

The Recruitment of Student-Athletes: Building Trust Between Coaches and Players

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August 10, 2021

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Key Words: Recruitment, Student-Athlete, Coaches, Players, Trust, Relationship, College

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my committee for all of their help throughout the process on this project. It has been a long journey to obtain this degree. Dr. Rateau, Dr. Drape, and Dr. Wolf- thank you for all your help throughout the year. I didn't think it was possible but you helped me to believe in myself and gave me the confidence to get this done. I would also like to thank Alise Svihla for all the help she has given me throughout the four years I have been at Virginia Tech. Without her, none of this would have been possible. She has been the best advisor. I also want to thank my teammates for participating in my project even though they did not have to. Finally, I would like thank my family for being there and supporting me throughout this journey.

Abstract

This study is focused on the recruitment of college athletes. Specifically, research centered on the aspects of the recruitment process and how they influenced a prospective student-athlete's decision. The theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, provided a framework for this study. A total of seven participants were interviewed using a qualitative research method. Each participant was a current or former Virginia Tech men's basketball player who went through the recruitment process. After a thorough analysis of the data, five themes emerged: Relationships, Playing in the ACC, Coaching Style, Honesty/Transparency/Trust, and Academics. These were the aspects that mattered most to recruits and weighed heavily on their decision. Based on these findings, recommendations were made to current and future coaches. These recommendations include focusing on building relationships with players, maintaining honesty/transparency throughout the recruitment process, and highlighting academics and their coaching style.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	5
Definition of Key Terms.....	6
Purpose Statement.....	6
Limitations.....	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	8
Theoretical Framework.....	12
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	15
Designing and Planning the Interviews.....	15
Conducting Interviews.....	16
Making Sense of Interview Data.....	17
Chapter 4: Findings.....	18
Theme 1- Relationships.....	18
Theme 2- Playing in the ACC.....	19
Theme 3- Coaching Style.....	20
Theme 4- Honesty/Transparency/Authenticity.....	20
Theme 5- Academics.....	22
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	23
Recommendations.....	24
Future Considerations.....	25
References.....	26
Appendices.....	29

Chapter 1: Introduction

Recruiting prospective student-athletes is vital for college campuses (Letawsky, Schneider, Pedersen, & Palmer, 2003). Being able to recruit top caliber athletes is even more strategic due to the potential increase in undergraduate admissions and booster donations that a championship may bring (Letawsky, et. al., 2003). Athletic recruitment happens when a college employee or representative invites a high school student-athlete to play sports for their college. Recruiting can occur in many ways, such as face-to-face contact, phone calls or text messaging, through mailed or emailed material or through social media (“Recruiting,” 2020). When coaches and the recruited athlete talk to each other they want to establish a bond of trust between each other. If this does not happen the recruitment between the coach and the player will be negative, causing either one to go a different direction. Building trust comes through the communication between the two people. The connection should be nurturing and consistent.

For athletes, making a decision on which school to attend is a very difficult decision. This decision comes down to trust and the relationship between the coach and the player. For many young kids who grew up and played the game of basketball, the chances of them being recruited by a Division I school is low, with less than one third of 1% of high school players achieving that goal (“Men’s Basketball Recruiting”). Most kids dream when they’re playing basketball at a young age and tend to take the sport seriously because they want to play for those top tier schools. During the recruiting process, to be able to feel like this, the coaches would have to make you feel like you are a priority. Making them a priority provides the appreciation that they have your best interest at heart for basketball and education which leads into trust.

Trust has various meanings depending on the person. Trusting someone means that you think they are reliable, you have confidence in them and you feel safe with them physically and

emotionally. Trust is something that two people in a relationship can build together when they decide to trust each other (Paige, 2020). Trust is something that people take seriously. When building trust with someone, you would do anything for them because you care about them deeply. Trust goes a long way for the recruitment process of Division I sports especially college basketball in the Power Five conferences. The Power Five conferences are Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Southeastern Conference (SEC), The Big 12, Pacific Conference (Pac 12), and The Big Ten.

