



Original Research

Coaches' Perception of Organizational Socialization Process of International Student-Athletes and the Effect of Cultural Distance: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

International Journal of Exercise Science 10(6): 875-889, 2017. This study focuses on the coaches' perspective of the organizational socialization process of new international student-athletes. After analyzing the information of 10 in-depth interviews with experienced NCAA Division I coaches, this exploratory study aided the researchers to identify socialization tactics being used to successfully integrate international student-athletes entering USA college teams. ISAs come from different cultures, and pending on their home nation culture they might be challenged in their ability to socialize within their new surroundings. Results indicate that the cultural distance between team culture and ISA's culture affects the effectiveness of socialization tactics, and coaches should evaluate and take into account cultural distance before structuring the socialization process for ISAs.

KEY WORDS: International athletes, USA college athletics, socialization tactics, adjustment to college

INTRODUCTION

In 2016 the USA Today News published the average expenditure of the top 50 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) institutions in 2014-2015 to be \$110,716,064.00. In this era of multi-million dollar paydays, schools switching conferences and the need to fill arenas, the pressure to win has increased. Kevin Stallings, the basketball coach at Vanderbilt, said, "The pressure to win is a very real part of the job... At a lot of places, it's just about winning" (30). Coaches and administrators continue to search for competitive advantage (32). The competition to recruit the top domestic players is high, so coaches have turned to larger international recruiting arenas with less competition (23). An end result of this competitive drive is that the International Student-Athlete (ISA) enrollment figures have doubled within the last decade (7). In the 2012-2013 academic year, the NCAA reported that 8,653 of the

186,640 (4.6%) Division I student-athletes came from outside the United States, and due to higher tuition fees (ISAs can not qualify for in-state tuition), athletic departments have to allocate more resources to the ISAs. Therefore, to protect their investment, college athletic departments and universities should consider devoting resources to the success and retention of ISAs.

International students experience difficulties adjusting to the national culture of their new host nation as well as adjusting to a new (collegiate) organizational culture (27). They have to adjust to a new academic system, establish social networks as well as learn a new language and overcome financial hurdles (33). International students are at greater risks of experiencing anxiety, stress, and culture shock (24), depressive symptoms (6), social isolation (15, 19, 24), and homesickness (16). ISAs have to overcome these challenges not only in the classroom, but also on the field. Many stressors from expectations placed on them due to the increased competitive nature of collegiate sports, put ISAs at a disadvantage and create an environment prone to failure (11).

Comparable to a business general manager in search of the most efficient way to manage his/her resources and obtain the best outcomes, the coach of a team also searches for the most efficient way to manage his/her human resources and a way to obtain the best outcome from his/her athletes. In the same way a new employee has to be socialized into his/her organization's culture (norms, values and beliefs), the incoming ISA also has to be socialized into his/her team's culture (norms, values and beliefs). Griffeth and Hom (10) found that member turnover is highest among newcomers to an organization, and in combination with the escalating cost of training new employees, organizations have a profound interest in helping their new employees adjust into their new roles and understanding the specific socialization tactics that best assist in this process.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore from the coaches' perspective, the socialization tactics used during the socialization process of incoming ISAs and explore the role of the cultural differences between the ISA's home nation and the United States within this process.

International newcomers and Cultural Distance: Many international newcomers are recruited for their high level of skills; however, the difficulty in learning the nuances of a new organizational culture in addition to nuances of a new national culture makes the adjustment of the international newcomers harder to achieve (28). Andrade (1) addressed the transitional issues unique to the general international student population during the first year in a U.S. college or university. Many of the issues encountered by international students overlap with those of domestic students: adjusting to a new environment, leaving home for the first time, developing effective study habits, and choosing a major; however, these potential struggles are compounded for international students by language barriers and cultural differences. Andrade also argued that specific cultural and linguistic challenges, which affect nearly every facet of the international student transitional process, are often neglected. International students have trouble adjusting to their new surroundings, primarily because of culture shock, which stems

