

Perception of barriers in dual careers and the importance given to psychological characteristics in athletes in training: a gender perspective

Authors/authorship:

- Antonio Eugenio Vélez-Alcázar
- Juan Alfonso García-Roca
- Raquel Vaquero-Cristóbal
- Antonio Peñalver-Asensio



Membership: Facultad de Deporte. UCAM Universidad Católica de Murcia **Country:** Spain

Facultad de Deporte. Universidad de Murcia

Centro de Estudios Olímpicos - UCAM

Origin of the Study

This research originates from the **UCAM ARETE Project**, entitled “*Determinant Factors of the Performance of Youth Athletes in the Regional Technification Program of Murcia*” (Code: CFE/CA/71-24).

It is a project **funded and conducted in collaboration with the High-Performance Center (CAR) of the Region of Murcia**, which serves as a reference hub for the development of young athletic talents.

Our broader aim is to understand the **factors influencing performance and well-being in youth athletes**, encompassing physical, psychological, academic, and social aspects.

Identified Barriers in Dual Careers



Time Constraints

Demanding athletic training schedules and academic commitments create significant time management challenges for student-athletes.



Competitive Pressure

High expectations and the intensity of competitive sports can exert substantial psychological pressure on young athletes.



Academic Structures

Traditional educational systems may lack the flexibility required to support athletes' unique needs for training, competition, and travel.



Gender Inequalities

Disparities in support, resources, and societal expectations can present unique challenges for athletes of different genders.

Aims of the Study

The study had two main objectives:

To analyze **gender differences** in the perception of balance and barriers within the dual career of youth high-performance athletes.

To examine differences in:

- **Athletic identity,**
 - **Performance-related psychological characteristics,**
- and the **importance attached to academic achievement.**





Methodology

Sample

A total of 119 track-and-field athletes participated, spanning categories U16, U18, and U20.



Male Athletes

M = 18.31 ± 2.31 years



Female Athletes

M = 17.27 ± 1.44 years

Context

All athletes were involved in programs of the CAR of the Region of Murcia and had competed in Spanish national championships.

Design

The study employed a cross-sectional and comparative design, differentiated by gender.

