in intercollegiate sports. I aim to generate new knowledge about your experiences and thoughts about sports and why international students are not significantly represented in intercollegiate sports. The number of international students at the western Canadian institution has increased significantly over the past five years. However, there is a disproportional ratio of their visibility in academics and intercollegiate sports. International students' inclusion in intercollegiate sports has potential benefits to both the institutions and the students in general. During the interview, you will be asked questions about your feelings, perception, benefits of engagement, constraints, and motivation as it relates to sports participation at the collegiate level.

I will be collecting data using semi-structured individual interviews with selected participants. Interviews will last approximately 60 minutes. Your participation in this study

will involve answering a prepared set of open-ended questions about your thoughts and feelings about the factors that may influence your decision, as an international student to not participate in intercollegiate sports. Introductory questions will be asked to gather background information about the participants. Such questions will aid in giving context to responses given.

The University of Saskatchewan requires that all research conducted by its members conform to the highest ethical standards. The purpose of this consent form is to ensure that the interviewee has carefully read and understood the purpose of their involvement in the study. The interview will be conducted and transcribed by the researcher (Marsha-Ree Lawrence). With your permission, the entire interview will be audio-recorded, to produce a transcript. However, the audio recording device will be turned off at any time on the interviewee's request without any reason.

Confidentiality and Data Security: All information you provide in this study is considered confidential. Your name will not appear in the final report or any publication resulting from this study; however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. In the case of quotation, the participant(s) will be referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on.

The data collection process, analysis, and report will adhere to the University of Saskatchewan ethical guidelines. The notes and audio recordings collected during the discussion sessions will be transcribed or written up and saved safely on the University of Saskatchewan secure Cabinet. A copy of the de-identified data will be backed up in PAWS. After the data has been analyzed, it will be stored safely in a locked cabinet, designed and maintained for this purpose, in a designated office in the University of Saskatchewan. Only the Principal investigator (Dr. Janet Mola Okoko) has the key to the file cabinet. It will then be destroyed after five years.

Potential Risks and Benefits: This is a minimal risk research. This research will be conducted respectfully. Furthermore, you are permitted to answer only those questions you are comfortable with. However, if you experience any form of distress, I will refer you to the Students Wellness Center. This office phone number is 306-966-5768 or email at student.wellness@usask.ca.

The study has the following potential benefits;

Firstly, it will help to increase the awareness and the importance of the inclusion or addition of international students in intercollegiate sports. This awareness may lead to practical actions adopted by universities to try to increase and develop international students' participation in intercollegiate sports. These actions could consequently promote the fulfillment of their potential and their full participation within the university that could contribute to the success of this institution.

Participant Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and you can participate in only those discussions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, without explanation or penalty of any sort. If you decide to withdraw from the study, all information provided by you will be destroyed and will not be used in the research or publication. However, this will apply only before you review and sign the transcript release form.

Your participation or non-participation will not affect your enrolment, standing at the University, or how they will be treated.

Once the interviews are completed, a transcript and an update of data collected will be issued to the participant. The purpose of this to ensure that the participant has been represented accurately. After completion, you will be given time read, member check and sign a release form. By completing and signing the transcript release form, you will be indicating that you have completed the review of your transcripts and have given permission for it to be used in the data analysis. The data collected from you will not be used if this form has not been reviewed and signed. Once the transcript release form has been signed, data analysis will commence immediately. After the period of engagement is complete, you can no longer withdraw or revise the data.

By signing this form, I consent to the following that;

Participant Statement

- My participation in the interview is entirely voluntary, and I reserve the right to withdraw at any time.
- I have read and understood the information sheet.
- I do not expect to receive any form of payment or benefit for my participation

- I have had an opportunity to ask questions, and my questions have been answered.
- A copy of this Consent form has been given to me for my records.
- I agree with the use of direct quotes bearing my pseudonym in publications
- I am aware that this consent form will be stored separately from the data.

Questions or Concerns: For any question and concerns Please feel free to contact the student researcher via email at msl317@usask.ca or supervisor via email janet.okoko@usask.ca or by phone 306-966-7611

This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

Signed Consent

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the description of the project.

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
<i>Researcher's Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>	

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher (Marsha-Ree Lawrence)

Appendix F

Interview Questions for participants.

- 1) Tell me about your background
Age (optional)
Country of Origin
Year of Study
Course of Study
Highest Level of sports played (High school, University, Community, National, Club, other)
- 2) Why did you decide to come to this institution? (Probe for academics, cost, sports, other)
- 3) What motivates you to play sports?
- 4) Where do you usually play sports?
 - 4b) What are the reasons for your preference?
 - 4c) How often do you play sports in a week?
- 5) How do you balance school and other aspects of life such as playing sports and working?
- 6) Do you know about the U Sports organization?
 - 6b) If yes, how did you find out about it?
- 7) Were you aware of the university's intercollegiate sports program before enrolling in the university?
 - 7b) How did you find out about it?
- 8) What is your perception of the university intercollegiate sports program?
- 9) Have you ever considered trying out for the university's intercollegiate team?
- 10) What do you believe are some of the benefits of playing intercollegiate sports as international students?

- 11) What are the possible benefits of including international students in this university's intercollegiate sports program?
- 12) What do you think are some of the challenges faced by international students that may influence their decision to participate in sports?

Appendix G



Department of Educational Administration University of Saskatchewan

Focus Group Consent Form

Research title: Factors Influencing The Representation of International Students in Intercollegiate Sports.

