

ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING THE WELLNESS NEEDS OF BLACK MEN STUDENT ATHLETES

Sephora A. Wawa-Egbuche, M.S.

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The literature on the wellness of collegiate-level student-athletes highlights a lack of diversity in gender and racial/ethnic representation, often overlooking black student-athletes, who form the second largest group in college sports (Boyd et al., 2017; Elder et al., 2014; NCAA, 2012). Notably, female student-athletes are more represented than their male counterparts (Hinton et al., 2004; Stickler et al., 2022). Race, ethnicity, and gender significantly impact black collegiate athletes, particularly males. Additionally, the dearth of qualitative research on this issue is troubling, as such studies can provide deeper insights into these experiences (Biggerstaff, 2012). This qualitative, reflexive thematic analysis aimed to understand black men student-athletes' perceptions of wellness and factors they believed contributed to their wellness. This study focused on the questions, "What are the wellness needs of Black men student-athletes?" and "What influences their overall wellness?" The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 13 NCAA black men student-athletes from various regions in the U.S. Findings revealed that black men student athletes viewed wellness as inclusive of the connection between body and mind and emphasizing taking initiative for collective success in their personal, academic, and athletic pursuits. They also believed wellness encompassed a sense of belonging in their environments.