



Development of Strategies to Improve the Achievement of Football Players in University

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Abstract

Background and Aim: Football's global appeal is driven by its simplicity and community-building. In China, university football is growing, but challenges in infrastructure, coaching, and academic balance remain. This article aims to study the current situation, problems and approaches of strategies to improve the achievement of football athletes' students in higher education.

Materials and Methods: The study is structured into three phases aimed at developing strategies to enhance the academic achievement of football athletes in higher education. Phase 1 involves analyzing the current situation, identifying problems, and gathering data through document review, questionnaires, and interviews. Phase 2 focuses on drafting and refining strategies with input from experts using the Delphi technique. Phase 3 confirms the strategies' quality and feasibility, with experts validating the final strategies through a structured assessment process before summarizing the findings in a final report.

Result: The research has successfully developed a comprehensive strategy aimed at improving the academic and athletic achievements of university football athletes. The strategy addresses multiple facets of athlete development, including academic support, athletic training, life skills and career development, mental health, coaching, and the integration of political education and citizenship. Each aspect of the strategy is designed to create a balanced and supportive environment that empowers student-athletes to excel in both their academic and athletic pursuits. By fostering collaboration between academic advisors, coaches, and mental health professionals, and incorporating evidence-based practices.

Conclusion: The strategy aims to enhance performance, reduce injury rates, and improve overall well-being. Furthermore, the inclusion of life skills, career development, and political education ensures that athletes are well-prepared for life beyond sports, with a strong sense of citizenship and social responsibility. The research concludes that a holistic approach, which integrates these elements, is essential for the long-term success and satisfaction of student-athletes, both during and after their university careers.

Keywords: Studying Strategies; Achievement of Football Athletes' Students; Football Athletes' Students in Higher Education

Introduction

Football is the world's most popular sport due to its simplicity, accessibility, and global appeal. The sport requires minimal equipment and is easily played in various settings, fostering grassroots engagement (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009). Football's global reach, particularly through international competitions like the World Cup, cultivates a shared identity and community among fans. The sport's inherent drama, unpredictability, and star players like Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo also contribute to its popularity (Whannel, 2002). Additionally, football fosters a sense of belonging and national pride, further enhancing its global appeal (Hobsbawm, 1990).

In China, football has gained traction at the university level, benefiting from the integration of the sport into physical education programs (Huang and Hong, 2020). Universities invest in facilities, host tournaments, and promote football as a way for students to engage in physical activity and develop teamwork skills (Li and Qi, 2021). National initiatives aimed at growing football in China have further spurred interest at the university level (Zeng and Zhou, 2018). However, challenges remain, including a lack of comprehensive football education, insufficient coaching quality, inadequate infrastructure, and difficulty balancing academics and sports (Chen and Wang, 2018).

Cultural biases that prioritize academics over athletics, along with fragmented administrative support, also hinder football's development. Despite these challenges, Chinese universities continue to make progress, with football playing a key role in school sports reform. Addressing these obstacles through improved education, coaching, and support systems can further integrate football into university life, contributing to the sport's growth in China (Wang and Li, 2020).





Objectives

1. To develop strategies to improve the achievement of football athletes' students in higher education.

Literature Review

This article mainly focuses on development of studying strategies to improve the achievement of football athletes' students in higher education. The following literatures and research will review as follow:

1. Strategic management

Strategic management is a critical aspect of organizational success, guiding long-term goals and the allocation of resources to achieve competitive advantage. Various scholars have defined strategic management through different lenses, focusing on aspects such as planning, decision-making, and implementation processes. Rumelt, R. P. (2011) - Strategic management is defined as the identification and execution of strategies that focus on achieving significant improvement in an organization's performance. Johnson, G., Scholes, K., & Whittington, R. (2008) - They define strategic management as the direction and scope of an organization over the long term, which achieves advantage through the configuration of resources within a challenging environment. Strategic management refers to the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of decisions that enable an organization to achieve its long-term objectives. It involves assessing internal and external environments, aligning resources with goals, and ensuring adaptability to changing circumstances.

