

Predicting Likelihood of NCAA Division I Athletic Department Mental Health and Mental Performance Staffing

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INTRODUCTION

- Intercollegiate student-athletes are a unique and vulnerable population that face specific psychosocial risks in comparison to the non-athletic student body.
- Intercollegiate athlete mental health services utilization (MHSU), defined as whether an individual uses services provided, is an emerging issue for intercollegiate athletic departments (Moreland, Coxe, & Yang, 2018).
- Student-athletes' struggling mental health has increasingly gained more recognition in the past decade, and the NCAA claims that it places mental health at the top of health concerns (NCAA, 2013; Moore, 2017).
- In response, the NCAA created recommendations for universities to take into consideration when searching for solutions to ensure the safety and mental well-being of their athletes (Moore, 2015), suggesting universities employ clinically licensed mental health practitioners (MHP) to provide services that can help engage athletes in treating potential behavioral mental health concerns emerging from participating in sport (NCAA, 2013).
- Athletic departments lacking specific mental health resources for student-athletes often have other staff members who are in frequent contact with their athletes on a daily basis (e.g., coaches or athletic trainers) that provide mental health counseling. These individuals are commonly practicing outside their realm of training and competency (Moreland, et al., 2018; Neal, et al., 2013; Moore, 2015).
- Experts suggest that mental health should be a priority of everyone who interacts with athletes but be overseen and managed by a few specified and dedicated members of sport organizations (Henriksen et al., 2020).
- Mental health services can be offered by a wide variety of professionals that include psychologists, licensed social workers, licensed mental health counselors, and psychiatrists. These licensed counseling professionals are qualified to treat mental health related issues, including depression, anxiety, or substance abuse. (Moreland et al., 2018)
- For performance-related objectives mental skills services are offered by sport psychology consultants, mental skills trainers and mental performance consultants. (Moreland et al., 2018)
- Regarding the spiritual needs of players, sport chaplains work directly with athletic departments to facilitate spiritual and pastoral care for athletes with specific religious needs (Gamble, Hill, & Parker, 2013).

PURPOSE

- The purpose of this study is to identify the mental health, mental performance, and ministry resources that are present in Division I athletic departments due to the lack of research on management of those resources in collegiate settings in scholarly literature (Sudano & Miles, 2017).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1: How many programs include mental health professionals in their athletic department staff listings?
- RQ2: How many programs include mental performance professionals in their athletic department staff listings?
- RQ3: How many programs include ministry/ chaplain staff in their athletic departments staff listings?
- RQ4: What institutional factors (subdivision membership and public/ private status) predict the staffing of mental health professionals in NCAA Division I athletic departments?

METHODS

- This study identifies MHP being staffed in NCAA Division I athletic programs and considers the influences of division and status as public/ private institution.
- Three coders conducted a census of 350 current members of NCAA Division I athletic departments to count the number of MHP in total, including licensed mental health counselor, social workers, psychologists listed on the official intercollegiate athletics staff directories.
- Consensus was met on the count of MHP in all athletic department staffs.
- Descriptive statistics were obtained, and six negative binomial regression models were used to determine the influence of the independent variables, subdivision membership (FBS (130), FCS (124), non-football (96)) and public (233)/ private institution (117), on the dependent variable of total MHP employees as a whole, social workers, counselors, psychologists/ psychiatrists respectively, CMPC, and ministry respectively. All models were significant ($p < .001$).

RESULTS

Table 1. Frequencies of schools with at least one of each staff position

Variables	All Schools	FBS	FCS	Non-football	Private	Public
Mental Health Practitioners	111 (31.7%)	73 (56.2%)	20 (16.1%)	18 (18.8)	25 (21.4%)	86 (36.9%)
Social Workers	21 (6.0%)	19 (14.6%)	1 (.8%)	1 (1.0%)	17 (14.5%)	4 (1.7%)
Mental Health Counselors	33 (9.4%)	20 (15.4%)	6 (4.8%)	7 (7.3%)	7 (6.0%)	26 (11.2%)
Psychologists/Psychiatrists	81 (23.1%)	64 (49.2%)	16 (12.9%)	11 (11.5%)	19 (16.2%)	62 (26.6%)
CMPC	43 (12.2%)	29 (22.3%)	7 (5.6%)	7 (7.3%)	10 (8.5%)	33 (14.2%)
Ministry/Chaplains	11 (3.1%)	0 (0%)	4 (3.2%)	7 (7.3%)	10 (8.5%)	1 (0.4%)