from confusion about the norms of the new culture (5, 18, 31). Chapdelaine and Alexitch (5) determined that international students experienced more culture shock, or a greater sense of social difficulty, than did host students. Students who were more fluent in English and had more social support also experienced less stress. (21). In addition, students who experienced greater cultural differences had less social interaction with host students, and lower levels of social interaction with host students intensified culture shock. Finally, homesickness may be more pronounced depending on the country of origin of the sojourners. Greater differences between one's culture and the host culture will result in more homesickness (8). Yeh and Inose (34) found that European students that moved to the United States reported less stress from culture shock than did Asian, African and Latin American students. This fact was attributed to a smaller cultural distance between European culture and American culture compared to the other continents. The results of these previous studies informed the difficulties and risk that ISAs were exposed to when they arrived to a new environment. As stated by Yeh and Inose (34), each newcomer had a different level of difficulty while being introduced to the host organizational culture.

There are several authors that have addressed transitional issues faced by student-athletes (14; 22) and specifically Ridinger and Pastore (22). Ridinger and Pastore were among the first to address the acclimation of ISAs to U.S. higher education and athletics, and noted the absence of research on ISA adjustment into college. Ridinger and Pastore (22) were the first to create a model of adjustment for ISA, which included four antecedent factors (personal, interpersonal, perceptual, and cultural distance), and five types of adjustment (academic, social, athletic, personal-, emotional, and institutional attachment), resulting in two outcomes (satisfaction and performance) to define successful adjustment to college. In fact, the greater the cultural distance between the sojourner's native country and the host nation, the greater the adjustments international athletes would be expected to make (22).

Later, Popp et al. (20) explored how the antecedent factors identified by Ridinger and Pastore connect to the actual lived experiences of international migrant athletes at U.S. universities. The antecedents presented in the adjustment model by Ridinger and Pastore (22) included the cultural distance dimension, which refers to the difference between the home culture and the culture found on the college campus, which can be both a geographical distance and a societal or cultural gap. Popp et al. (200) as well as Ridinger and Pastore (2s) both studies mentioned cultural distance as a key variable in the process of adjustment, but they did not define how to measure it within the field of sports. Authors have studied the adjustment of ISAs to the new team culture, however there is a lack of studies on the leader's approach to establishing an effective socialization process for the new members.

According to Slack (26), "While culture is often presented as a unitary entity, most sport organizations have a dominant culture and one or more subcultures. These competing cultures can lead to organizational conflict if they are not managed." In the case of college athletics, the head coach of each team is responsible for creating and/or managing the culture at that level (25). Additionally, the head coach of the team is the person in charge of structuring the socialization process for his/her new athletes. The head coach has many resources available to

help during the adaptation process. Ultimately, the head coach will determine what tactics to use during the socialization process, yet it is unclear to what extent head coaches understand the effect of cultural distance on the socialization process of international newcomers.

National Culture as Barrier to Organizational Socialization in sport: Katz (13) looked at the organizational socialization within the U.S. collegiate sport context and found that entering a new environment brings forth a number of challenges for any newcomer. Networks are inherently related to belonging, consequently, network development and network location should play an important role in how newcomers join communities. At the same time, not all newcomers require the same socialization experience; a successful newcomer adjustment process is a matter of fit between individual characteristics and the socialization tactics employed by the organization. Finding a belonging early in the newcomer experience is essential to a successful socialization process (13). For that reason, it is very important for organizational researchers to include the time of the measurements for all the variables, and include the role of time in socialization (3). The value of providing a form of engagement early in a newcomer's transition is hard to overstate. (13). Other factors to take into account, are the number of members on the team and the nature of the sport (team vs. individual), which might alter what combinations of tactics are used during the socialization process of a newcomer. Additionally, the national host culture and the ISAs' culture are different from one newcomer to the other; this "cultural distance" affects the effectiveness of the socialization tactics used with newcomers.

The stability and productivity of any organization depends in large measure upon the way newcomers come to carry out their tasks. When the transition from generation to generation is accomplished smoothly with a minimum of disruption, the continuity of the organization's mission is maintained and the predictability of the organization's performance is left intact (29). The culture within an organization represents the glue that holds together the various interlocking parts of an on-going social concern. However, it was found that the greater the cultural distance between the new environment and the expatriate's home culture, the greater those transition difficulties are likely to be (12).

