



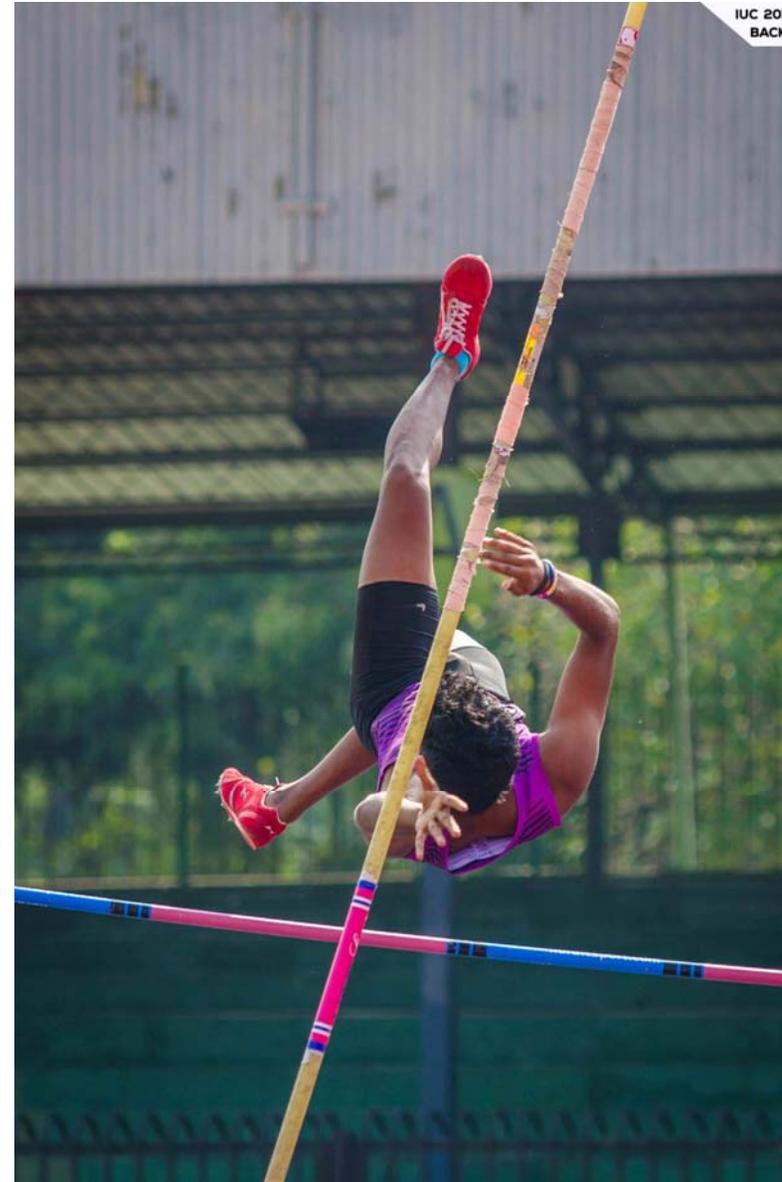
Work Hard or Play Hard?

The Tale of the Sri Lankan Student-athletes

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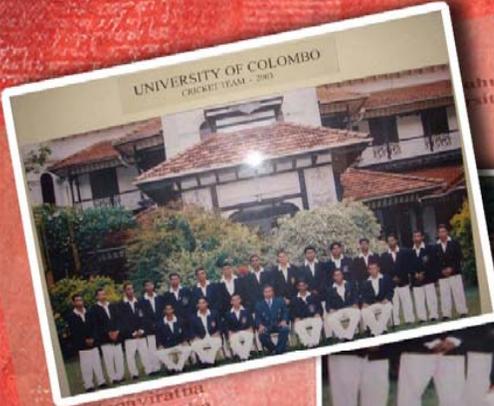
Introduction & Background

Student-athletes

- Engage in organized sporting competitions while completing their tertiary education.
- High-pressure, time-consuming lifestyle with academic and athletic roles.
- Can lead to personal and professional development, promote active living and bring prestige to the institution and/or country.
- Most importantly academics prepare athletes for a life beyond their sporting careers.

Why Student-athletes?

Did You KNOW? 



UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO
CRICKET TEAM - 2003



R. Sangviratna
P. Dissanayaka
U. Chandana

Jehan Mubarak and Kumar Sangakkara (L-Seated together), two former cricketers for the national team played for the University of Colombo cricket team while representing the country...