Figure 1. Frequencies of mental health professionals staffed

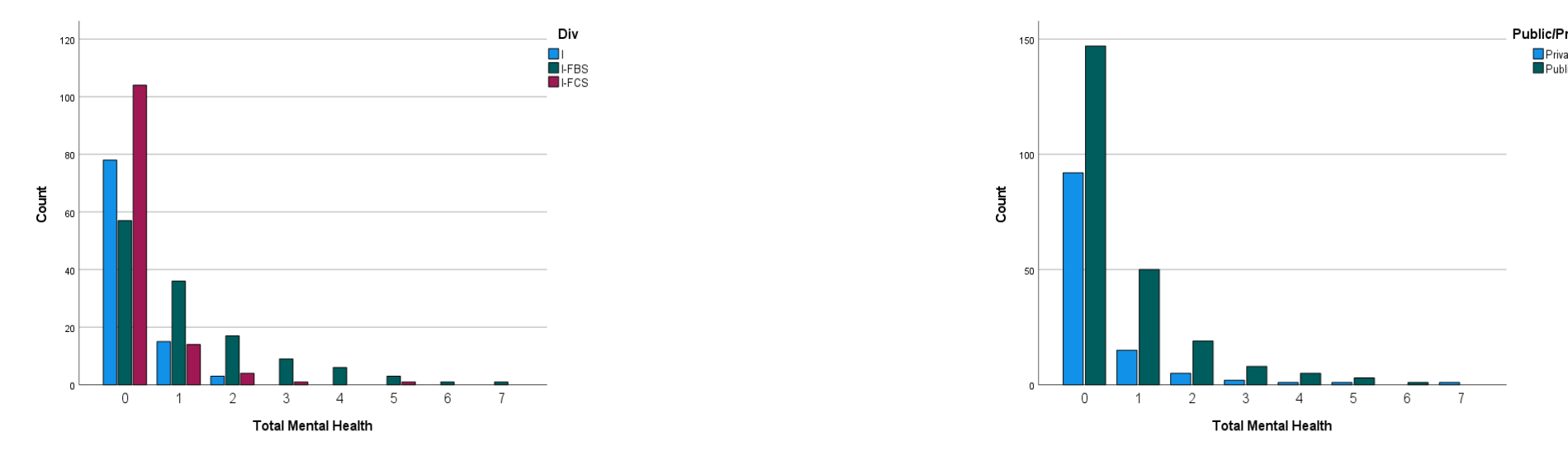


Figure 2. Frequency of social workers staffed

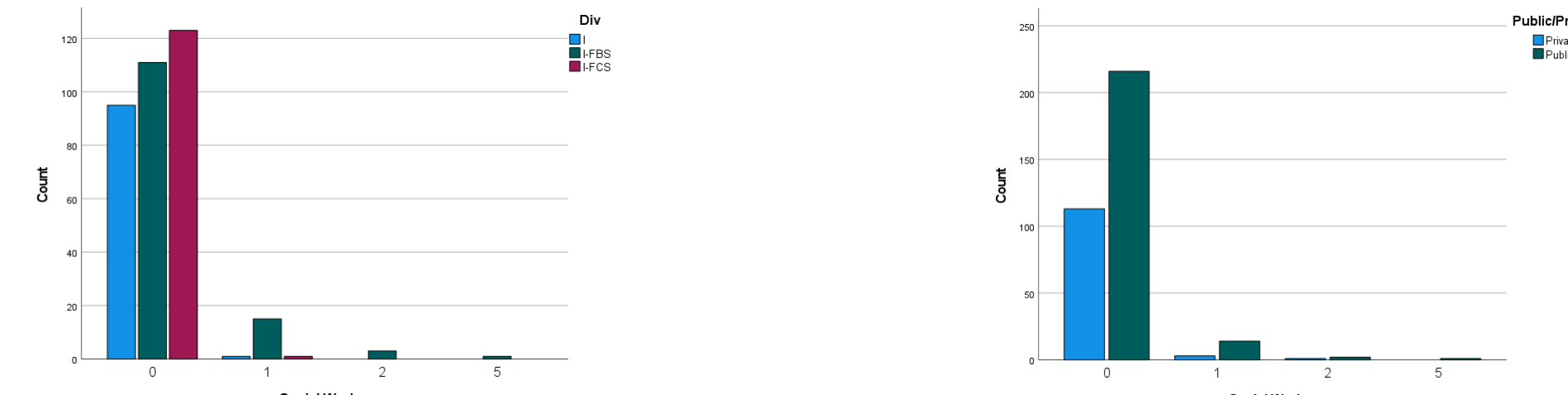


