

# Student athletes' perceptions of the occupation of sleep and its impact on well-being



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## 1. Background

Sleep is a central occupation that allows the body to rest. It supports performance in daily life and is essential to well-being (Tester & Foss, 2018). Student-athletes (SAs) regularly experience poor sleep due to demands of balancing two-time consuming aspects of their lives - sporting and academic. There is a lack of research exploring SA insights on sleep. This research will explore SA's perceptions of sleep and its impact on their well-being.

## 2. Research Question and Aims

*How do student athletes perceive the occupation of sleep and its impact on their well being?*

- To examine sleep routines that SA's engage in to facilitate sleep.

- To explore how sleep routines influence SA identity.

- To probe SA awareness of the relationship of sleep, to their health, well-being and performance.

## 3. Design

### Methodology

- Qualitative study
- Phenomenology

### Sample

- Purposive & snowball sampling
- Quercus Student Athletes

### Data collection

- Seven semi-structured interviews



## 4. Findings

### Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis Framework & Wilcock's (1999) *Doing, Being, Belonging, Becoming* Framework informed the analysis process.

### Theme 1 – Doing 'I sleep because I am an athlete'

"... it's kind of all like scheduled ... keeping to my routine" (Participant 1)

### Theme 1

### Theme 2

### Theme 2 – Being 'I sleep to be an athlete'

"If you do wake up after a very good night's sleep, the next morning you'll have a good session". (Participant 5)

### Theme 3

### Theme 3 – Belonging & Becoming

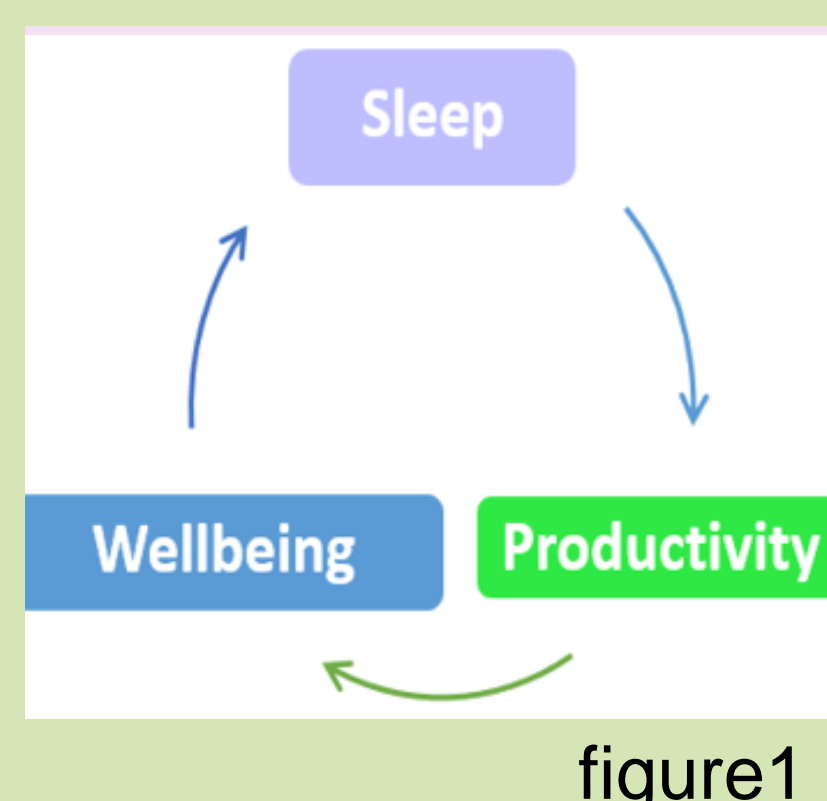
'I sleep because of the athlete that I am, those around me and who I want to become'

"We are all going through the same demands" (Participant 7)

"We are in a crew boat, so if you don't get good sleep, it might affect the boat the next morning" (Participant 5)

## 5. Discussion

**Doing:** Participants noted an indirect link between sleep & wellbeing with productivity connecting them (see figure1). **Sleep** enables SAs 'to do' productive occupations which impacts **well-being** (Wilcock, 2006).



**Being:** SAs prioritise **sleep routines** for sporting rather than academic performance, due to their greater **recognition** socially as an **athlete** (Beamon & Bell, 2011) and the shorter duration of sporting career (Moshkelgosha et al., 2012).

**Belonging & Becoming:** **Teammates support** SA sleep, well-being, identity and performance, a unique finding of this study.



## 6. Implications for practice

This research:

- ✓ Provides insights on SA sleep perspectives, a new OT research area in Ireland & recognises SAs as a unique group amongst the university community.
- ✓ Identifies potential OT role supporting SA sleep occupation.
- ✓ Recognises the role of coach education to build on SA understanding of the importance of sleep to performance.
- ✓ Advocates the harnessing of peer support for SA sleep & well being.
- ✓ Highlights potential for further research on OT role with SAs.

## 7. Conclusion

- Sleep enables SAs **to do** productive occupations.
- **To be** - SAs recognise that **belonging** to a team influences SA Identity.
- Sleep is important as it enables SAs **to become** successful and supports their well-being.

## 8. References

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