2. Academic achievement

Academic Achievement refers to measurable and assessable learning outcomes that reflect the knowledge, skills, and competencies students acquire through various levels of education. This concept encompasses multiple dimensions of learning. These outcomes are typically evaluated through diverse assessment methods, including standardized test scores, grade point averages, and other evaluative measures that demonstrate the attainment of educational objectives. Bloom's Taxonomy is a framework developed by Benjamin Bloom (1956) that classifies educational objectives into different levels of cognitive complexity. It ranges from basic knowledge acquisition to higher order thinking skills, including knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

3. Football achievement

Football Achievement refers to the measurable success or performance of football players in competitive settings. It encompasses various aspects such as individual skill levels, team success, and overall impact on the game. It is often evaluated through metrics like goals scored, assists, defensive contributions, and team rankings. Gordon, (2013) explores football achievement from a performance metrics perspective, emphasizing how players' individual statistics, such as goals scored and assists, contribute to overall team success. This study highlights the role of quantifiable achievements in evaluating player performance. Schempp & Harnish, (2012) focus on the psychological aspects of football achievement. They examine how mental toughness and resilience contribute to players' success and their ability to perform under pressure.

4. Related research

Bompa (1999) defines physical conditioning as a comprehensive process that involves training the body to enhance its performance in specific sports. This process includes strength training, endurance exercises, flexibility, and coordination, which are tailored to meet the demands of the sport being played.

Fleck & Kraemer, (2004) explain that physical conditioning is the systematic improvement of physical abilities such as strength, speed, agility, and endurance through structured training programs. These programs are designed to prepare athletes for the physical demands of their sports.

Hao (2022) emphasizes that with the development of the times, school teaching is increasingly focusing on quality education. Primary school physical education teachers must adapt to the changing times, employ their initiative, introduce innovative physical education forms, and foster students' physical development. In this article, the author discusses relevant strategies for teaching football projects in primary school physical education based on personal experience, aiming to create an effective primary school football classroom.



Garcia and Subia (2019) emphasized that in terms of study habits, the athletes put forth their best effort on exams and quizzes, actively participated in class activities and discussions, and submitted all academic requirements they missed right after the competition. Nevertheless, they need to improve in completing assignments on time and working independently on assignments and other school projects. Regarding self-discipline, they strongly agreed that their participation in school athletics helps them develop better time management skills. They also reported being thoroughly prepared, showing discipline, and staying focused on the plan. Nevertheless, they need to become more responsive to their academic work. Lastly, their academic performance was found to have a significant relationship with participation in school athletics. This implies that the higher the academic performance, the more the respondents participated in school athletics.

Conceptual Framework

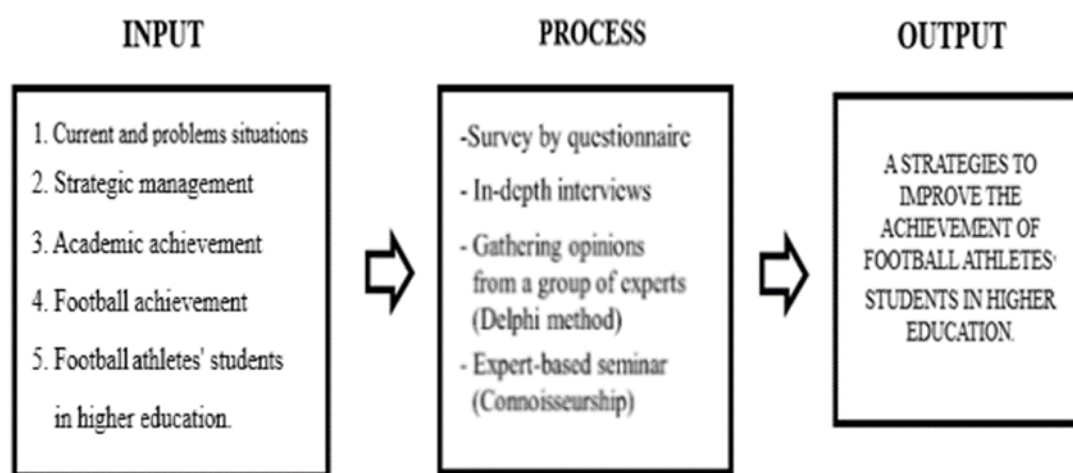


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Methodology

The research procedures were carried out as shown in the following table:

Step of research	Target group	Instruments	Data analysis	Results
1. To study the current situation, problems and approaches of strategies to improve the achievement of football athletes' students in higher education.	- Strategic management - Academic achievement - Football achievement - Football athletes' students in higher education - Related research	Websites used to search for information, including CNKI, Google Scholar, and others.	Content analysis	Components utilized in the creation of the questionnaire
	200 football athletes from 10 universities in Guangdong province	Questionnaire Survey form (IOC=0.86), Cronbach's Alpha	$\bar{x} \pm SD$ - PNI modified Value	- Modified Priority Needs Index - Classification of "Strength" and "Weakness"



Step of research	Target group	Instruments	Data analysis	Results
		Coefficient ($\alpha = 0.81$)		
	30 football coach, PE teachers and administrators in 10 universities in Guangdong province - SWOT analysis	Interview form Tows matrix analysis template	Content analysis Tows matrix analysis	- Classification of “Opportunities” and “Threats” - The classified of strategies: SO, ST, WO, WT Weihrich, H. (1982) - Draft of the questionnaire structure for collecting Delphi consensus data, designed based on the POLC framework (Jones, G. R., & George, J. M. ,2019) and McKinsey 7S model Peters, T. J., & (Waterman, R. H. ,1982)
2. To draft strategies to improve the achievement of football athletes’ students in higher education.	17 Experts	Delphi techniques’ questionnaire (IOC=0.92)	-Mdn \geq 3.50 and IQR \leq 1.50	The final draft of strategies to improve the achievement of football athletes’ students in higher education
3. To confirm strategies to improve the achievement of football athletes’ students in higher education.	11 Experts	Evaluation record form	Content analysis	Strategies to improve the achievement of football athletes’ students in higher education

Results

After completing the entire research process, the researcher was able to summarize the findings as shown in the following figure.

THE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF FOOTBALL ATHLETES' STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION					
A. Academic Support and Integration	B. Athletic Training and Development	C. Life Skills and Career Development	D. Mental Health and Well-being	E. Coaching and Leadership	F. Integration of Political Education and Citizenship
Learning Achievement Expectations					
1. Improved GPA and Academic Retention Rates 2. Higher Graduation Rates Among Student-Athletes 3. Balanced Academic and Athletic Responsibilities	1. Enhanced Athletic Performance and Reduced Injury Rates 2. Increased Overall Fitness and Well-Being 3. Higher Levels of Athlete Satisfaction and Motivation	1. Better Preparedness for Post-Collegiate Life and Careers 2. Stronger Leadership Qualities and Life Skills 3. Higher Rates of Employment and Career Satisfaction After Graduation	1. Improved Mental Health and Well-Being Among Athletes 2. Reduced Burnout and Stress-Related Issues 3. Enhanced Focus and Performance	1. Stronger Coach-Athlete Relationships and Improved Communication 2. More Effective Goal-Setting and Achievement 3. Higher Levels of Athlete Engagement and Satisfaction	1. Enhanced Sense of Citizenship and Civic Engagement 2. Development of Leadership Skills that Extend Beyond Sports 3. Greater Awareness of Social and Political Issues Among Athletes

The figure summarizes the structure of 'Strategies to Improve the Achievement of Football

Players in University.' The researcher summarized the details of each strategy, as shown in the following table.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF FOOTBALL ATHLETES' STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Vision
Created an academic environment where student-athletes excelled academically while balancing athletic commitments, fostering lifelong learning and personal growth. Empowered student-athletes to reach their full potential through holistic development, individualized training, and a commitment to health and well-being. Fostered a supportive, dynamic environment prioritizing mental health, effective communication, and shared success both on and off the field.

