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Characteristics of Collegiate Ranch/Stock Horse Teams and Team Member Perceptions of
Benefits of Participation

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Agricultural and Extension Education

by

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University of Arkansas
Bachelor of Arts in Communication, 2019

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University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe characteristics of collegiate ranch horse teams and team member's perceived benefits from participation. A lack of research and literature on this category of competition, that is rapidly growing in popularity, is the problem that this study was designed to solve. In recent years, students have begun choosing where to further their education based upon their participation on a ranch horse team. With collegiate ranch horse teams being prevalent, there is a need for a simplified presentation of facts about the teams that can be referenced. This study will be used to guide university administrators in their decisions to add and, or improve ranch horse teams. It also benefits perspective students, parents, and donors by giving them information when making decisions regarding their involvement with a ranch horse team. The study was completed in two separate articles.

The purpose of the first article was to describe characteristics of collegiate ranch horse teams. The objectives were to describe coach and team demographics, describe organizational characteristics, describe team facilities and resources, and describe team operations. Daft's (2016) Organization Theory was the guiding theory used for this article. A researcher created survey was sent via Qualtrics to all persons in a designated leadership position to every ranch horse team across the country. The survey included multiple open response style questions per objective. The responses were evaluated by the researcher and categorized by their answer. The frequencies and percentages of each category were reported. The main conclusion from the survey responses was that most teams operate with a mix of school and personal resources. The recommendation for science was to more clearly ask about the designated leader's position within the school or university.

The purpose of the second article was to describe team members perceived benefits of participation on a collegiate ranch horse team. The objectives of the study were to describe team members' perceptions of life and professional skills gained, describe team members' perceptions of equestrian skills gained, describe team members' perceptions of effect on undergraduate and/or graduate experience, and to describe team member perceptions of negative aspects of participation. The guiding theory of this study was Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1984). Once the person in the designated leadership position completed their portion of the researcher created survey, they were asked to forward a link to a second researcher created survey via Qualtrics to all current team members on their team. The survey consisted of open response, multiple-choice, Likert-type scale and one open response style question. Responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, grouping like answers and counting the frequencies, and Chi Square Test of Associations were used to find correlations. The conclusions of the study were that team members perceived participation on the team to be beneficial on their life and professional skills, equestrian skills, and collegiate experience. The most frequent negative aspects of participation were drama and time management. The recommendation for science was to include a question and comparison about the students' majors.

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Dedication

This thesis document is dedicated to collegiate ranch horse teams and their members. Being a founding member of the University of Arkansas Ranch Horse Team was the most unexpected yet rewarding experience that provided me with a home and purpose for many years.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I.....	1
References	3
CHAPTER II: CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLEGIATE RANCH HORSE TEAMS.....	4
Introduction	4
Overview of Literature	5
Methods.....	9
Findings.....	14
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	17
References	22
CHAPTER III: TEAM MEMBER PERCEPTIONS OF BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION	24
Introduction	24
Overview of Literature	26
Methodology	32
Findings.....	36
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	41
References	45
CHAPTER IV	48
References	50

CHAPTER I

This research project was completed with the intention to gather information that would be beneficial for the longevity of collegiate ranch horse teams across the United States.

Collegiate ranch horse teams have become increasingly popular in the last decade. This increase in popularity can be attributed to an increase in participation in ranch horse type events across all associations of horse showing. Since the idea of these teams is new and still evolving, there is no academic research about collegiate ranch horse teams. This is a problem because the creation of new teams and operations of current teams could greatly benefit by having information about other teams to present to administration at their respective schools. This information will aid administration when making decisions regarding a new or current team at their school. Another aspect of information that is vital to the longevity of these teams is having academic evidence that participation on a team benefits the team members. Prospective students interested in ranch horse are deciding which school to attend based upon the school's ranch horse team and the value that they believe would add to their academic experience.