Instruments Utilized



AIMS

Athletic Identity Measurement Scale



CPRD

Psychological Characteristics Related to Sports Performance

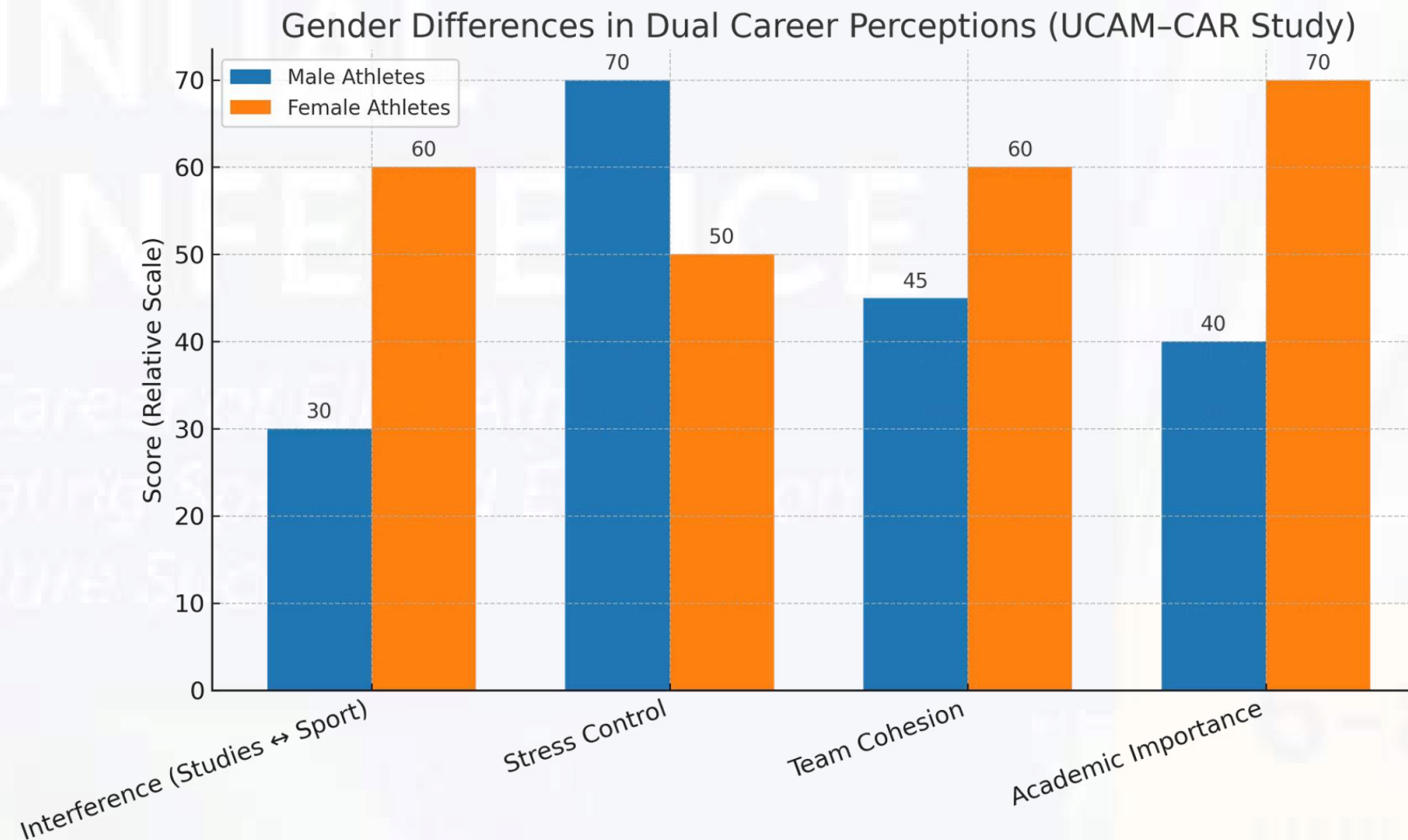


ESTPORT

Perceptions of Dual Career Questionnaire

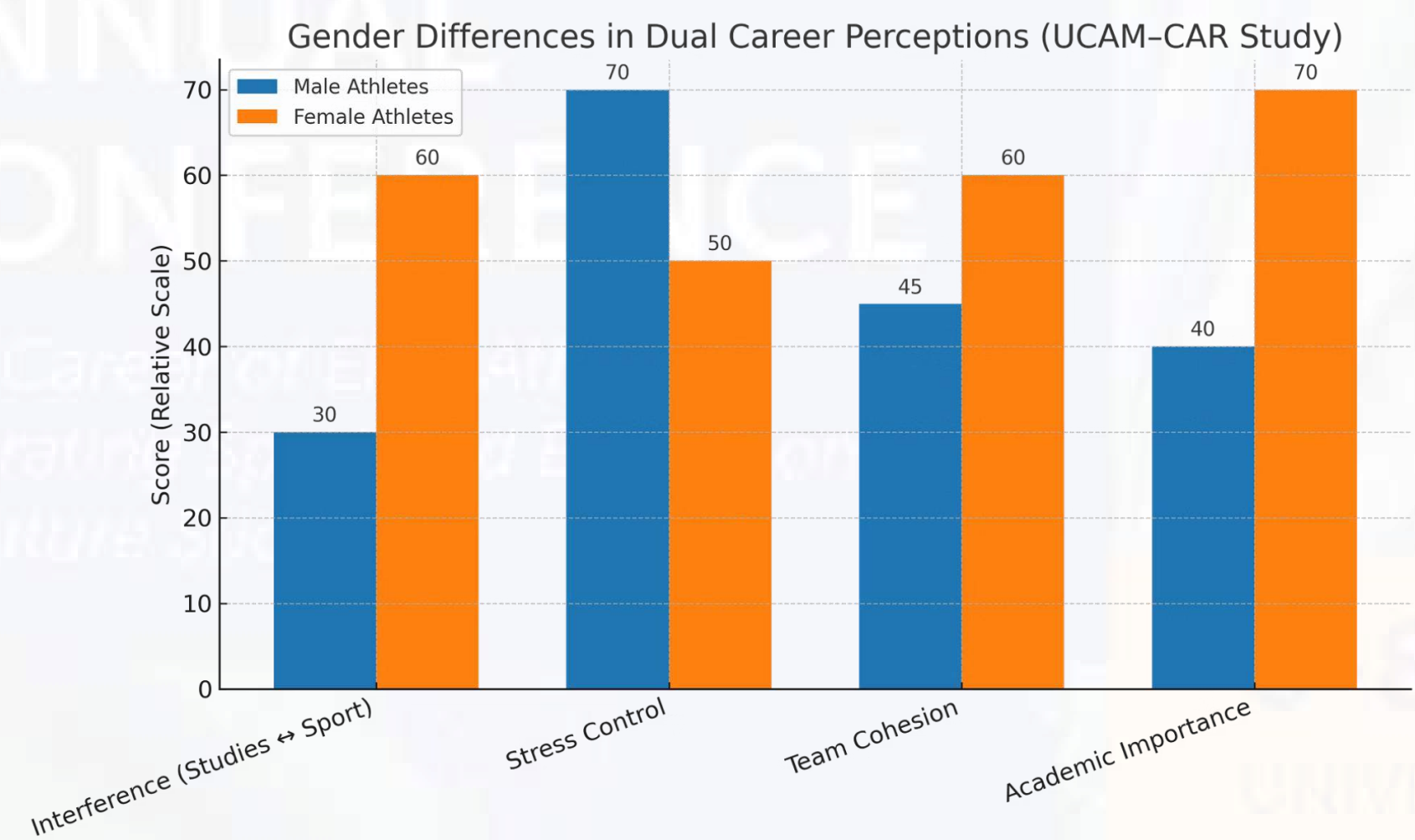
Key Findings

- **Perception of barriers:**Female athletes reported greater interference between academics and sport.
- **Athletic identity:**Female athletes scored higher on items reflecting emotional vulnerability, such as *“I feel bad about myself when I perform poorly in sport.”*