It was also stated that the content of the work and the importance of interpersonal communication are greatly impacted by a change in cultural setting, for example, the adaptation of an engineer versus a human resource manager (9). In the field of sport, interpersonal communication is needed and highly valued in team sports more than in individual sports. Vocal leaders such as a point guard in a basketball team, needs an effective interpersonal communication, which would greatly influence the performance of the team.

In summary, the following research questions guided the present study on sport organizational socialization at the collegiate athletic Division I level:

RQ1: What tactics do coaches use during the socialization process of ISAs?

RQ2: From the coaches' perspective what is the effect of ISAs' cultural distance during the socialization process of ISAs?

METHODS

Participants

The target population for this study were NCAA Division I athletic coaches. The researchers used purposeful sampling using a maximum variation approach to obtain different perspectives from coaches with experience dealing with ISAs. The responsibilities and interaction of the coaching staff with ISAs varied from the head-coaches, assistant-coaches, recruiting-coaches, and strength and conditioning-coaches. The researchers recruited the coaches to participate in the study through personal connections to the athletic department of various universities. The inclusion criteria used was coaches from NCAA Division I institutions, which have had successful programs within the conference and at the national level, and have had a high frequency of ISAs on their teams. (See Table 1).

Table 1. Subject's background information.

Coach (M/W)	Sport (M/W)	Experience (yr)	Exp. with ISA	Nationality
Head Coach (M)	Soccer (M)	18	Extensive	England
Head Coach (M)	Soccer (M)	38	Extensive	USA
Head Coach (M)	Tennis (W)	22	Extensive	USA
Head Coach (M)	Tennis (W)	13	Extensive	Australia
Head Coach (W)	Golf (W)	11	Extensive	USA
Ass. Coach (W)	Soccer (W)	8	Fair	USA
Ass. Coach (W)	Track (M/W)	10	Extensive	Jamaica
Ass. Coach (W)	Volleyball (W)	2	Little	USA
Ass. Coach (M)	Football (M)	5	Fair	USA
Streng. Coach (M)	Tennis (M/W)	8	Extensive	USA

Note: M = men; W = women; Little 0 to 2 ISAs; Fair 3 to 10 ISAs; Extensive = 11 or more ISAs.

One author conducted in-depth interviews with 10 coaches using a semi-structured interview. Each interview lasted approximately 30-40 minutes.

Protocol

In this qualitative study the authors strive to obtain information from coaches and their perception of their own experiences. The authors chose an emergent research design to capture "rich information cases" as they become available (17). To explore organizational socialization tactics used with new ISAs coming to US college athletic teams, the authors conducted in-depth interview with coaches of various NCAA Division I teams. The socialization tactics used with ISAs were identified and categorized. Finally, the desired outcomes were grouped based on the coaches' perceptions.

Statistical Analysis

The researchers conducted a content analysis of the current team's website and media guides from past years to confirm the presence of ISAs on each team. With this information, we were able to triangulate findings such as ISAs' turnover, group recruiting of ISAs from the same nation, and possible peer-mentorship from older ISAs from the same nation. The researchers coded the data following the procedures outlined by Patton (17). This preliminary analysis yielded 73 socialization tactics mentioned by the coaches during the interviews. The emergent

nature of the exploratory study guided the researchers to account for each tactic with the same importance regardless of the frequency of use, until saturation was reached. After developing initial themes, we classified the 73 socialization tactics into five major categories that summarized a broad area of action for each socialization tactic. The five major areas that emerged from this analysis were custom coaching, mentorship, team structure, all-inclusive family and supporting services. Each major area had various tactics, all with the same goal during the socialization process of new ISAs.

RESULTS

Based on the emergent analysis of the information given by the coaches, we proposed the following figure that summarizes the exploration of the organizational socialization process of ISAs from the coaches' perspective.