This thesis includes two articles, one addressing the characteristics of existing teams and the other addressing the benefits reported by team members. The first article was sent to the person in the designated leadership position, to be referred to as the "coach" for the remainder of the thesis, at each school's ranch horse team. The list of teams and contact information was gathered from the researcher's prior knowledge from participation, the American Stock Horse Association website, and a list provided from the Stock Horse of Texas Association. Coaches were contacted via email and/or Facebook messenger. They were sent follow up reminders three times following the initial contact. There were 17 respondents who completed the survey. The purpose of this study was to describe the characteristics of collegiate ranch horse teams at

colleges and universities in the United States. The study was designed to focus on describing coach and team demographics, team organizational characteristics, team facilities and resources, and team operations. The following research objectives guided the study: (1) to describe coach and team demographics, (2) to describe organizational characteristics, (3) to describe team facilities and resources, (4) to describe team operations. The respondents were asked to answer an open response style survey with four different objectives.

The second article was designed to determine team members' perceived benefits of participation on a ranch horse team. The purpose of this study is to gather descriptive data about team member perceptions of benefits from participation on collegiate ranch horse teams. The following research objectives guided the study: (1) to describe team members' perceptions of life and professional skills gained; (2) to describe team members' perceptions of equestrian skills gained; (3) to describe team members' perceptions of effect on undergraduate and/or graduate experience; (4) to describe team member perceptions of negative aspects of participation. Literature on retention by engagement, extra and co-curricular activities, participation on agricultural college teams, equestrian related course work, and participation on college equestrian teams was used to guide the study. Students who participated on teams such as livestock judging had increased communication, decision making skills, and knowledge of the industry (Field et al., 1998). A study on participation on an Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA) found that students gained life skills such as working with others, behavior around horses, responsibility, and teamwork (Mikulec & McKinny, 2014). Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1984) was the guiding theoretical framework for the study. The theory's five postulates suggest that students who put more energy into academic experience gain more. The respondents to the first article were asked to complete their survey, then forward a second

team member survey to all students they considered to be active team members as of the day they completed the survey. There was a 37% response rate with 85 of the 230 population. The population number was found from the first article which asked the coaches how many team members they currently had on their team.

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CHAPTER II: CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLEGIATE RANCH HORSE TEAMS

Introduction

Collegiate ranch horse teams provide students with the opportunity to compete both individually and as a team in ranch horse events representing their college or university. There are many varying aspects to how each team operates at their school in terms of operations, demographics, administration, and resources. As the popularity continues to grow for involvement and support for these teams, it will be important to have a more universal understanding of how teams operate. These teams became popular within the last fifteen years, meaning that there is lack of official establishment bylaws, and no references to ranch horse teams exist in the literature on co-curricular and extra-curricular agricultural activities in higher education. Research to fill the gap in literature and providing information will help the sport establish a firmer foundation.

Problem Statement

The problem that this study was designed to address is that there is no current record of information for how collegiate ranch horse teams operate at their colleges or universities. This is a problem because there is little formal information for administration, current teams, prospective students, and financial supporters to examine when making decisions regarding establishing new teams or further developing existing teams. Information from this study will be used by administration to compare their current or future teams to other functioning teams. Prospective students and their parents can evaluate which style of program would be best for them to commit to participating. Financial supporters will be able to see where the gap of funding exists. Current teams will also be able to use the results of this study as a tool for comparing how other teams function in terms of operations, demographics, administration, and

resources and to make stronger decisions about building and promoting these teams based on empirical evidence.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics of collegiate ranch horse teams at colleges and universities in the United States. The study was designed to focus on describing coach and team demographics, team organizational characteristics, team facilities and resources, and team operations.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives guided the study: (1) to describe coach and team demographics, (2) to describe organizational characteristics, (3) to describe team facilities and resources, (4) to describe team operations.