Figure 3. Frequency of mental health counselors staffed



Figure 4. Frequency of psychologists/ psychiatrists staffed



Figure 5. Frequency of CMPC staffed

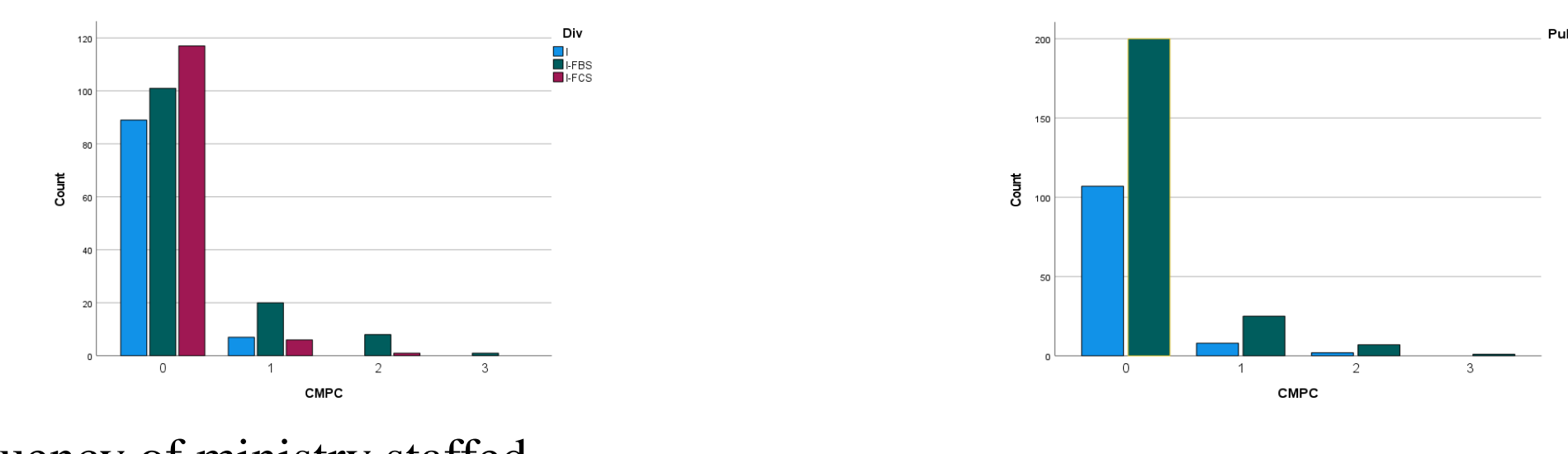
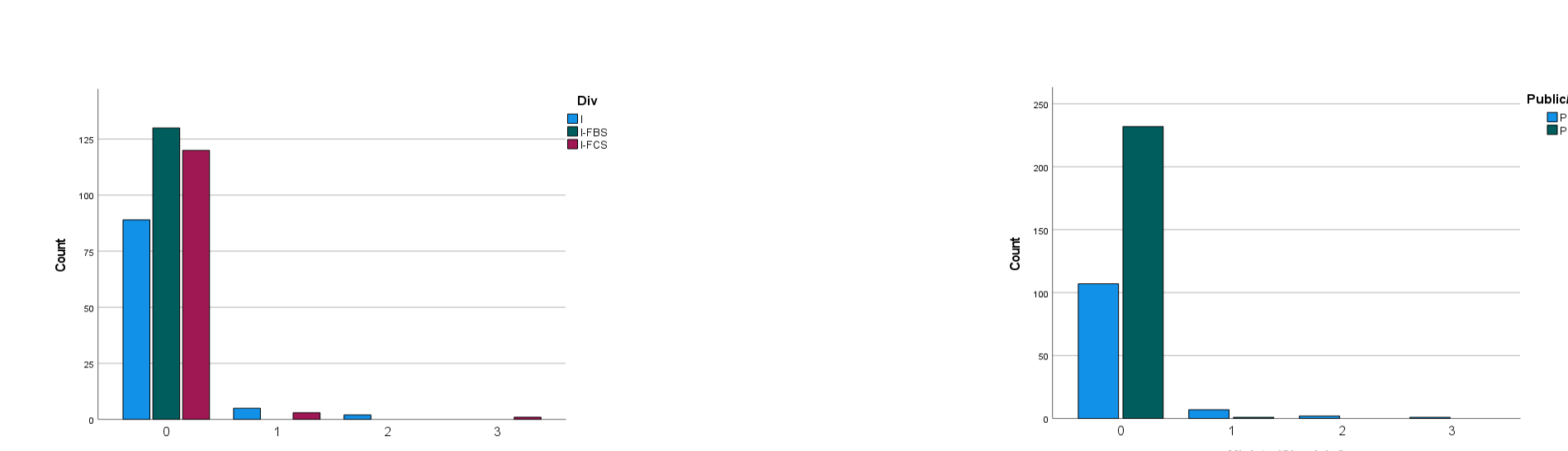