Mission
Provide comprehensive academic support and athletic training programs that empower student-athletes to excel in both academics and sports while maintaining optimal health and well-being. Equip student-athletes with essential life skills, career development opportunities, and mental health resources to foster personal growth and future success. Empower coaches with leadership and communication skills to nurture positive relationships and holistic athlete development.

A. Academic Support and Integration

Planning	Strategy: Develop a targeted academic support strategy that includes tailored advising, mandatory study halls, and flexible scheduling. Shared Values: Promote the importance of balancing academics and athletics.
Organizing	Structure: Establish a dedicated organizational structure with academic advisors who specialize in supporting student-athletes. Systems: Implement academic tracking and scheduling systems to accommodate athletes' unique needs.



Leading	Style: Foster a collaborative approach between faculty and coaches to support athletes academically and athletically. Staff: Hire or train academic advisors with expertise in working with student-athletes.
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Controlling	Systems: Use academic monitoring systems to regularly assess progress and adjust support strategies as needed. Skills: Equip advisors with skills in academic counseling, time management, and student engagement to effectively manage and improve student outcomes.
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Learning Achievement Expectations	1. Improved GPA and Academic Retention Rates 2. Higher Graduation Rates Among Student-Athletes 3. Balanced Academic and Athletic Responsibilities
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B. Athletic Training and Development

Planning	Strategy: Design individualized training programs that align with academic schedules and long-term athletic goals, incorporating sports science. Shared Values: Foster a commitment to athletic excellence and overall well-being.
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Organizing	Structure: Develop a training structure that incorporates sports science, cross-training, and recovery protocols. Systems: Utilize performance tracking systems to monitor athletic development and adjust training programs accordingly.
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Leading	Style: Emphasize continuous improvement and scientific approaches in training through effective coaching leadership. Staff: Employ coaches with expertise in sports science, biomechanics, nutrition, and injury prevention.
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Controlling	Systems: Regularly assess athletic performance using established tracking systems and make necessary adjustments. Skills: Develop coaching skills in sports psychology, nutrition, and injury prevention to optimize athlete performance.
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Learning Achievement Expectations	1. Enhanced Athletic Performance and Reduced Injury Rates 2. Increased Overall Fitness and Well-Being 3. Higher Levels of Athlete Satisfaction and Motivation
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C. Life Skills and Career Development

Planning	Strategy: Create a comprehensive program focused on leadership, life skills, and career development, including workshops, career counseling, and alumni mentorship. Shared Values: Emphasize the importance of life skills and career preparedness as part of the athletic and academic journey.
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Organizing	Structure: Establish a network connecting athletes with alumni and career opportunities, supported by career counselors and mentorship programs. Systems: Implement systems for career counseling, internships, and job placements that align with both academic and athletic interests.
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Leading	Style: Foster supportive leadership that encourages personal growth and professional readiness. Staff: Engage career counselors and alumni who can mentor and guide athletes in their career development.
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Controlling	Systems: Track participation in workshops and career outcomes to refine and improve the program. Skills: Focus on developing leadership, communication, and financial literacy skills among athletes.
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Learning Achievement Expectations	1. Better Preparedness for Post-Collegiate Life and Careers 2. Stronger Leadership Qualities and Life Skills 3. Higher Rates of Employment and Career Satisfaction After Graduation
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D. Mental Health and Well-being