Overview of Literature

Collegiate Ranch Horse Teams

There is currently no known academic literature focusing specifically on describing or evaluating collegiate ranch horse teams as co-curricular or extra-curricular activities. However, there have been previous studies on collegiate equestrian team functions but not directly associated with ranch horse teams. For this study, the literature review will focus on the academic research that has a relationship to demographics, operations, resources, and administration of other forms of collegiate equestrian teams, agricultural college teams, and extra-curricular or co-curricular organizations.

Collegiate ranch horse teams provide benefits to not only the students, but to their schools. The study on an Intercollegiate Horse Show Association team by Anderson and Karr-Lilienthal (2011) found that the greatest benefit of participating on a collegiate equestrian team

was the development of personality traits and life skills that are beneficial for professional growth. Colleges and universities can also benefit from having a ranch horse team. Involvement “aids in student retention, plus helps to build loyal alumni” (p.12).

Conceptual Framework

Collegiate ranch horse teams are established differently at each college and universities across the country.

Team Demographics

Team demographics refers to how a team is established with a college or university. Collegiate ranch horse teams are not part of the National Collegiate Athletic Association which requires them to be registered as student organizations, designated as departmental teams, considered club sports, or other. The overall goals of student organizations, departmental teams, and club sports are to improve administration operations, increase the number of participants, win contests, and create an environment for students to build social networks. Colleges and universities offer student organizations for students to involve themselves. Student organizations operate with a student executive board as their governing body. Executive boards for student organizations consist of a president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary (Czekanski and Lower, 2018).

Organizational Characteristics

The organizational objective referred to the governing body of the team’s establishment and how the team operated within that. Club sports, student organizations, and departmental teams all have administration approve the actions made by the team. The administration also decides and handles the funding of these teams. A study on sport clubs found that they have

various means in which they generate revenue such as club dues, recreational sport department allocations and fundraising (Czekanski & Lower, 2018).

Team Operations

Team operations were included in the study to understand how these teams operate on a day-to-day basis. In Cooney's (1979) historic study on sport clubs, team operations referred to the functionality of the team and their daily activities. The study on the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association team found that team members attended one mandatory practice a week and additional optional practices. They attended monthly meetings and committed to one hour a week of barn chores (Anderson & Karr-Lilienthal, 2011).

Facilities and Resources

The size and diversity of a program was very dependent on student interest and availability of university resources (Czekanski & Lower, 2018). With equestrian athletes being an added component of these ranch horse teams, there were more required necessities for the teams to operate. The team horses required a barn, riding area, farm equipment, truck and trailer for hauling, and someone to care for the horses.

Theoretical Framework

Organizations

Collegiate ranch horse teams are organizations. An organization is a person or group of people intentionally organized to accomplish an overall, common goal, or set of goals (McNamara, 2013). Organizations are structured systems that bring together individuals to work collectively to achieve numerous outcomes (Pedersen et al., 2011). Organizations need a mission and goals. The mission of an organization is the overall purpose, and the goals are general statements of intent (McClellan et al., 2012).

Organization Theory

Organization theory, developed by Richard Daft in 2016, was used as a lens through which to understand the characteristics of collegiate ranch horse teams. According to the theory, organizations encompass five dimensions to create their structure (Pederson et al., 2011). These five dimensions are centralism, formality, specialization, design, and communication.

- (1) *Centralism*. Daft defines centralism as the hierarchical level of authority that makes decisions. There are two forms of decision-making authority. In a centralized structure, decisions are made by one individual or a small group. Decentralized organizations allow individuals from multiple levels of the organization to make decisions.
- (2) *Formality*. There are also two types of formality within organizations. Formal structure is established through formal bylaws. It is the outline of the organization (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). These bylaws define the positions, responsibilities, reporting lines etc. of the organization. There can also be informal structure that changes as the organization and its members change (Daft, 2016).
- (3) *Specialization*. Specialization refers to how labor and tasks are divided between members of the organization (Blau et al., 1996). Highly specialized organizations have members completing specific tasks that only a few other members are trained to perform. Low levels of specialization are when most of the members of the organization are trained to do multiple tasks (Pederson et al., 2011).
- (4) *Design*. Organizational design is how the leaders manage the structure and culture of the organization so that they can undertake its activities and achieve its goals (Pederson et al., 2011). There are five parts of an organization's design. These

include strategic apex, techno structure, middle line, support staff, and operative core. These components can be emphasized and structured in different combinations with specialization, formality, and centralism (Mintzberg, 1989).