Definition of Key Terms

- Recruitment: When a college employee or representative invites a high school student-athlete to play sports for their college (“Recruiting”, 2020)
- Student-Athlete: An individual who is a student at an institution who also participates in an NCAA sport
- Coaches: An individual who oversees a sport program
- Players: The individuals who are on a roster for a team. Can be synonymous with student-athlete
- Trust: The ability to have faith in someone; when actions match words
- Relationship: The process between two or more individuals where growth and trust bring them together to form a bond
- College: An institution of higher education

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this paper is to describe the recruitment process that prospective student-athletes go through and the factors that influence their decision making. This paper will also discuss the topic of trust between the coach and the prospective student athlete with regards to their decision making. Interviews will be conducted with five to ten student-athletes, asking them

ten questions each about how they were recruited and how they developed trust with the coaches who recruited them.

Limitations

There is not a lot of research on the decision making process that student-athletes go through to make their college choices. It is difficult to find prior research that focuses on the recruitment process. Limitations also include finding interview participants who are willing to speak openly about their recruitment process. It was important to ensure confidentiality when conducting interviews in order to establish rapport and comfort with the participants. In order for the interviews to be successful and data to be analyzed, participants must be truthful in their responses. Consent forms are an important part of this process and ethical considerations were discussed so that participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences and being truthful (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Research Objective

Describe the aspects of your recruitment process and how they influenced your college decision.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this paper is to describe the recruitment process that prospective student-athletes go through and the factors that influence their decision making. This paper will also discuss the topic of trust between the coach and the prospective student athlete with regards to their decision making. Interviews will be conducted with five to ten student-athletes, asking them ten questions each about how they were recruited and how they developed trust with the coaches who recruited them.

- Describe the aspects of your recruitment process and how they influenced your decision.

Recruitment Defined

Student-athletes face a major decision when it comes to choosing a college to attend. The process of receiving an offer from a coach to attend a university and play for them is called recruiting. Recruiting includes building a relationship between coaches and the player and persuading them to come to their school to help their school and also help the player's future. This process is key to an athletic department's success and many athletic departments have devoted large amounts of money to this area in order to compete with other schools (Klenosky & Troutman, 2001).

There are a number of recruiting rules, which are governed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The NCAA determines the age in which prospective student-athletes can start being recruited, how and when they can be contacted by college coaches, and how and when they can visit institutions. Each sport has specific rules regarding the dates they can begin communicating with high school athletes. For most sports, coaches can begin communicating with athletes the summer between their sophomore and junior year of high school ("NCAA Recruiting Rules", 2021). These rules are designed to limit the amount of

communication athletes receive from coaches early in their high school career and give them time to make informed decisions regarding where they want to attend college (“NCAA Recruiting Rules”, 2021).

In order to be able to get recruited, athletes must become eligible. “The higher your grade point average (GPA), the higher the percentage of schools that can recruit you. Coaches and colleges want to see a challenging course load and good grades” (Moffitt, 2018, p.18). High school athletes must not only earn a certain GPA, they also have to meet specific NCAA eligibility requirements. These initial eligibility requirements include: graduate from high school, complete 16 NCAA-approved core courses, and earn a minimum GPA and SAT/ACT score that matches the core-course GPA (“NCAA Eligibility Center”, 2021). The minimum GPA for Division I athletics is a 2.3 GPA and the institution uses a sliding scale to match the test score with the GPA to determine whether the athlete will be eligible (“NCAA Eligibility Center”, 2021). For example, if a prospective student-athlete has a low GPA, they will need a high test score. When looking at recruits, coaches have to make sure the player will be successful academically. “With NCAA academic eligibility rules in order, coaches have to find athletes that not only meet the requirements to be accepted, but can also maintain eligibility throughout his or her athletic career” (Goldner, 2010, p. 19).