Key Findings

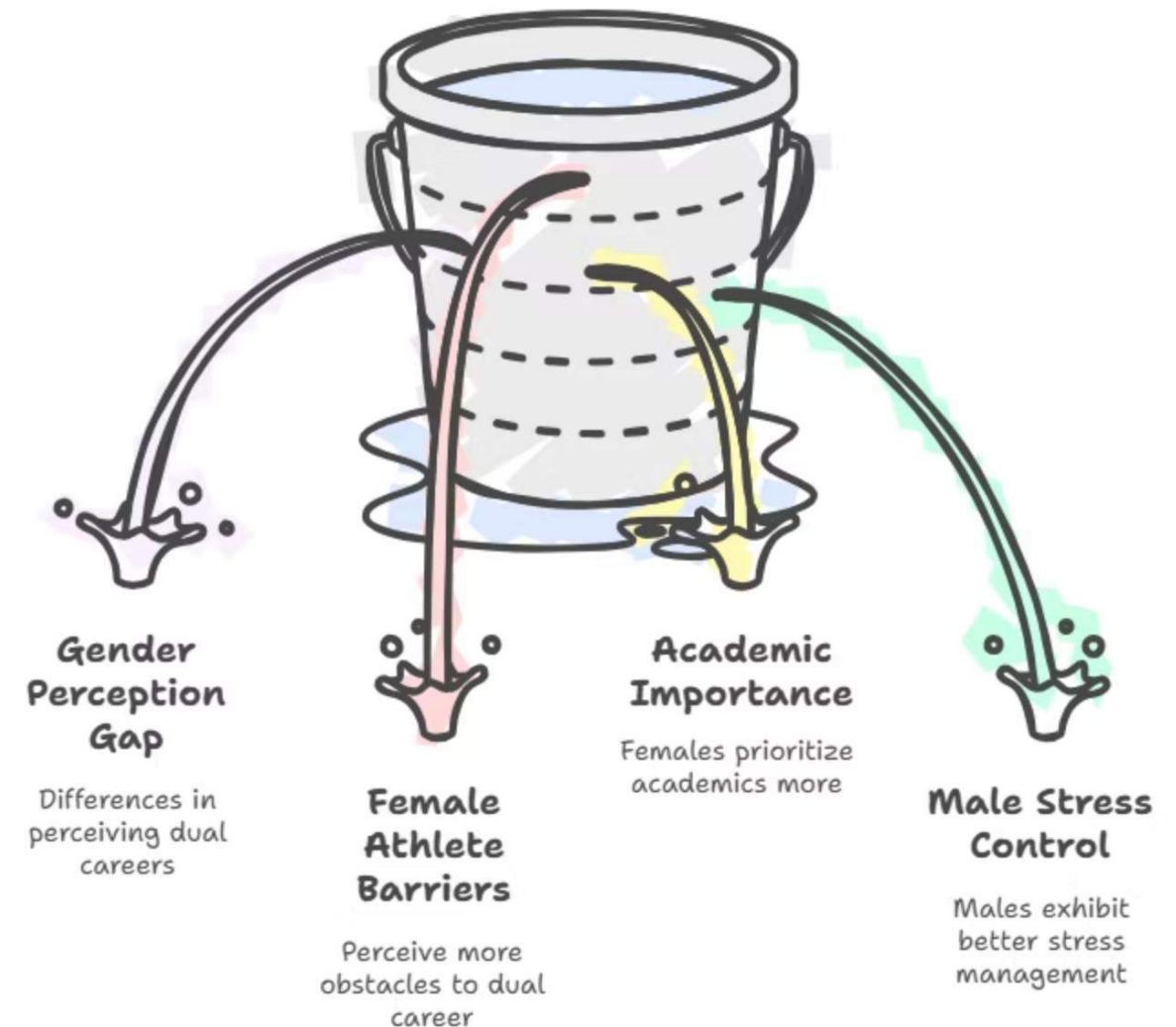
- **Psychological characteristics:**Male athletes showed stronger **stress control** and greater sensitivity to **performance evaluation**, while female athletes reported higher **team cohesion**.
- **Academic dimension:**Female athletes placed more importance on **achieving an academic degree** and expressed more doubts about their ability to achieve high grades.