(5) *Communication*. Communication is the means of coordinating individual efforts towards achieving the common goals of the organization. This communication can be formal or informal. Formal communication is adherence to the standard operating procedures through the established management of information. Informal is the communication that occurs when the rules for how to communicate are not followed (Kraut et al., 1990).

Examining ranch horse teams through the lens of organizational theory provided an organized approach to describing how they operate. The five dimensions of an organization provided a foundation for teams to establish how they work within themselves. Each of these five was a necessity for a team to achieve goals.

Methods

Design of the Study

This study was conducted using a qualitative survey design employing open-ended questions addressing the research objectives. Open-ended questions provide direct quotes from respondents for their answers (Labuschangne, 2003). This type of design uses a questionnaire to gather information for purposes of empirical description. This approach was chosen because, while all the programs appear to serve the same general purpose, there also appears to be a great amount of diversity in the structure of the programs. This diversity would have been very difficult to describe through objective questions using Likert-type scales. Therefore, open-ended questioning provided opportunities for subjects to freely explain the unique qualities of their

programs, resulting in a deeper description of both the thematic characteristics and the unique differences across all the programs (Labuschangne, 2003).

Subjects

Subject Selection and Recruitment

Subjects for this study were selected using a census approach. The population consisted of the individuals in the designated leadership positions of each of the 26 collegiate ranch horse teams in the United States, as identified in records provided by the Stock Horse of Texas Association.

Table 1

Current Teams

College/University Name
University of Arkansas
Texas Tech
Missouri State University
Texas A&M
West Texas A&M
Clarendon College
University of Wyoming
New Mexico State University
Middle Tennessee
North Central Texas College
Colorado State University
North Eastern Junior College
Sam Houston State University
Texas A&M Commerce
Weatherford College
Sul Ross State University
Tarelton State University
Stephen F. Austin University
Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture
Eastern New Mexico University
Oklahoma State University
Laramie County Community College
University of Findlay
Oregon State University
Hill College
University of Nebraska Lincoln

A Qualtrics survey was sent to 26 program leaders. The email addresses were gathered from the Stock Horse of Texas Association, by direct message, or the team website. Each team has an established leader to attend coaches' meetings at shows and be a point of contact. There is not currently an official association dedicated to the governing and recording of collegiate ranch horse teams. This research protocol was reviewed and approved by a Human Subjects Board. The approval number is #2101308423.

Instrumentation

Instrument Development

After considering what information would be most useful to collegiate ranch horse teams, their sponsors, their administration, and prospective students, the researcher developed four objectives for the study to address. The objectives were established with guiding knowledge from the researcher's prior experience and professionals within the industry of collegiate agricultural teams, qualitative surveys and social science research. The objectives included describing coach and team demographics, team organizational characteristics, team facilities and resources, team operations.

These objectives were also formed from knowledge of the dimensions of an organization defined by Richard Draft (2016). The centralism, formality, and design of the teams will be determined in the objectives to describe coach and team demographics and team organizational characteristics. Team facilities and resources are part of centralism and specialization. Team operations explain specialization and communication.

A pilot study was conducted prior to sending the survey to responses to assist in finding the interview questions and procedures (Creswell, 2013). The pilot study was sent to all coaches of NCEA DI Reining teams. Coaches of reining teams were chosen for this study because ranch

horse team members participate in the event reining, slightly modified, during their own competitions, therefore, the mentality of the coaches was like that of ranch horse team coaches. Reining is a specific event such as swimming, while ranch horse competitions include reining as part of their overall competition, like in a triathlon. The results of the pilot study were used to adjust the questions and ensure that they were easy to understand and complete.