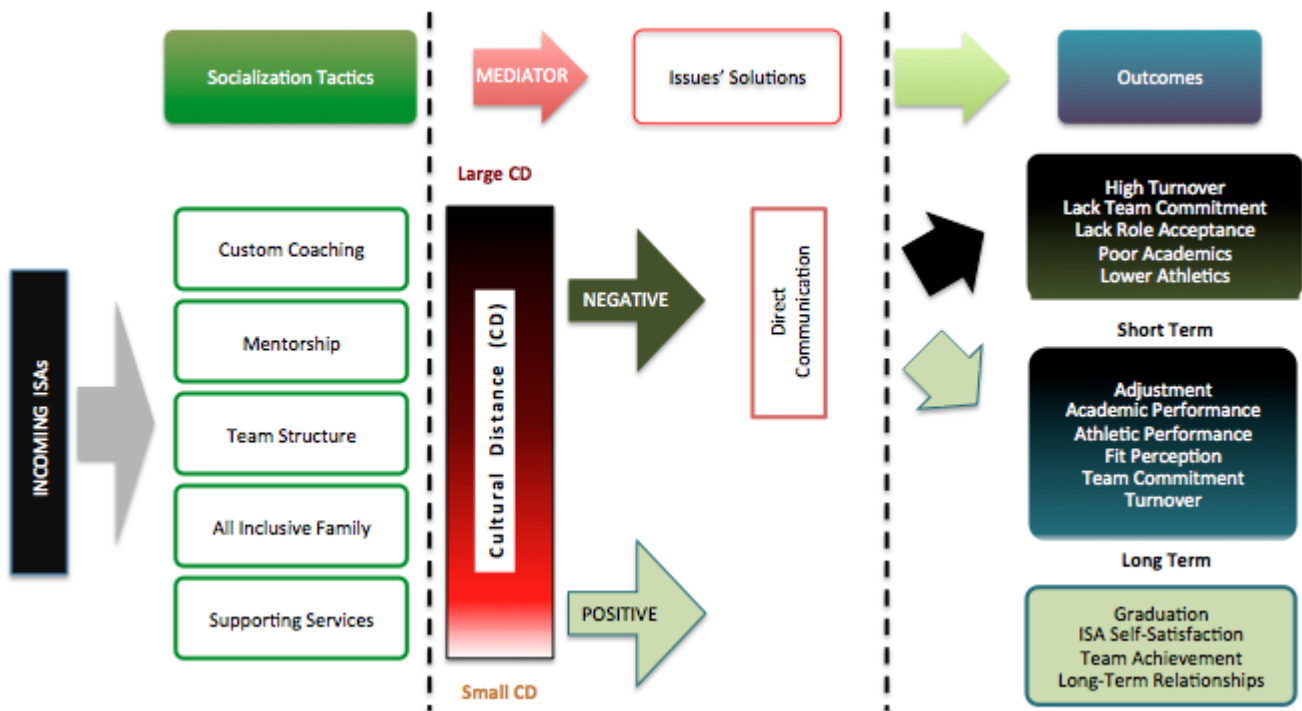


Figure 1. Organizational socialization tactics used in collegiate athletics and the effect of ISAs' cultural distance from the coaches' perspective.

The figure includes the five areas that gathered the specific socialization tactics used by coaches, the effect cultural distance has on the effectiveness of those tactics, and the potential outcomes due to the effect of ISAs' cultural distance. The greater the cultural distance is (top of the graph) the more problems that ISA and the coach have to face and the smaller the cultural distance is (bottom of the graph) the fewer problems and more positive outcomes the ISA and coaches obtain. Then, coaches reported that the solution to common problems such as homesickness and possible miscommunication was to talk directly with the ISA. However, the outcome of the coach-ISA talk was not always positive.

It is important to mention that from the ten coaches interviewed only one reported giving a personality evaluation to his/her athletes before establishing socialization tactics and team roles. The other nine coaches reported assigning the same socialization tactics to the entire incoming freshman class regardless of being domestic or international. All the coaches reported the importance of meeting ISAs in person and getting to know their culture and personality as well as their emotional, academic and medical needs early in the recruitment process.

Socialization tactics and cultural distance: In the sections below, we will discuss the socialization themes gathered after the analysis of the information given by the coaches. In addition, we will present how cultural distance affected the effectiveness of the socialization tactics.