The Recruitment Process

As a recruit, student-athletes can take as many unofficial visits as they would like to see if they like the school, and try and visit with the coaches if possible. This will help them with the decision making process in the long run because they will be able to have a better understanding of the schools and what they have to offer. Athletes should start this process around sophomore year of high school. When on the visits, they should come with a list of questions that they would like answers to. By junior year, they can try and take an official visit. Official visits are different

from unofficial visits and there is a limit on the number of official visits that athletes can take. Additional advice includes: “Begin visiting colleges and universities. Spend the night if possible. Meet with the coaching staff and professors in your area of academic interest. Also take in a practice and check the playing facilities, as well as spend time with current student-athletes” (Hurley & Hollibaugh, 1999). Unofficial visits are paid for entirely by the recruit’s family, which is why a prospective student-athlete can take as many as they would like (“NCAA Recruiting Rules”, 2021).

Decision Factors

There are multiple factors that go into the decision making process. This choice is a life changing decision. According to the NCAA rules set forth for recruiting, prospective student-athletes can only make five visits to Division I schools and are limited to one visit per school (“NCAA Recruiting Rules”, 2021). When a top rated athlete is recruited by multiple schools, the decision becomes very difficult. Many parents help out their children in this decision. Coaches spend a considerable amount of time recruiting parents as well as the athletes themselves because of the role they play in the athletes’ decision (Sander & Keller, 2010). Another large factor in the decision is the cost of attendance. This is the out of pocket expense that the athlete will have to pay. “Last year the players' association found that athletes on full athletics scholarships shoulder anywhere from \$200 to more than \$6,000 in additional out-of-pocket expenses per year. The average amount was \$2,763 per year” (Sander & Keller, 2010).

The head coach and player relationship is extremely important. According to Sander (2008), coaches can tell you anything- whatever they want you to hear- just to get you to commit to their school and once you are there, you are stuck. The head coach is the one who decides if you are going to sign the National Letter of Intent (NLI). This is the paperwork that allows you to come to the school. Building relationships with the recruit will be the way to win them over.

Having no relationship and having to stop by once and a while will not cut it. Coaches who hand write letters are helping themselves with the recruit because these are things that other coaches aren't necessarily doing (Hoyt, 2019). According to a study by Cooper (1996), the most important reasons that players chose certain schools were: the coach's commitment to the program, and player-coach relationships (p. 25).

NCAA Recruiting Trends

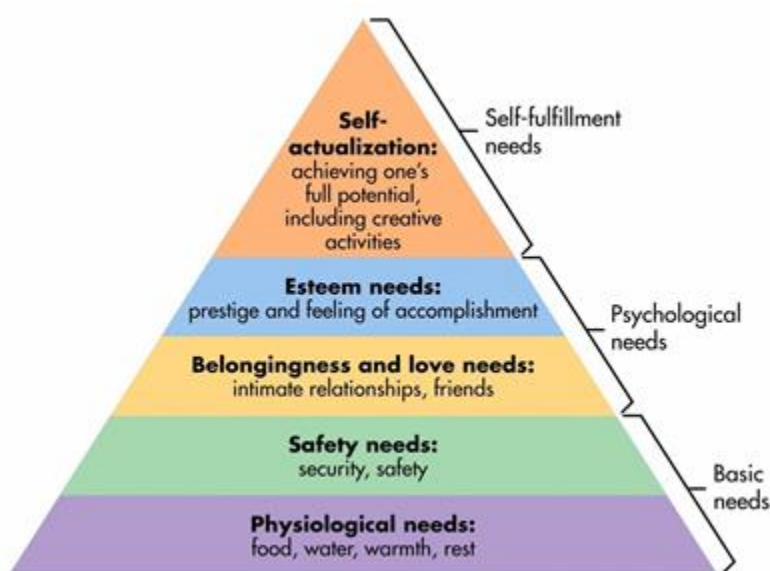
Examples of those who have been through the recruitment process include Marvin Clark. Clark committed to the University of Oregon on a basketball scholarship because of the facilities, basketball program itself, and the relationships he had with the coaches (Wolverton, 2014). Unfortunately, Clark suffered an injury around the time of his commitment and had to miss several months on the court. The Oregon coaches convinced him to attend a prep school before coming to Oregon so that he could ensure he was ready to play at the collegiate level (Wolverton, 2014). The Oregon coaches ultimately decided to retract their offer and he was left to find somewhere else to go to college (Wolverton, 2014). Clark eventually chose to attend Kansas State after establishing a relationship with the coaches there and believing he could trust in them. The Kansas State coach sent a 185-word text explaining why he believed Kansas State was the right choice for Clark. The first reason was he would be playing for a staff he could trust, which had recruited him harder than anyone else (Wolverton, 2014).

