



Background

- Collegiate athletes are expected to manage their athletic and academic commitments which may increase their levels of stress ¹
- Increased levels of stress increases the susceptibility of mental health issues ^{2,3}
- A survey from the National College Health Assessment found that 31% of males and 48% of females reported symptoms of either depression or anxiety ³
- Collegiate athletes are less likely to utilize mental health care services despite reporting symptoms of depression or anxiety ³

Objective

- To determine whether there is a relationship between sports-related commitment and academic stress in UCSD collegiate athletes

Methods

- Survey based research study available to UCSD collegiate athletes (May 2023)
- The survey was shared to UCSD athletic assistant coaches and UCSD professors in order to collect data
- Flyers with the survey QR code were distributed and posted around the UCSD campus
- Sample Size was 64 participants
- Analyzed data using Chi-Square Tests, significance level set at .05
- Questions were pulled from Perceived Academic Stress scale (PAS)



Results

- Concentration levels in academics decreased as a result of sport-related time commitments (**Table 3**)
- Distraction levels increased due to sport-related time commitments (**Table 3**)
- Although average sport-related hours were much higher in-season compared to off-season, there still were 28% who reported spending 16+ hours on sports-related commitments (**Fig.1**)
- Perceived levels of academic stress was statistically associated with increased course load among UCSD collegiate athletes (**Fig.2**)
- No association was found between sport-related hours spent while off-season and academic stress

Table 1. Demographics of Sample Size N=64

Gender	Counts (%)
Female	42 (66%)
Male	22 (34%)
Class Level	
Freshman	23 (36%)
Sophomore	15 (24%)
Junior	13 (20%)
Senior	13 (20%)
Sport Status	
In-season	30 (47%)
Off-season	34 (53%)
Years on UCSD Team	
1yr	26 (41%)
2yrs	20 (31%)
3yrs	9 (14%)
4 or more yrs	9 (14%)

Table 2. Athletic Sport Breakdown

Sports	Counts (%)
Baseball	2 (3%)
Basketball	1 (2%)
Fencing	11 (17%)
Rowing	8 (13%)
Cross Country	1 (2%)
Track & Field	1 (2%)
Tennis	7 (11%)
Water Polo	11 (17%)
Volleyball	4 (6%)
Swimming & Diving	4 (6%)
Softball	3 (4%)
Soccer	3 (4%)
Two or more sports	8 (13%)

Table 3. Results for sport-related hours while in-season and academic stress

Statement	Pearson Chi-Square Significance (2-sided)
1. I usually procrastinate on my class assignments.	.107
2. I usually think that my course load is too much.	<.001
3. I usually have trouble concentrating in my classes.	<.001
4. I am usually distracted in class.	<.001
5. I believe I have enough time to study for my exams.	.379