Custom Coaching: First, coaches gain knowledge about general cultural differences of ISAs based on their country of origin from many years of experience. Custom Coaching refers to the coaches' use of previous knowledge about their incoming ISA's background (individual needs, personal values, motivation to become an ISA, knowledge of the NCAA rules for each sport), in order to establish a socialization tactic that will be favorable for the adaptation of the newcomer. Those tactics have a high level of involvement between the coach and the ISA on an individual basis and the coach would have to apply custom coaching throughout the ISA's experience.

For example, if one of the characteristics of a particular ISA's culture is collectivism, then the coach might look to recruit more than one athlete from the same culture, looking to make the adaptation process of those athletes more efficient. One coach stated, *"I have had many Brazilians and I know that in their culture they like to be in groups so we recruit them in groups of 2 or more. They will adjust better if they are in groups."* [Head Coach Soccer, male]. We partially confirmed this information with triangulation of information from the websites and media guides from past years. The roster of the teams showed small groups of ISAs from the same nationality on the same team.

Custom coaching is also an important tool for detecting problems at an early stage. Coaches claimed to maintain a constant one-to-one communication that focused on the wellbeing of the ISAs at various points in time during the adaptation process. *"Asking them on a regular basis if they are OK. We work one-on-one with the athletes, so we get to know them and ask questions related to class, practice and any other areas."* [Head Coach Tennis, male] This is another example of a custom coaching socialization tactic where the coach maintains regular meetings/practices with the ISA in order to gather information about possible difficulties that the ISA might be facing during the socialization process.

Mentorship: Almost all coaches emphasized the importance of mentorship. They referred to mentorship as a system to help newcomers (protégés) become acclimated into the team by pairing them up with more experienced teammates (peer-mentor) or coaching staff (mentor). The coaches trusted that the peer-mentor relation allowed the newcomers to obtain

information, have a good example to follow, and provided them with advice. Mentors or peer-mentors introduced new ISAs into their new roles.

The goal of the mentorship tactic, peer-to-peer, was to gradually introduce the newcomer into the team's culture due to the experience of the senior member, who had extensive knowledge of the structural and functional characteristics of the team and its surroundings (e.g. city, university, etc.). The coaches assumed that the older peer is knowledgeable about the norms, values and beliefs of the team and the environment surrounding them. In addition, the older player informed the younger player about the team's traditions and symbols, which might not be visible to the people outside of the team.

Another style of mentorship is coach-ISA, in which the coach assigned various student-athletes to each member of the coaching staff (assistant coaches). The responsibilities of the mentors (assistant coaches) involved, making sure their ISA learned and applied the norms and values of the team. In addition, the coaches aimed to provide emotional support to the athletes that needed it at a specific point in time. The coaches stated the use of mentoring tactic continuously during the academic year. This tactic also served as a reporting tool for potential issues. The coaches claimed to develop a strong relationship with their protégés and gain their athletes' trust by demonstrating genuine interest in the ISAs' well-being. A head coach reported that the involvement of the assistant coach as a mentor was important because for some ISAs the hierarchical figure of the head coach limited an effective mentor-protégé connection. For some ISAs, it was easier to relate to the assistant coaches as opposed to the head coach, due to positions of power. Coaches stated that it is important to use of this tactic for a long period, not just the first phase. Another objective of this tactic is to help the ISAs in building a social network that would later serve as a support system.

Team Structure: Coaches reported that the socialization tactics used to introduce the team structure to the newcomers was not different for ISAs and domestic athletes. The coaches used a formal style to communicate the general team rules and norms, applicable to all members of the team under the same standards. It is essential to emphasize the difference between the team's rules and roles. The rules are the same for every member, and the roles might be different for each member of the team. It was important for coaches to use the team rules as unifiers for all its members without distinction of origin, or status within the team. However, it might be necessary to communicate the rules to the ISAs in a different way. The effect of cultural distance on this group of tactics caused misunderstandings. In some cultures, the rules are not strictly enforced, and enforcers routinely make exceptions for individuals. The following example illustrates how cultural distance affected the team structure tactics.