Another trend in the recruitment process is recruiting at young ages. Ryan Boatright is an example of this. He was recruited at just 14 years old and offered his first scholarship to the University of Southern California before he even started high school (Gregory, 2007). This has become a trend in recruiting, with the number of high school juniors committing early to big-college-football schools up 430% (Gregory, 2007). The rush to recruit players early is a direct

result of coaches trying to keep their jobs and win games, as well as keep their large salaries (Gregory, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

The theory that will be used to describe the decision making process that student athletes go through is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This theory helps to describe the needs that student athletes have and how they may influence their decision to attend a certain institution. The five stages in this theory are described below. Each of these is reflected in the recruiting process and how coaches and the players build trust with each other.



McLeod, S. (2020, March 20). Maslow's hierarchy of needs. *Simply Psychology*. Retrieved from: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

Physiological needs:

Each person has basic needs that must be met for them to come to school. The basic needs according to Maslow include food, water, and warmth (McLeod, 2020). When a prospective student-athlete is visiting a school, they will want to make sure these basic needs are met through discussions on where they will be living, how they will be paying for food, and an overall sense of what their life will look like once they are living in their new "home".

Safety Needs:

Maslow describes safety needs as basic safety including security (McLeod, 2020). As a player, safety needs may also include having a full scholarship in order to assist with financial needs and being able to have gym access and being able to have academic support. This can give them a sense of security. The basic needs are very important for players because they need to have these access to help succeed them in life and on the court.

As a player and parent, being able to be safe is very important. Imagine a kid from a different country and coming to America, the player and parent need to feel like they are in a safe environment. When a player looks at a school and they tour the campus, they may feel a certain level of comfort and that will help them to know if they feel safe or not. According to Lawrence, Kaburakis, & Merckx (2008), the campus visit and campus environment have consistently ranked in the top variables influencing school choice (p. 92).

Belongingness and love needs:

The first level of psychological needs is the level of belongingness and love. This level includes intimate relationships and friendships (McLeod, 2020). As an incoming freshman, building relationships with people on the team and campus is very important. The new relationships they make could help them for the rest of their lives. As for teammates, the brotherhood will help them on the court and be able to succeed. The goal when you get to campus is to succeed together and win as many games as possible. In addition to the relationships built with teammates, athletes' relationships with coaches is very important in this stage to develop trust. As a basketball player being recruited by Division I schools, provided a sense of belongingness and encouragement. The coaches from several basketball programs may proceed to contact with the players through various media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or email. This allows coaches to reach players easily for the recruitment process.

Esteem needs:

In the next stage, esteem needs, individuals have need for accomplishment or prestige (McLeod, 2020). During the recruitment process, athletes want to feel wanted because you know other athletes are getting recruited but you want to know why they want you and not the other kids. You want to feel like you are the coach's number one recruit and their main target. Also, high school athletes who want to play at the next level want to feel like they can get to Division I and have a chance at the highest level. This is important for this stage.