K. Sangakkara 9
S. Dias 8
J. Mubarak 8.4
M. Maduwantha
R. Nirmalasingham

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JOHN DE SARAM
(1948 OLYMPICS)
UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO

LESLIE HANDUNGE
(1948 OLYMPICS)
UNIVERSITY OF PERADENYA

GEOFFREY MARKS
(1952 OLYMPICS)
UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO

SUMEDHA RANASINGHE
(2016 OLYMPICS)
UNIVERSITY OF SRI JAYAWARDENAPURA



Congratulations

Srimali Samarakoon
University of Sri Jayawardenapura

Gold Medal
in the Women's 45kg category

Current System in Sri Lanka

Students in both the public and private sectors can engage in sports.

However, extensive sporting facilities and consistent competitions organized by a recognized governing body are mainly available for those within the 17 universities under the direct purview of the University Grants Commission.

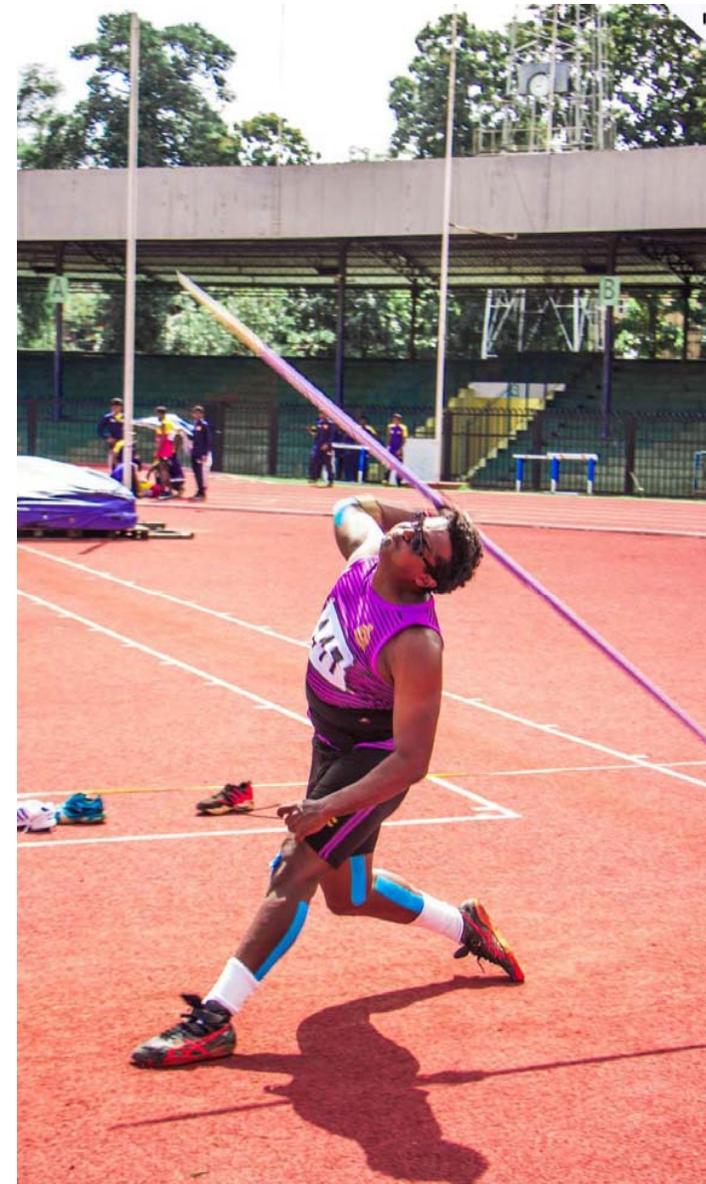
Students selected based on the G. C. E.A/L, but a small number of internationally recognized athletes are given some special provisions in:

- Sports Science and Management - Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, University of Sri Jayewardenepura and University of Kelaniya
- Physical Education - Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka and University of Jaffna

Although some level of support is provided to student-athletes in the state-university system, there are no formal career pathways for them.

Countries such as the United States and those in the EU have recognized the concept of dual careers and have provide more targetted support.

Dual Careers - Engagement in the sports domain and the domains of work (whether training or employment), education, and the health sector.



Research Questions

Prior to implementing dual career programmes it is first necessary to ask the questions;

- Will dual career programmes be useful in the context of Sri Lanka?
- What form of dual career support is necessary for student-athletes in the country?

Research Objectives

1. To assess the level of motivation of student-athletes to engage in dual careers.
2. To identify the needs, challenges and current support structures of student-athletes.