They (ISAs) miss home, their friend and lifestyle.... The athletes had to be back by certain date in January, back from Christmas break, and she did not come back that day. She wanted the extra time with her family. She did not really understand that once we said, "this is the date you have to be back", that was the date. She came back two or three days after that, it became a messy situation. The coach sat her down and talked to her and try to make her understand... you have a responsibility to this program, so when we tell everybody else to be back we cannot give you extra privileges because you are international. [Assistant Coach Volleyball, female]

In this situation, cultural distance affected the effectiveness of team structure tactics. The coach solved the issue with direct communication, to ensure it would not happen again. At this stage, the ISA had to accept the rules or go back to her home country. It became apparent from the interviews that each team structure is different. Depending on the leadership and coaching style of each head coach, a team has more rules or less rules. One coach reported, *"The team has strict rules and norms that guide the expected behavior of the team members such as a dress code, punctuality, expected behaviors for class, practices, away games and other situations"* [Head Coach Soccer, men]. In contrast, another coach reported *"The team has one basic principle that guides the behavior of each team member in all situations: represent the university in a first-class manner"* [Head Coach Tennis, women]. In the case of ISAs, the enforcement of the team rules must be the same but the introduction to the team rules might be different, based on each ISAs cultural distance.

All-inclusive family: Fourth, the all-inclusive family describes the specific way in which the members of the team experience the team culture. It is dependent upon the members of the team and their style of human interaction, connectedness and favorability to diversity. The coaches reported that the team culture is constantly changing and due to the nature of college sports where an athlete only has four-years of eligibility, the team culture will be adapted based on the members of the team at a specific point in time. Coaches reported that the tactics used were collective in context, informal and greater in number especially during the first stages of newcomer socialization. The validity of the ISAs' personal characteristics is important in order to have a better socialization between the ISAs and other members of the team.

The biggest hurdle is the adjustment to a different culture, language, and social structure. Although, the things that combat that, is that they are in this culture of the team. This team culture is embracing all of them. They are brothers or sisters together and that helps them to overcome homesickness or any other challenge. [Head Coach Soccer, male]

All the coaches mentioned the use of socialization tactics within this area. The interaction of the members of the team outside of the sport context was qualified as very important based on the coaches' experiences. *"When they come to the program, they are coming into an all-inclusive family of people that look out for them in everything"* [Head Coach Soccer, male]. The all-inclusive family group of socialization tactics is one of the biggest advantages of ISAs over international students. A coach stated that the main goal of this group of tactics was to increase the connectedness between the members of the team.

Supporting Services: The goal of these services is to facilitate the successful adaptation and performance of the student-athletes in their athletic and academic responsibilities. Supporting services include the following areas: study hall, tutors, psychologist, nutritionist, sport trainers and various introductory meetings among others. Each athletic department offers similar tactics in a formal socialization of newcomers into the university lifestyle. For example, the introductory meetings are collective in context, and most times mandatory to all student-athletes in the athletic department. The introductory meetings inform all newcomers (domestic and ISA) about various topics such as; alcohol and drug use, nightlife, sexuality, violence, fan

interaction and eligibility regulations among other topics. The coaches also mentioned introductory meetings specifically for ISAs, where they received information about immigration rules and resources for internationals.

I make a point of attending the introductory meeting for internationals every year, where they receive important information about additional regulations the internationals have to be aware. I want to be able to help them remain in good migration standing. [Head Coach Tennis, women]

The coaches reported that the athletic department organizes and manages the supportive services independently from the head coach of each team. However, the coaches can promote the use of those services in a more or less frequent way. After analyzing the interviews, the researchers established that supporting services are essential for the adjustment of domestic student-athletes and ISAs. *"We have our staff that works with them in terms of the strength coach, the nutritionist, the academic counselors, the psychologist, so we have a lot of services that we can offer to this guys"* [Head Coach Soccer, male].

Even though coaches do not directly control supporting services, they receive continuous reports and information from these services. Additionally, the coaches encourage both domestic students and ISAs to take advantage of this support system. ISAs use support services in an individual context and based on the need of each ISA. After reviewing the information on the athletic department web site, the researchers confirmed the existence of supporting services in all the universities associated with the interviewed coaches.

Challenges arising from the effect that cultural distance has on organizational socialization. Coaches reported that based on ISAs' cultural distance there were instances where the ISAs did not have a clear understanding of the rules and roles within the team. In addition to the introduction of the ISAs to the team culture in a collective context, the coaches reported having the need to clarify the team culture to the ISA in an individual context as well, until ISAs clearly understood and adopted the rules and roles within the team.