Self-actualization:

The final stage of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, self-actualization, includes achieving one's full potential (McLeod, 2020). This involves full trust and how the coaches see you helping their program and your life afterwards. This decision comes down to the recruit trusting the coaches and seeing them as the future of the program. In this stage, the recruit should be able to see themselves at the school, growing as an athlete and as a person. They should be able to see how they will benefit the school and how the school will benefit them. At this stage in the recruitment process, there is no doubt that they do not belong anywhere else. "Maslow (1943) describes this level as the desire to accomplish everything that one can, to become the most that one can be" (McLeod, 2020). In addition, this stage may include ensuring that the school offers a degree that the athlete wants to pursue so that they can achieve their potential off the court or field. According to Letawsky et. al. (2003), "the most important factor for student-athletes was the degree program options offered by the University" (p. 604). The self-actualization is an important part of the recruitment process because it checks off everything the player wants in a college to prepare for their future.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this paper is to describe the recruitment process that prospective student-athletes go through and the factors that influence their decision making. This paper will also discuss the topic of trust between the coach and the prospective student athlete with regards to their decision making. Interviews will be conducted with five to ten student-athletes, asking them ten questions each about how they were recruited and how they developed trust with the coaches who recruited them.

- Describe the aspects of your recruitment process and how they influenced your decision.

Designing & Planning

An application was placed with the Virginia Tech office of Human Research Protection Program for the IRB approval. After university review it was determined that this activity was not researched involving human subjects as defined by HHS and FDA regulations (Appendix C). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the relationships between athletes and their coaching staff throughout their recruitment process, and how the athletes feel like their experience compares to what they were told it would be during the recruitment process. Data was collected through sampling and recruitment. Athletes were recruited to participate through an email invitation. Eight were contacted and asked to participate, with a goal of obtaining seven interviews.

The sample included Division 1 men's basketball athletes from the Power 5 conferences (Atlantic Coast Conference, Big XII, Big Ten, Southeastern Conference, and Big East). The interviewer was familiar with all ten athletes who were asked to participate in the interview.

This population was selected in order to provide information on their experiences regarding their athletic recruitment. Each participant has been through the recruitment process so they are able to reflect on their experiences.

After participants were emailed, inviting them to participate, they were asked to complete consent agreements. As stated by Creswell (2018), “when collecting consent for a study, the researcher should not force participants to sign the informed consent form. Participation in a study should be seen as voluntary, and the researcher should explain in the instructions for the consent form that participants can decide not to participate in the study” (p. 97).

Detailed instructions regarding this were sent to participants. They were told they could “opt out” at any point if they felt uncomfortable. In addition, the consent form clearly stated that all data would be protected and their identities would be kept confidential. Consent forms were signed and sent back to the researcher once agreed upon.

Conducting Interviews

Qualitative interviews were selected as the method of data collection. In this method, interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer conducted introductions and reviewed the structure of the interview. The opening question included an ice-breaker question to put the interviewees at ease and build rapport. This is a type of question that asks participants to talk about themselves in a way that does not alienate them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A series of questions were then asked regarding how the recruiting process was for the participants. These questions focused on: communication, relationships, building trust, and the college decision making process. All questions related to the main research question of: How has your college experience changed compared to what you were told in the recruitment process?

Interviews were scheduled with each participant for a 30 minute window and conducted over Zoom and recorded through a digital device (phone). Zoom was chosen because all of the athletes are all across the country and this allowed for a broader participant pool. The interviewer preferred to conduct the interviews face to face, but this was an issue, so they were able to use technology to conduct the interviews. The interviewer used a university issued computer to conduct the Zoom interviews and protected the data using a password. The interviewer conducted each interview in Lane Stadium, using a private tutor room.

Some of the conditions that needed to be addressed were the constraints of the time of the interviews. The interviews had to be scheduled around the athletes' schedules, which was difficult. The winter break was a great opportunity for these interviews to take place because athletes did not have classes to focus on during this time.