Methodology

Twofold Methodology

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graph TD; A[Twofold Methodology] --> B[Quantitative]; A --> C[Qualitative]; B --> D[Factor Analysis]; C --> E[Deductive Thematic Analysis];
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Quantitative

Factor Analysis

- Motivation of student-athletes for dual careers
- Athletes' Motivation toward Sports and Academics Questionnaire (SAMSAQ-EU)
- Sample: Student-athletes of UoC and UoP

Qualitative

Deductive Thematic Analysis

- Motivation and experiences of elite student-athletes
- Semi-structured interviews (online)
- Sample: Elite student-athletes of UoC and UoP

Results & Discussion - Factor Analysis

SAMSAQ-EU Tool

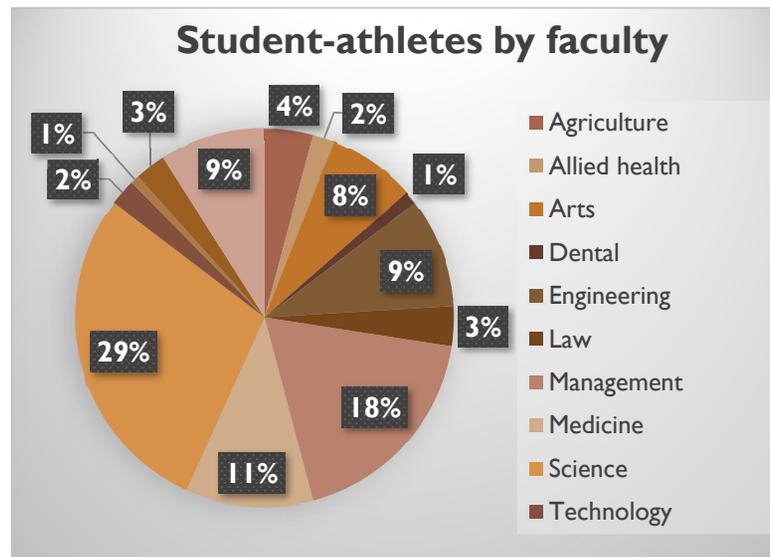
- Consists of 39 items and 3 latent factors; Academic Motivation (AM), Student Athletic Motivation (SAM) and Career Athletic Motivation (CAM).
- A five-point Likert scale was used where 1 – strongly disagree and 5 – strongly agree to indicate the motivation.

Table 1. Sample of the SAMSAQ-EU

Item Number	Description
Item1	I am confident that I can achieve a high grade point average this year (3.0 or above).
Item2	Achieving a high level of performance in my sport is an important goal for me this year
Item3	It is important to me to learn what is taught in my courses.
Item4	I am willing to put in the time to earn excellent grades in my courses
Item5	The most important reason why I am in school is to play my sport

Descriptive Statistics

- 266 student-athletes from UoC and UoP participated in the study of which 169 were male and 97 were female.
- The average age was 22-23 years.
- 57.5% took part in one sport only (31.6% - Individual sport; 25.9% - team sport) .



Factor Analysis

- The Exploratory Factor Analysis showed SAMSAQ-EU consisted of 39 total items (SAM = 9 items; AM = 19 items; and CAM = 11 items).
- All 39 items had a good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.7$) and were relevant for the analysis.
- Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy observed that KMO = 0.81 and was adequate.
- All items in the Confirmatory Factor Analysis indicated high p-values and were retained in the analysis.
- The Rasch analysis showed that all infit and outfit statistics were within the range 0.5-1.5 and productive for measurement.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis with Cronbach's alpha value.

Latent Factor	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
AM	1, 3, 4, 7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 23, 24, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39	0.850
SAM	2, 5, 8, 13, 19, 20, 22, 25, 27	0.773
CAM	6, 9, 11, 16, 17, 18, 21, 26, 30, 37, 38	0.755

- Statistically significant difference between females and males in all three forms of motivation.
- Women showed higher motivation for academics. Men showed higher motivation for sports during and beyond the university period.

Table 3. Comparison of Mean Levels of Motivation

Sample	AM	SAM	CAM
Overall total	4.18±0.87	3.47 ± 1.21	2.78 ± 1.28
Female	4.24±0.84	3.26 ± 1.21	2.60 ± 1.28
Male	4.15±0.89	3.59± 1.19	2.88 ± 1.28

Table 4. Correlations between AM, SAM and CAM

Sample	Latent Factor	SAM	CAM
Overall	AM	0.584**	0.047
	SAM		0.259**
	CAM		
Female	AM	0.502**	-0.130
	SAM		0.087
	CAM		
Male	AM	0.607**	0.201**
	SAM		0.359**
	CAM		
University of Peradeniya	AM	0.616**	-0.025
	SAM		0.267**
	CAM		
University of Colombo	AM	0.575**	0.078
	SAM		0.249**
	CAM		

- AM is positively correlated with SAM, suggesting that student-athletes are highly motivated for both their sports and studies.
- AM and SAM are positively correlated with CAM only among males, indicating women are less motivated for a sporting career beyond educational period.