Coaches reported that a tactic used to solve problems was one-on-one communication. The objective was to achieve a clear understanding and compliance of the rules, in addition to presenting possible consequences in the case that the ISA does not adapt to the rules. A clarification on expected behavior was necessary for ISAs where the cultural distance from the host-culture was big.

For example, an ISA did not feel comfortable approaching the head coach and letting him know about her dissatisfaction. The ISA just accepted her situation and tried to cope with her internal conflicts. The [head coach, tennis, women] stated that the tactic used in this situation is more reactive than preventive. Using this approach has risks, in this case, the issue existed for too long and it was too late to fix it. The coaches might not become aware of the existence of an issue until there are no options to fix it. In this example, the ISAs' emotional well-being was too compromised and her return to her country of origin was imminent. One of the [Head Coach, tennis, women] stated:

A young player that for two years was on the outward side showing good attitude, working hard, but at the same time was crying every night in her dorm room because she was homesick and not achieving the success that everyone had set for her. She did not have the ability as a person to release these problems. So for two years this was a terrible experience for her. Nobody knew about it. When a third party brought this to our attention then we had to investigate... it was a terrible situation and by that time we couldn't fix anything. She went to her home country to reestablish her self-sense of worth and repair things with her family. She had to get away from tennis and from school and be back into being a healthier person in general. [Head Coach Tennis, male]

In this situation, the ISA lacked communication with the coach and failed to be able to inform him/her about her feelings and concerns. However, the fact that the coach could not anticipate this situation also indicates that he/she did not have a clear communication with his/her athletes. In other cases, the coach might be able to prevent problems and negative consequences by evaluating the cultural distance of the ISA. The coach might be able to decrease the number of misunderstandings and increase the satisfaction of his/her athletes if the ISAs' cultural distance is taken into account during the socialization process.

Expected Outcomes from the coaches' perspective: The information from the interviews generated a group of expected outcomes from the coaches' perspective such as adjustment to the new environment and the team, high academic and athletic performance, graduation on time, commitment to the team for the full four years of eligibility, self-satisfaction of the ISAs, and athletic achievement as a team. The coaches mentioned that one of the most rewarding outcomes for them was the long-lasting relationship that they created with ISAs. In some cases, the former ISAs became part of the recruiting network of the coach.

Most of the coaches stated that the outcome with the highest priority was to graduate their athletes on time. The next expected outcome was to assemble a winning team and obtain championships. During the interviews, the interviewer asked the coaches to explain if the expected outcomes from the ISAs were different from the expected outcomes from the domestic student-athletes. They reported that the expected outcomes for their ISAs were similar to the expected outcomes for the domestic student-athletes. When attempting to resolve issues a coach stated that most of the time it is too late to solve the problem. Even though the coaches did not report having a high rate of ISAs' turnover, the researchers triangulated with the information published in the websites and media guides of each team and it revealed a high fluctuation in the number of ISAs from year to year, which contradicts the statements of the coaches. One of the coaches reported having trouble with athlete commitment with the team. Her ISAs were leaving the team before the four years of eligibility.

The most negative would be... I had a player turn pro in the middle of the season, and went back to Europe to play the European Tour. And just this year I lost a recruit to the European Tour as well. [Head Coach Golf, female]

In this situation, the coach was losing players because they decided to become professionals. Those players failed to identify themselves with the organizational culture of the team and the team's short-term and long-term goals. Those ISAs showed a lack of commitment with the

team by putting their personal interest ahead of the well being of the team. The investment made on recruiting those athletes did not have the expected return.

In some cases, reacting to the problem with one-on-one communication might fix a situation; nevertheless, the problem already caused a waste of time and resources. The previous experience illustrated this situation. In some cases, reacting to the problem might be “too little and too late”. In regards to the previously mentioned situation, the coach stated, “*When I talk to the athlete about not becoming a professional athlete and staying with the team, the athlete has already made up their mind about what they want to do*” [Head Coach, golf, women].