Making Sense of the Data

Interviews were transcribed in detail and data was analyzed to identify find codes, categories and themes. The codes were the words that were repeatedly stated by the interviewees. Then, these codes were put into categories based on their relevance. Finally, five themes emerged after examining the different categories. The researcher reviewed the common themes among all interviews to determine the conclusions that could be made in the recruitment process. The research questions were revisited to provide an analysis of how the data answered the questions.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this paper is to describe the recruitment process that prospective student-athletes go through and the factors that influence their decision making. This paper will also discuss the topic of trust between the coach and the prospective student athlete with regards to their decision making. Interviews will be conducted with five to ten student-athletes, asking them ten questions each about how they were recruited and how they developed trust with the coaches who recruited them.

- Describe the aspects of your recruitment process and how they influenced your decision.

Eight Virginia Tech basketball players were identified to meet the criteria. All eight were sent invitations via email (Appendix A) and seven responded positively and all seven were interviewed. After interviews 72 codes were identified and at the conclusion of the data analysis. The number of codes was due to the length of the interviews. Interviews lasted anywhere between 13-20 minutes, depending on the participant. The researcher discovered five themes that emerged from the interviews. These five themes helped understand the recruitment process and what student-athletes were looking for when choosing an institution. The five themes that emerged were: relationships, playing in the ACC, coaching style, honesty/transparency/authenticity, and academics. These factors were brought up numerous times throughout the interviews by multiple student-athletes.

Theme 1- Relationships

Student-athletes were asked why they chose to attend Virginia Tech and the majority of those interviewed stated that the relationships with coaches was the top factor in choosing to be here.

Interviewee James stated:

“The family environment that was created by the coaches throughout the recruitment process. I feel like they did a really good job of establishing that relationship and I felt like that relationship is important, and when you go and commit to any school, you’re not going to go somewhere where you don’t feel comfortable with the coach and staff. So I would probably say that’s probably the biggest reason why I came here.”

A second interviewee, Akon, stated the importance in trust:

“One of the main factors that separated the coaches was the confidence and trust that the coaches had in me. A big reason why I committed here to Virginia Tech was because Coach always had trust and belief in me since day one.”

Theme 2- Playing in the ACC

The ability to play in the ACC conference was a theme that emerged throughout the interviews. This was a factor for many student-athletes in why they chose to attend Virginia Tech over other institutions. The ACC is one of the top caliber leagues for men’s basketball in the NCAA. Interviewee Kevin stated:

“Having the opportunity to play in the ACC was always a huge goal of mine.”

This was also the case for interviewee, Omar, who discussed how playing in the ACC could help him reach his goals of getting to the NBA:

“Playing in the ACC that's one of the best conferences in college basketball probably the best with the history of the blue blood teams. I couldn't, I couldn't pass up the opportunity. And also, you know, my dreams and goals, I felt like Virginia Tech was what helped me reach my goals, to make it to the NBA...”

Theme 3- Coaching Style

Those who were interviewed discussed how important it was to fit into the coach's style of play. Having that familiarity with the coaching style made them feel comfortable with what they were getting themselves into. According to Omar, this was a large factor in his decision to attend Virginia Tech:

“Some coaches, you know, let their guys get up here and just do one thing. Like shoot the ball or just play defense all the time. Never let them get better at what they do best. So I feel like Virginia Tech was the best for that because it can help me develop my game.”

A second interviewee, Steven, added the coaching style included great chemistry, team bonding, and fun:

“I knew what Coach is like, I know what the assistants are like and the type of program and culture he creates and runs, it's one of, of hard work, but it's also one of great chemistry and team bonding and encouragement and fun. There's a great nature of excitement to every day is practice. Every day is great.”

