Relationships Between Club Activity Stressors, Commitment to Sports, and Resilience in High School Athletes Belonging to School Athletic Clubs

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Introduction: School athletic clubs serve as central sites of sports activities for many junior and senior high school students in Japan. School athletic clubs preserve the traditions of pre-war junior and senior high schools, and constitute a sports-education system unique to Japan. Although other countries maintain athletic clubs, only in Japan is there a system, an environment, and leaders (school teachers) under which school athletic clubs seek to win national championships. This system is characterized by the incorporation of sport within school-based education; this arrangement allows students to regularly perform athletic activities. Three million junior and senior high school students spend 700 hours each on athletic club activities annually. These facts indicate a large number of school athletic clubs performing extremely intensive physical training activities. The question thus arises: do school athletic clubs’ activities truly cultivate the minds and spirits of young athletes, given the current environment has these problems? In our study, we surveyed athletes belonging to school athletic clubs to examine relationships between concepts related to mental strength and ideas about sports. The authors specifically addressed sport commitment and resilience. Scanlan et al. proposed a theory of sport commitment, which describes athletes’ persistence in, connection with, and devotion to sports. Research has examined resilience since the 1990s; in Japan, resilience has been discussed in terms of ‘ability to recover’ and ‘restoration of strength’. Resilience has also been considered ‘mental strength’, which enables one to recover from stress or negative life events, and to recuperate after harm. Additionally, as students may experience a variety of stressors unique to school athletic clubs, stress measures specific to these clubs were used. This study aimed to investigate relationships among these factors.

Method: Anonymous questionnaire surveys were administered. Participants were students (n = 203) attending private high schools in the Tokyo metropolitan district. Questionnaires were (1) Hagiwara et al.’s Commitment to Sports Scale, (2) the Resilience Scale developed by Yamagishi and revised by Oshio and Ishige et al., (3) Shibukura et al.’s Stressor Scale for High School Athletic Club Members, and (4) a face sheet inquiring whether the participant is a member of a school athletic club. For follow-up investigation, each participant was issued a password. Data were collected from the 11th to the 15th of May 2015.


We subsequently internally analysed the athletic club member group. Using the mean score on the Commitment to Sports Scale (M = 23.95, SD = 5.14), we divided participants into an ‘above-mean group’ (n = 94) and a ‘below-mean group’ (n = 58), and then investigated relationships between the two groups’ scores on the Resilience Scale and the Stressor Scale for High School Athletic Club Members. Scores were compared using analysis of variance. Scores on each factor of the Resilience Scale were compared between the above- and below-mean groups. Scores were significantly higher for all factors in the above-mean group (p < .01) (Figure-1). Similarly, regarding the Stressor Scale for High School Athletic Club Members, analysis of variance was used to compare the above- and
The below-mean group. Results showed that the below-mean group’s scores on four factors—‘competitiveness’, ‘coaches’, ‘practice time’, and ‘comrades’—were significantly higher \((p < .01\) or \(.05\)) (Figure-1).

**Discussions:** Regarding the Commitment to Sports Scale’s above- and below-mean groups, significant differences were observed between these two groups in scores on the Resilience Scale and on the Stressor Scale for High School Athletic Club Members; the above-mean group had significantly higher Resilience Scale scores. This suggests that a persistence in and devotion to sports may strengthen resilience.

Further, regarding the Commitment to Sports Scale, stressor scores for ‘competitiveness’, ‘coaches’, ‘practice time’, and ‘comrades’ were significantly higher in the below-mean group. We consider this indicates a tendency to find these factors more stressful when commitment to sports is low.

It is of critical interest that opposing tendencies were observed in scores on the Resilience Scale and on the Stressor Scale for High School Athletic Club Members when comparing the above- and below-mean groups. We plan to complete follow-up surveys examining these effects, to further investigate relationships between these scales.

**Conclusions:** The results of our survey of High School athletes who are members of school athletic clubs suggests the following:

- Greater commitment to sports is significantly related to greater resilience.
- Less commitment to sports is significantly related to increased feelings of stress regarding school athletic club activities.