DISCUSSION

The head coach of each team is responsible for structuring the socialization process and determines what tactics to use with the new ISAs and domestic student-athletes. Coaches face a challenge when trying to find a balance between accommodating ISAs from different cultures and findings ways to create a homogeneous culture for their team. In their quest for a homogeneous team culture, coaches often do not differentiate between domestic and international athletes, as they try to maintain a homogeneous environment for all of their athletes. The head coach treats everyone in the same way to avoid any preference. Nevertheless, the findings of this study support socialization research that integrates organizational tactics and individual proactivity together (2). Each athlete has a different background and different factors that influence their reality, which might hinder the effectiveness of a universal treatment. Not all newcomers require the same socialization experience; a successful newcomer adjustment process is a matter of fit between individual characteristics and the socialization tactics employed by the organization (13). For this reason, the researchers propose to evaluate the incoming ISAs and find their cultural distance before structuring the socialization process. Based on the information obtained whether the cultural distance is large or small then the head coach can determine what additional socialization tactics ISAs would need. Popp et al. (20) as well as Ridinger and Pastore (22) both studies mentioned cultural distance as a key antecedent variable in the process of adjustment, but they did not define how to measure it within the field of sports. Therefore, the authors suggest further research should focus on the use of person-environment fit theory, in order to evaluate the ISA’s cultural distance.

Popp et al. (20) as well as Ridinger and Pastore (22) proposed a model of adjustment of ISAs to the new team culture, however based on our findings we propose the addition of the organizational socialization process to the model. The ISA’s antecedents should determine the use of specific socialization tactics, which in turn will lead to the ISA’s adjustment. Our findings also fill a gap on the literature on the leader’s approach to establishing an effective socialization process for the new members.

Feldman (9) stated that internationals often receive less mentoring in the form of social support and role modeling and more tasks related mentoring. He bases his hypothesis on mentoring research that finds the mentor-protégé relationship to be based on similar

demographics. We confirmed this finding, and found that it is more effective to have ISAs mentored by an international with a similar cultural background whenever possible.. Because of the shared background, they serve as role models and they are empathetic to the social support needs (4). The researchers found that mentoring, a tactic used by coaches, supports the need for a structured socialization process for ISAs. The most cited definition of socialization describes it as the “process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role” (29). In the same way that a new ISA needs to acquire the social knowledge and skills to assume a role within his/her team.

Following Katz (13) and our results, we propose that the first few weeks or months are crucial to the successful adaptation of the ISA. Coaches should set up a system that allows the ISA to adapt to the new style of life, the food options, transportation, the new academic system, and ways to access different support services. The early engagement should be used in an individual context (assigned person-ISA) where one individual introduces the ISA to the new environment. The following activities would be applicable upon the arrival of the ISA: setting up a phone plan that will work for his particular needs (international, data availability in relation to financial resources); setting up bank accounts (international transfers, close to campus, ATM availability). In addition to, giving ISAs information about the transportation system; how to get to an accessible grocery store, pharmacy, athletic campus, classes (safe way to call a taxi, approximate rates, approximate wait time); accessible and healthy restaurants/cafeterias; and appropriate clothing for the weather, among others. Finding a belonging early in the newcomer experience is essential to a successful socialization process (13). Therefore, the early engagement period, upon arrival of the ISAs, is extremely important to establish a sustainable and conducive environment for an effective adaptation. After the ISA has set up his everyday needs, he/she would be ready to go through the general organizational socialization process.

Due to the increase in collegiate athletics’ investment and the constant pressure to win, there is a need to increase the effective use of resources in order to obtain positive outcomes. The present study provides valuable insight into how to improve the ISAs’ socialization process in order to achieve a better adaptation, self-satisfaction, high levels of athletic and academic performance, increased commitment with the team and reduce turnover.

The results of this study could inform collegiate athletic recruitment policy in addition to influencing the socialization process of new ISA and domestic student-athletes as well. There are both academic and fiscal ramifications attached to the results of this study making it significant in power and scope. By improving the ISAs’ outcomes of organizational commitment, role satisfaction, the ISAs be more likely to remain in college during their 4 years of eligibility, while performing in athletics to the best of their abilities and successfully obtaining a college degree.

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