Theme 4- Honesty/Transparency/Authenticity

When discussing the recruitment process, student-athletes wanted to find coaches who would be honest with them. They wanted to hear the truth regarding playing time, where they fit into the system, how they would be coached, etc. This made them feel like they could trust the coaches and that they were being genuine throughout the process. Interviewee, Akon, described how this can be a difficult part of the recruiting process:

“You never know which coach is going to be real with you and which coach is just being fake to make you come and commit to their school. So you really have to have a good understanding and a good foundation with the people around you, such as your family,

coaches, friends who understand you and what's best for you. But you also have to understand what you gotta do is best for yourself in the future. So coaches sometimes are going to just tell you what you want to hear and not be real with you, which the game in the recruitment process can get really tricky in that way. And that causes challenges because then you see kids go to those schools, after the coaches tell them what they want to hear in a year or two years later, they end up transferring, going to another school. So I knew I wanted to make the decision to go to a school where I wasn't in that situation where I had to transfer and end up staying there."

Another interviewee, Connor, felt similarly about the importance of trust and honesty when it comes to the recruitment process and coaches. He stated:

"The biggest thing I was looking for between the coaching staff was honesty and truthfulness. I'm very big on honesty and that was one of the most things I was looking for in any staff. How real could you be with me? If you were going to be transparent with me and tell me how it was going to be, I would much rather have it that way, rather than have something be said to me that didn't happen."

The concept of honesty and truthfulness emerged after the recruitment process ended as well.

According to interviewee, Steven, his experience has lived up to his expectations:

"I would say it has lived up to my expectations and I was sold to in the recruiting process and I would say I definitely completely knew what I was going to be getting and the recruitment process you know. I really heard that it was going to be fun, it's going to be a great fit and it was going to be challenging and it's going to be a lot of work and then I'd be pushed everyday and that was absolutely true."

Theme 5- Academics

A final theme that emerged was one off the court. This theme centered around academics. Student-athletes wanted to make sure that they could major in something they were interested in and that they were going to get a degree they would be proud of. For student-athletes, it was about more than just basketball. For interviewee, Junior, academics was the deciding factor for choosing Virginia Tech:

“Virginia Tech was about what was best for me. I felt like they really cared about what major I wanted to be in because that was the most important thing for me, the major I wanted to get into. Basketball was big but academics is always the most important for me.”

A second interviewee, Akon, stated his priority in receiving his education:

“I chose Virginia Tech because of the relationship that I had with the coaching staff and the opportunity that I had to get an education at a first class school here like Virginia Tech.”

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to describe the recruitment process that prospective student-athletes go through and the factors that influence their decision making. This paper will also discuss the topic of trust between the coach and the prospective student athlete with regards to their decision making. Interviews will be conducted with five to ten student-athletes, asking them ten questions each about how they were recruited and how they developed trust with the coaches who recruited them.

- Describe the aspects of your recruitment process and how they influenced your decision.

Research from this study indicates how important relationships, playing level, coaching style, honesty/transparency/authenticity, and academics are throughout the recruitment process. Building relationships start from high school and can continue throughout a student-athletes' college career. Student-athletes build these relationships with various members of the coaching staff, ranging from the head coach to assistants, and even members of the staff. Student-athletes who are recruited at a high level have many different options and relationships with coaches are one of the top deciding factors that separate one school from the next. Honesty and trust between coaches and players can lead to positive relationships that are long-lasting. Student-athletes are taken on elaborate official visits, with day-long itineraries filled with meetings, photo shoots, fancy dinners, and facility tours, but at the end of the day, the most important thing they are looking for is an honest and genuine relationship with their coaching staff.

Three of the themes discovered during this research study connected directly to the theoretical framework of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Theme One, Relationships, connects to the third stage of Maslow's Hierarchy which describes ones need for belongingness and love and includes relationships. Prospective student-athletes described how important it was for them to

feel connected and build strong relationships with the coaching staff in order to meet this need of belongingness. Having this need met helped improve recruiting process.

The second theme, playing in the ACC, connects to the need for esteem. This stage includes the need for prestige and feeling accomplished. As the student-athletes stated, playing in the ACC was a dream for them because it is such a high level in the basketball world. They stated how this was a goal of theirs and an opportunity they couldn't pass up because it would help them reach their goals.