Planning	Strategy: Develop a comprehensive mental health program that includes resources, workshops, and peer support networks for athletes. Shared Values: Promote a culture of mental well-being and support within the athletic program.
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Organizing	Structure: Integrate mental health resources into the athletic program, ensuring easy access to counseling and support networks. Systems: Implement systems for mental health monitoring and provide regular workshops on stress management and time management.
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Leading	Style: Adopt an empathetic leadership style that prioritizes mental health and well-being, encouraging open communication and support. Staff: Employ counselors and mental health professionals with expertise in sports psychology.
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Controlling	Systems: Regularly assess mental health outcomes and make adjustments to the program as necessary. Skills: Regularly assess and develop the skills of coaching staff and mental health professionals to ensure they can effectively address the mental health needs of athletes.
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Learning Achievement Expectations	1. Improved Mental Health and Well-Being Among Athletes 2. Reduced Burnout and Stress-Related Issues 3. Enhanced Focus and Performance
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E. Coaching and Leadership

Planning	Strategy: Strengthen coaching effectiveness through leadership development, focusing on holistic athlete development. Shared Values: Promote a shared commitment to athlete success and personal development within the coaching staff.
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Organizing	Structure: Establish a collaborative coaching model that includes input from academic advisors and mental health professionals. Systems: Use goal setting and feedback systems to track coaching effectiveness and athlete progress.
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Leading	Style: Adopt a leadership style that is inclusive, feedback-oriented, and focused on athlete development. Staff: Train coaches in leadership, communication, and motivational techniques.
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Controlling	Systems: Evaluate coaching effectiveness through athlete feedback and performance metrics, adjusting strategies as needed. Skills: Enhance coaches' skills in goal setting, motivation, and athlete engagement.
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Learning Achievement Expectations	1. Stronger Coach-Athlete Relationships and Improved Communication
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	2. More Effective Goal setting and Achievement 3. Higher Levels of Athlete Engagement and Satisfaction
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F. Integration of Political Education and Citizenship

Planning	Strategy: Foster citizenship and leadership through the integration of political education and community engagement in the athletic curriculum. Shared Values: Emphasize the importance of social responsibility, leadership, and active citizenship within the athletic community.
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Organizing	Structure: Create a curriculum that includes political education, community engagement, and collaborative learning opportunities for athletes. Systems: Implement systems for tracking civic engagement and leadership development among athletes.
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Leading	Style: Encourage a leadership style that promotes active citizenship, social awareness, and community involvement. Staff: Involve educators and coaches with expertise in political science, leadership, and community engagement.
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Controlling	Systems: Assess the impact of political education and citizenship programs on athletes' civic engagement and leadership skills, making adjustments as necessary. Skills: Develop skills in civic engagement, teamwork, and social responsibility among athletes
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Learning Achievement Expectations	1. Enhanced Sense of Citizenship and Civic Engagement 2. Development of Leadership Skills that Extend Beyond Sports 3. Greater Awareness of Social and Political Issues Among Athletes
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The research concludes that a holistic approach, which integrates these elements, is essential for the long-term success and satisfaction of student-athletes, both during and after their university careers.

Discussion

The strategic framework provided in the study highlights the multifaceted nature of student-athlete development, emphasizing the need for a balanced and holistic approach. This is particularly significant in higher education, where the dual pressures of academic achievement and athletic performance often place considerable stress on student-athletes.

Academic Support and Integration: The strategy in this area is particularly relevant, as it addresses the challenge of balancing academic and athletic responsibilities. The tailored academic support system, which includes advising, flexible scheduling, and mandatory study halls, is designed to improve GPA and retention rates among student-athletes. The focus on promoting lifelong learning and personal growth aligns with the broader educational goals of higher education institutions, ensuring that athletes are not only successful in their sports but also in their academic pursuits. Studies have shown that academic support systems tailored to the unique needs of student-athletes can significantly impact their academic performance and graduation rates (Comeaux, 2015). By creating a structured and supportive academic environment, universities can help athletes achieve academic success without compromising their athletic goals.