Researcher: I am Marsha-Ree Lawrence; M.Ed. student, in the Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, Email: msl317@usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Janet Okoko, Assistant Professor at Educational Administration Department University of Saskatchewan, Email: janet.okoko@usask.ca or by phone 306-966-7611.

Introduction: The purpose of this present research is to explore and provide a deeper understanding of the factors influencing international students' participation in intercollegiate sports. Also, this research aims to generate new knowledge about your experiences and thoughts about sports and why international students are not significantly represented in intercollegiate sports.

The discussions in this focus group are centered on your perception of the factors that hinder decision making as it related to participation in intercollegiate sports. A focus group discussion is a type of data collection method in which a moderator moderates a small group to understand the views of member regarding a specific topic. This session is scheduled to last for 90 minutes and will be moderated by the student researcher (Marsha-Ree Lawrence). The entire discussion will be audio-recorded and transcribed for purposes of analysis.

The University of Saskatchewan requires that all research conducted by its members conform to the highest ethical standards. The views and comments shared during this discussion should be kept in the strictest confidence by all participants. Your responses will only be shared with my supervisor and will be combined with other participants' responses in the study. This consent form is to ensure that participation is voluntary and that you have carefully read and understood the purpose of your involvement in this research. A copy of the form will also be left with you so that you can be reminded of what we discussed.

Potential Risks and Benefits: Firstly, this research will be conducted respectfully. Furthermore, participants are permitted to answer only those questions they are comfortable with. However, if you experience any form of distress, I will refer you to the Students Wellness Center. The service is one that is covered under students' health insurance and will not incur a fee. The office phone number is 306-966-5768 or email at student.wellness@usask.ca.

Secondly, participants in the focus groups may respond to each other in ways that are frustrating for other participants. To ensure this risk is properly mitigated and minimized the researcher (moderator) will ensure that everyone is respected. The participant(s) will be encouraged to talk one at a time and not debate.

The study has the following potential benefits:

Firstly, it will help to increase the awareness and the importance of the inclusion or addition of international students in intercollegiate sports. This awareness may lead to practical actions adopted by universities to try to increase and develop international students' participation in intercollegiate sports. These actions could consequently promote the fulfillment of their potential and their full participation within the university that could contribute to the success of this institution.

Confidentiality and Data Security: The researcher will undertake to safeguard the confidentiality of the discussion but cannot guarantee confidentiality due to the nature of a focus group discussion. Nevertheless, participants are required to respect the confidentiality of the other members of the group by not disclosing the contents of this discussion outside the group and be aware that others may not respect their confidentiality.

All information you provide in this study is considered confidential. Your name will not appear in the final report or any publication resulting from this study; however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. In the case of quotation, the participant(s) will be referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on.

The data collection process, analysis, and report will adhere to the University of Saskatchewan ethical guidelines. The notes and recordings taken during the discussion sessions will be transcribed or written up and saved safely on the University of Saskatchewan secure Cabinet. A copy of the de-identified data will be backed up in PAWS. After the data has been analyzed, it will be stored safely in a locked cabinet, designed and maintained for this purpose, in a designated office in the University of Saskatchewan. Only the Principal investigator (Dr. Janet Mola Okoko) has the key to the file cabinet. It will then be destroyed after five years.

Participant Right to Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary, and you can participate in only those discussions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, without explanation or penalty of any sort. Should you wish to

withdraw, you may leave the focus group meeting at any time; however, data that have already been collected cannot be withdrawn as it forms part of the context for information provided by other participants.

Your participation or non-participation will not affect your enrolment, standing at the University, or how they will be treated.

Once the focus group discussion is completed, a transcript and an update of data collected will be issued to the participant. The purpose of this to ensure that the participant has been represented accurately. After completion, you will be given time read, member check and sign a release form. By completing and signing the transcript release form, you will be indicating that you have completed the review of your transcripts and have given permission for it to be used in the data analysis. The data collected from you will not be used if this form has not been reviewed and signed. Once the transcript release form has been signed, data analysis will commence immediately. After the period of engagement is completed, the participant will no longer be able to withdraw or revise the data.

Follow up: The final research results will be sent to the participant at his/her request.

Questions or Concerns: For any question and concerns Please feel free to contact the student researcher at m1317@usask.ca or supervisor janet.okoko@usask.ca or by phone 306-966-7611. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town, participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

The Participant:

- I agree to participate in the focus group discussion on factor influencing the representation of international students' in intercollegiate sports.
- I have been made aware of the topics to be discussed in this focus group session.
- I am aware that my information will remain confidential throughout data reported and that I have the right to leave the focus group at any point.
- I am fully aware that the data collected will be securely stored safely
- I am fully aware that I am not compelled to answer any question or partake in a discussion, but that I do so at my own free will.
- I agree to have the focus group recorded. I am aware of my right to revise the transcript containing the contributions I made in the focus group. A period of three days will be given for me to read and sign the release form. Once the release form has been signed, a further revision of the transcript is not possible.

- I am fully aware that anything discussed in this focus group and the identities of participants must remain confidential.
- I am aware that this consent form will be stored separately from the data.

Signed Consent

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the description of the project.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions, and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Researcher's Signature	Date	
_____	_____	

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher (Marsha-Ree Lawrence)

Appendix H

TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM

Research Title: Factors Influencing The Representation of International Students in Intercollegiate Sports.

Please select one appropriate statement:

I, _____,

- have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Marsha-Ree Lawrence. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Marsha-Ree Lawrence to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

- decline to review the transcript. However, I authorize the release of this transcript to Marsha-Ree Lawrence to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form.

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
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Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
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