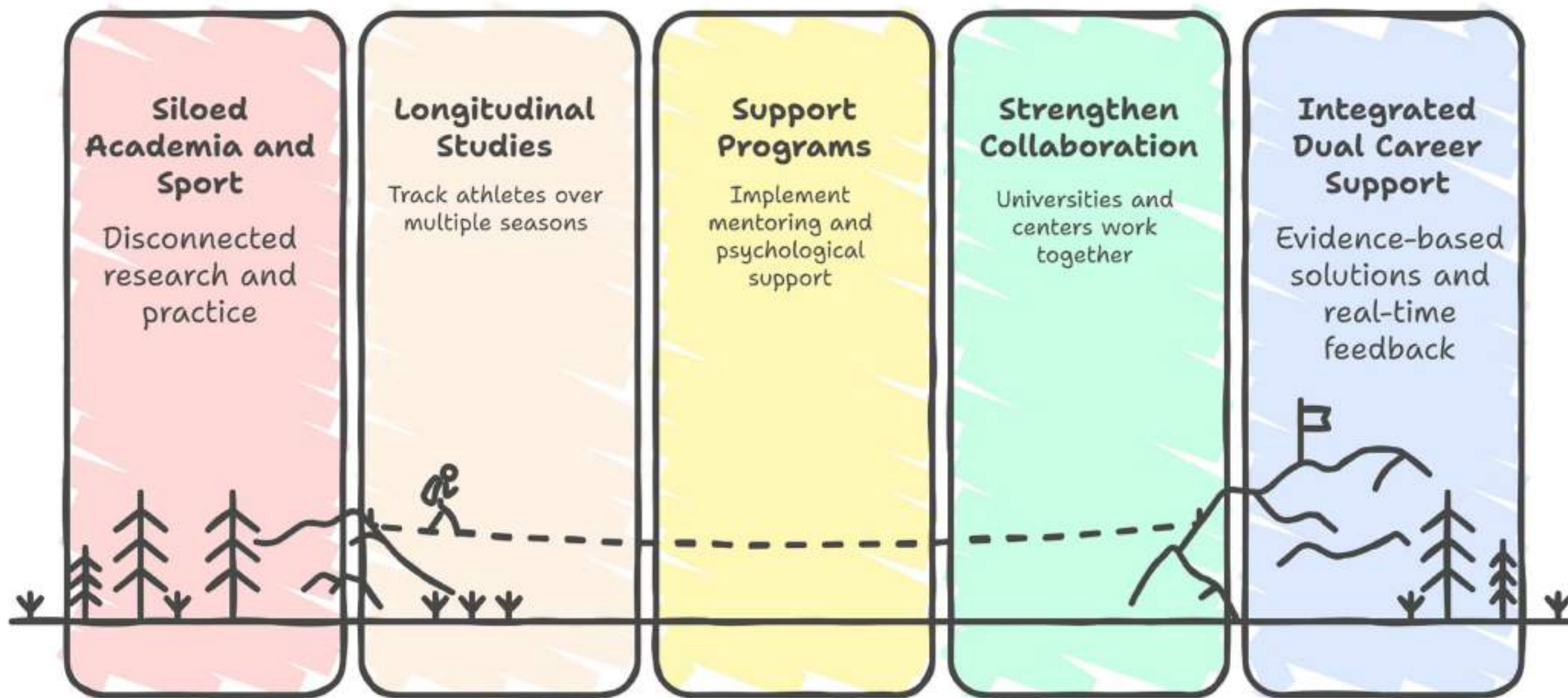
Conclusions

- There are **clear gender differences** in the perception of dual careers among youth athletes.
- Female athletes perceive more barriers and attach greater importance to academics, whereas male athletes score higher in stress control.
- These findings highlight the need for **tailored support programs** that address both academic and sporting demands, with sensitivity to gender-specific challenges.

Gendered Barriers in Youth Athlete Development



Future Directions and Practical Impact



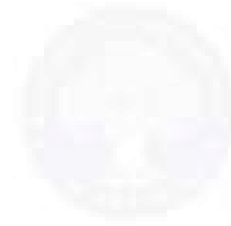
Research Impact



This communication presents preliminary results from the UCAM–CAR project on dual career barriers and psychological characteristics in youth athletes.

A more comprehensive and detailed version of this study —including full methodology, advanced statistical analyses, and extended discussion— has been **accepted for publication in a Q1 SJR-indexed journal** and is currently **in press**.

THANK YOU!



UNIVERSITĀTE
LATVIA