Athletic Training and Development: The focus on individualized training programs supported by sports science and injury prevention strategies is crucial for optimizing athletic performance and reducing injury rates. The inclusion of cross-training and recovery protocols further enhances this approach, contributing to the overall well-being of student-athletes. Research indicates that integrating sports science into training regimens can lead to significant improvements in athletic performance and injury prevention (Reilly and Ekblom, 2005). By adopting a holistic approach to athletic training, the strategy ensures that athletes are physically prepared to perform at their best while also maintaining their long-term health.

Life Skills and Career Development: The life skills and career development strategy aim to equip student-athletes with the tools they need to succeed beyond their collegiate careers. By focusing



on leadership, financial literacy, and career preparedness, this strategy addresses the often-overlooked aspect of post-collegiate life for athletes. The importance of life skills training for student-athletes cannot be overstated, as it prepares them for the realities of life after sports, whether they pursue professional athletic careers or other professions (Wylleman et al, 2004). This comprehensive approach ensures that athletes are well-rounded individuals, capable of navigating the challenges of life both on and off the field.

Mental Health and Well-being: The mental health and well-being strategy reflects a growing recognition of the importance of mental health in athletic performance. By providing accessible resources, fostering peer support, and integrating mental health education into the athletic program, this strategy aims to improve the overall well-being of student-athletes. The links between mental health and athletic performance is well-documented, with studies showing that mental health issues can significantly impact an athlete's ability to perform (Rao and Hong, 2022). By prioritizing mental health, this strategy not only supports athletes in their personal lives but also enhances their performance in both academic and athletic arenas.

Coaching and Leadership: The emphasis on developing coaching leadership skills, including communication, motivation, and goal setting, is essential for fostering positive coach-athlete relationships. This strategy also includes input from academic advisors and mental health professionals, ensuring a well-rounded approach to coaching. Effective coaching is a critical component of athlete development, with research highlighting the role of coaches in shaping athletes' experiences and outcomes (Jowett and Cockerill, 2003). By investing in leadership development for coaches, this strategy enhances the support system available to student-athletes, leading to better communication, stronger relationships, and improved performance.

Integration of Political Education and Citizenship: The innovative approach of integrating political education and citizenship into the athletic curriculum addresses the need for student-athletes to develop a sense of civic responsibility and social awareness. This strategy not only promotes active citizenship but also fosters leadership skills that extend beyond sports. Integrating political education into athletic programs is a novel approach that can have far-reaching implications for the development of student-athletes as informed and engaged citizens (Metzger, 2012). By exposing athletes to social and political issues, this strategy encourages them to take an active role in their communities, both during and after their athletic careers.

Recommendation

Application of Research Results

1. **Studying strategies validation:** The positive feedback from experts on the studying strategies based on the SWOT analysis, Tows matrix etc. Suggests that it is well-suited for addressing the challenges faced by football athletes. These studying strategies can serve as a foundation for similar initiatives aimed at enhancing the academic and athletic performance of football athletes in universities.

2. **Broader Applicability:** The studying strategies' adaptability to other sports and universities across China can inform strategies for football athletes, promoting a holistic approach to academic and athletic success. Leveraging insights from football can help tailor specific programs for football athletes, particularly in areas like time management and support services.

3. **Foundation for Future Research:** The insights gained can provide a framework for managing fitness centers, which are essential for the holistic development of athletes. Understanding the context of China is crucial, but this model can also inspire adaptations in different cultural settings, fostering international collaboration in sports education.

Future Study Recommendations

1. **Categorization of Data:** Future studies should focus on categorizing expert opinions and results more clearly. This approach will allow for a more nuanced understanding of the different factors influencing the academic and athletic experiences of football athletes.

2. **Advanced Statistical Analysis:** Transitioning from basic to advanced statistical methods will enhance the reliability and accuracy of findings. Utilizing quantitative measures will provide a more robust basis for evaluating the impact of various interventions on football athletes' academic performance.

3. **Expanding Participant Demographics:** Investigating elite football players beyond the university setting can yield valuable insights into the transition from university to professional sports. Understanding their experiences can inform more effective strategies for supporting athletes throughout their careers.

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