Figure 6. Frequency of ministry staffed



RESULTS, cont.

Likelihood of staffing mental health, performance, and ministry positions

- Six negative binomial regression models were conducted to determine relationship of NCAA Division I subdivision membership and status as public or private on likelihood of staffing mental health, mental performance, and ministry positions in NCAA Division I athletic departments in January 2021.
- Mental health professional was significant ($\chi^2=73.64$; $df=3$; $p<.001$) predicting FBS was 5.37 times more likelihood of staffing than non-football subdivision school.
- Social workers was significant ($\chi^2 = 36.31$; $df=3$; $p=.001$). FBS was a significant predictors in the model predicting 20.19 times more likelihood of staffing than non-football subdivision schools.
- Mental health counselor was significant ($\chi^2=16.22$; $df=3$; $p=.001$) predicting FBS was 2.51 times more likelihood of staffing than non-football subdivision school.
- Psychologist/ psychiatrist was significant ($\chi^2=50.46$; $df=3$; $p<.001$) predicting FBS was 3.01 times more likelihood of staffing than non-football subdivision schools.
- CMPC was significant ($\chi^2=23.68$; $df=3$; $p<.001$) predicting FBS was 4.13 times more likelihood of staffing than non-football subdivision school.
- Ministry was significant ($\chi^2=29.40$; $df=3$; $p<.001$) with the likelihood of staffing ministry employees decreasing by a factor of .06 at Public institution versus Private. FBS and FCS were non-significant.

Table 2. MHP, CMPC, and ministry staff positions in Division I athletic departments

Staff Position (Dependent Variable)		FBS	FCS	Public/Private (1=public)
MHP	β	1.68 ***	.11	-.07
	I.R.R.	5.37	1.11	1.05
	S.E.	(.28)	(.32)	(.01)
Social Worker	β	3.01 **	-.241	-.131
	I.R.R.	20.19	.79	.88
	S.E.	(1.05)	(1.42)	(.55)
Mental Health Counselor	β	.92*	.05	.48
	I.R.R.	2.51	.63	1.62
	S.E.	(.47)	(.58)	(.46)
Psych	β	1.77***	.34	.48
	I.R.R.	5.82	5.85	.80
	S.E.	(.34)	(.37)	(.26)
CMPC	β	1.42**	-.12	-.01
	I.R.R.	4.13	.89	.99
	S.E.	(.46)	(.54)	(.38)
Ministry/Chaplain	β	.00	.47	-2.79**
	I.R.R.	.00	.67	.06
	S.E.	(.00)	(.56)	(1.05)

Note. We conducted negative binomial regression analysis of mental health, mental performance, and ministry/chaplain staff positions in NCAA Division I athletic departments in January 2021. $N = 350$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

CONCLUSIONS

- FBS institutions had a greater likelihood of staffing MHP and CMPC than other subdivisions and 56% of programs had at least one MHP.
- Much more of an imbalance with the hiring of social workers by FBS schools when compare to any of the other mental health professional categories analyzed.
- Private schools are more likely to hire ministry positions, though total number of positions is low.
- Athletic administrators acknowledge that investing time and resources on psychosocial concerns in athletic departments is necessary (Neal et al. 2013). The finding that over half FBS programs show that investment is being made.
- A general lack of these positions across NCAA Division is evident from these results.
- Our findings show there is room for athletic departments to grow their mental health and mental performance offering.
- Future research will explore athletic department inclusion of these positions at NCAA DII and Division III institutions.