Results & Discussion – Thematic Analysis

- 15 individuals were identified as elite athletes based on participation at international sporting competitions representing the national team of Sri Lanka or the combined university team of the country.
- Of the 15 identified, 12 provided consent to participate in the study.

Table 4. Details of study participants

Gender	UOC	UOP	2 nd year	3 rd year	4 th year	5 th year	Medicine	Management and Finance	Law	Arts
Male	5	1	2	3	1	0	1	4	0	1
Female	4	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1
Total	9	3	4	5	2	1	3	5	2	2



4 major themes were identified in relation to the motivation and perceptions of elite student athletes towards dual careers:

1. Motivation for sports, academic activities and a dual career
2. Interrelationship between sports and academic activities
3. Challenges for a dual career
4. Support structures for a dual career

I. Motivation for sports, academic activities and a dual career

Intrinsic regulation

83.3% participants indicated experiencing joy, self-satisfaction and relief from stress.

Integrated regulation

41.6% incorporated an athletic identity into their sense of self.

Few viewed their identity in terms of a combination of academics and sports.

Identified regulation

66.6% valued sports for its outcomes such as a better health, opportunities for social interaction and their ability to contribute to the team.

I. Motivation for sports, academic activities and a dual career

Introjected regulation

58.33% held high, long term goals in sports. Others had moderate, medium-short term goals.

Majority had moderate-high academic goals, from short to long term. Only two held short term, low academic goals.

External regulation

91.6% were motivated by social recognition, availability of opportunities as a student/athlete/employee, prestige for the nation and expectations of others.

Non-regulation

41.6% showed a lack of motivation for sports beyond university period. One was not motivated for academic activities in the long term.

2. Interrelationship between sports and academic activities

'...when we do a sport, we develop a lot of values such as the ability to make instant decisions, team spirit, discipline, mental strength. Then all of them help us in our academics too.'

- The major benefits of being a student-athletes included developing personal and professional skills. These were high productivity, time management skills, ability to cope with stress, self-confidence and interpersonal skills.
- Negative outcomes were difficulty in balancing two careers, leading to poor performance in both and limited time available for rest and leisure.
- Most interviewees believed that the positives would outweigh the negatives given adequate planning and support.

3. Challenges for a dual career

'We are not rich right?...financial need is the major problem.'

- Financial constraints was the major challenge (i. e. for equipment, nutrition, transport, etc.).
- Other challenges:
 - Negative attitudes towards professional sport.
 - Inflexible education system.
 - Inadequate sports infrastructure and resource persons.
 - insufficient information on available opportunities.
 - Disparities between of sports.
 - Physical and mental strain of dual careers.
 - Gender norms.
- The lack of consistent earnings in professional sport was a challenge for sporting careers beyond the university period.

4. Support structures for a dual career

'From friends, from family, from some academic individuals. Yeah, the moral support is there.'

Informal support

- A high degree of support by peers and teammates.
- Parents and family also supported physical and psychological needs.
- Two student-athletes indicated support from employers.

Formal support

- Coaches and student and staff led sporting bodies offered high support in terms of motivation, facilities and funds.
- Limited support by general administration (e.g., exemptions on minimum class participation requirements, rescheduling of exam dates clashing with major competitions).
- Lowest level of support was by academic staff. In some instances such persons have explicitly discouraged participation in sports.

Conclusion & Recommendations

- Student athletes are highly motivated for dual careers despite belief that those involved in sports are not academically inclined.
- Therefore there seems to be a suitable environment to implement dual career pathways in state-universities of Sri Lanka.
- Dual careers of student-athletes can be better supported by:
 - Increasing awareness on university sport, especially among academic staff and administration.
 - Provide flexible schedules for student-athletes.
 - Improve coordination between sporting bodies and academic bodies.
 - Provide financial support through scholarships.
 - Provide psychosocial support and career guidance targeting student-athletes.
 - Disseminate information about opportunities available for student-athletes more widely.
 - Specialized support mechanisms and sport promotion for women and PWDs etc.

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