Figure 1. Average sport-related hours spent in-season v. off-season

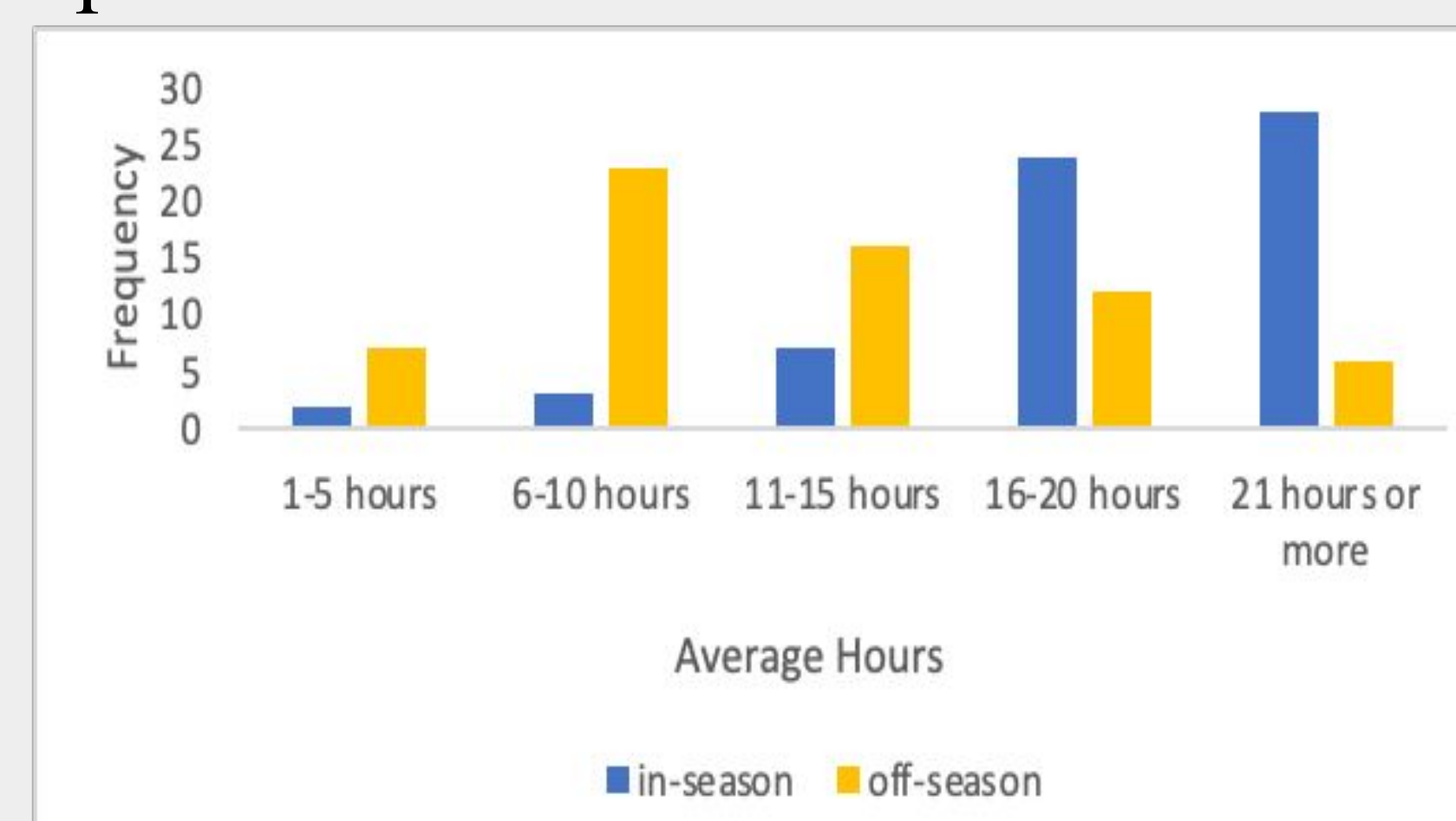


Figure 1 illustrates how athletes spend more time per week dedicated to their sport while in-season than when off-season.

Figure 2. Responses for Participants Belief that course load is too much when in-season