Finally, the fifth theme, academics, connects to Maslow's top need- the need for self-actualization. This is being able to achieve one's full potential. Maslow described this stage as "the desire to accomplish everything one can, to become the most that one can be" (McLeod, 2020). Being able to obtain an education and earn a degree from Virginia Tech proved to be a major decision factor for those who went through the recruiting process. This allowed prospective student--athletes to focus on their potential and see success beyond the basketball court.

Recommendations

This study shows the importance of three main themes in the recruitment process: caring and trust, transparency, and academics. Head coaches, assistant coaches, and those who are recruiting specifically can use this study in order to ensure they are emphasizing the aspects of the process that prospective student-athletes are looking for. For example, many large basketball programs are putting money into recruiting budgets and facilities in order to "show off" their program; however, based on the research, this is not what the recruits are looking for. Coaches should focus more on building strong relationships with prospective student-athletes and being honest/transparent, and less about "showing off" the program. In addition, coaches should focus on highlighting features that prospective student-athletes are interested in, such as majors the

institution offers and other academic resources, so that the athlete will feel confident in their decision. These factors can help the coaches to improve their recruitment process and in turn, ensure they are providing the athletes with what they are looking for in order to recruit top talent.

Future Considerations

Future research should focus on the experience of athletes once they arrive on campus and continue to assess whether what they were told during the recruitment process has held true, as well as their overall satisfaction with their decision. Additional research on the decision making process and factors that lead to an athlete's decision may also help in the recruitment process, especially for college coaches.

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Appendix A

Verbal Script for Recruitment

Hello, my name is Wabissa Bede, and I am currently working towards the completion of my Master's degree and I will be conducting a research study on the aspects of the athletic recruitment process. Part of this project includes multiple semi-structured zoom interviews with current student-athletes. For this study, we are engaging in Action Research, seeking to enhance the recruitment process within college athletics. If you have been through the recruitment process and are currently playing at a Division I institution, would you like to help me by participating and being a part of a recorded zoom interview? This interview should not take more than 15 minutes. The interview will be conducted by myself and is completely voluntary.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. What made you choose the particular school you are at now?
2. What factors separated the coaches from each school?
3. Describe your recruitment process.
4. Describe the relationship between the coaches and you, as well as your family members.
5. What factors were the biggest in your decision to choose your school?
6. Describe any challenges you faced during the recruiting process.
7. What was the deciding factor between your top two schools?
8. How did you handle telling the coaches that you were not going to attend their school?
9. How would you describe your relationship with your coach and the coach(es) that recruited you.
10. Now that you are in college, has the experience lived up what you were told it would be during the recruiting process?

Appendix C



Division of Scholarly Integrity and
 Research Compliance
 Institutional Review Board
 North End Center, Suite 4120 (MC 0497)
 300 Turner Street NW
 Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
 540/231-3732
 irb@vt.edu
<http://www.research.vt.edu/siro/hrpp>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 28, 2021
TO: Richard James Rateau
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572)
PROTOCOL TITLE: The Recruitment of Student-Athletes: Building Trust Between Coaches and Players
IRB NUMBER: 21-171

Based on the submitted project description and items listed in the Special Instructions section found on Page 2, the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) has determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by HHS and FDA regulations.

Further review and approval by the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) is not required because this is not human research. This determination applies only to the activities described in the submitted project description and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made you must immediately submit an Amendment to the HRPP for a new determination. Your amendment must include a description of the changes and you must upload all revised documents. At that time, the HRPP will review the submission activities to confirm the original "Not Research" decision or to advise if a new application must be made.

If there are additional undisclosed components that you feel merit a change in this initial determination, please contact our office for a consultation.

Please be aware that receiving a "Not Research" Determination is not the same as IRB review and approval of the activity. You are NOT to use IRB consent forms or templates for these activities. If you have any questions, please contact the Virginia Tech HRPP office at 540-231-3732 or irb@vt.edu.

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Determined As: **Not Research**
 Protocol Determination Date: **April 28, 2021**

ASSOCIATED FUNDING:

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this protocol, if required.

Invent the Future