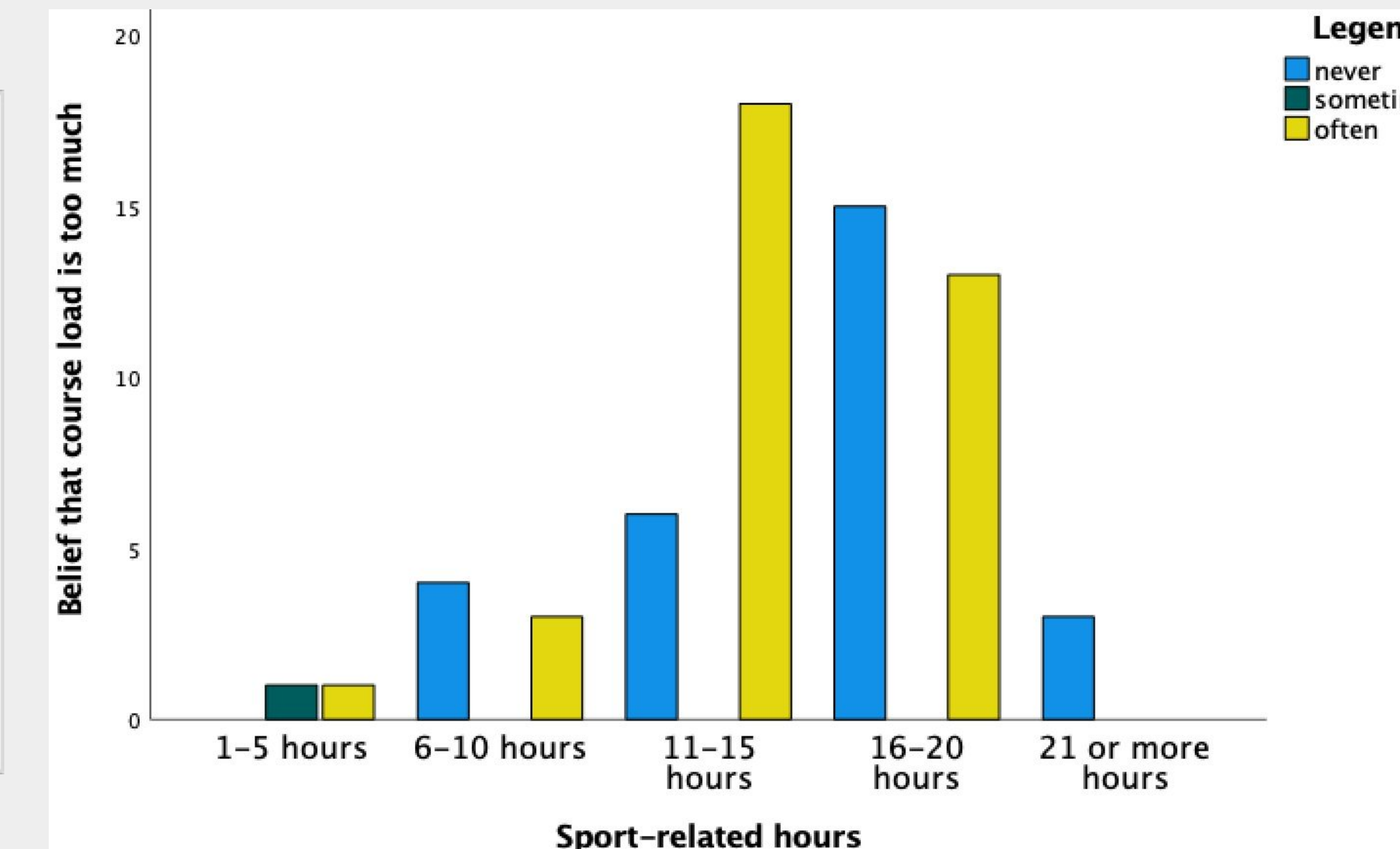


Figure 2 shows how course load size is perceived depending on the number of sport-related hours spent while in-season.

Conclusion

- While in-season, UCSD collegiate athletes are more likely to experience academic stress due to course load size and difficulty concentrating because of increased distraction levels all of which increases their vulnerability to mental health issues as stated in the literature
- UCSD collegiate athletes are in need of more time management resources while in-season to balance their sport and academic commitments to ensure academic and athletic success
- The amount of time UCSD collegiate athletes spend on sport-related commitments while off-season is not associated with academic stress

Policy Implementation

- UC San Diego Athletics commits to focus more on academic success rather than competitiveness in sports through their Strategic Plan for Athletics 2024-2028:
 - Implement study days for students to work on school related assignments
 - Create tutoring sessions at the Teaching+Learning Commons specifically for student athletes
 - support groups for struggling student athletes

Abstract & References