Procedures for Data Collection

The Qualtrics survey was developed after the thesis approval on December 2, 2020. The survey was sent via email on March 17, 2021. Respondents were reminded five days later, again three days later, and remaining teams were contacted via Facebook Messenger. The coaches who completed the survey were reminded twice to have their team members complete the team member survey.

Data Analysis Procedures

The design in this study can be characterized as qualitative in nature (Creswell, 2013). For each open-ended style question, the responses were examined to identify thematic responses. Frequencies of instances demonstrating the emergent themes for each question were recorded to provide evidence for their existence. For each question, the frequencies of responses that supported the dominant themes were recorded and reported as findings. Counting frequencies of recurrent data during qualitative analysis is an accepted method to assist in identifying and exploring patterns, according to Guest et al. (2012).

Qualitative Rigor

Numerous tactics were employed to ensure the integrity of the qualitative findings. To achieve credibility, the following techniques were used:

A peer examination (Merriam, 1998) was completed to confirm that the correct coding was used. The advisory committee overseeing this research project provided feedback on the data analysis. Data were visually analyzed using an excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet provided an audit trail which was examined by peer researchers for verification of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A reflexivity statement was also used to clarify potential researcher biases (Merriam, 1998).

Reflexivity Statement

After attending the University of Arkansas for one semester, an opportunity to join a newly formed ranch horse team was presented to the researcher. As a founding member, the researcher was very hands on with the expansion of the team as it was being started from the ground up. The University of Arkansas was wary of the idea of a ranch horse team due to the lack of knowledge and information available about established teams, but quickly gave support after the establishment of the team. The researcher quickly fell in love with the idea of the collegiate ranch horse teams and dedicated themselves to the success and growth of the team. The researcher began managing social media accounts, making relationships with sponsors, and connecting with professionals in the industry through the team. The coach of the UA Ranch Horse Team at the time of the researcher's graduation suggested that the researcher pursue a master's degree and continue volunteering with the team. After starting the groundwork for the researcher's thesis project, the researcher quickly discovered that it would be enjoyable for the researcher to conduct research on collegiate ranch horse teams. The goal of the research is to make teams across the country more recognized, give them credibility and factual research to use when facing obstacles, and to continue the popularity of these teams.

The committee of faculty who contributed to this study was chosen based on their experience and value they would bring to the study. Jordan Shore, the UA Ranch Horse Team Coach, was chosen as he is not only a mentor, but very knowledgeable about ranch horse teams. He competed for multiple years with Missouri State University and acted as their assistant coach before being hired by the U of A. The others do not have direct experience with equine-related teams but have expertise in social science research. Dr. Jefferson Miller is an agricultural communications professor and leader in the industry. As an academic and thesis advisor he provided guidance in all areas of the research project. Dr. Jill Rucker is an agricultural education researcher with extensive knowledge of qualitative studies.

Findings

A total of 17 people in designated leadership positions completed the survey out of 26 identified teams in the nation, resulting in a response rate of 65% for this census effort. The survey questions were in four sections corresponding to the four objectives of the research. The first objective was completed with fill in the blank responses regarding the demographics of the respondent and their team. The next three objectives were answered with open response style questions that allowed respondents to write as much or as little as necessary to answer the question. The findings section is organized by objective.

Findings for Objective 1. The first objective was analyzed with descriptive statistics. Of the 17 respondents, 6 (35%) responded as male and 11 (65%) responded as female. The ages ranged from 22 to 72 with a mean of 36 years old. Of the represented schools, 5 (29%) were two-year junior or community colleges and 12 (71%) were four-year colleges or universities. The number of team members considered active as of the day they completed the survey ranged from 2 to 36 with a mean of 13.5.

Findings for Objective 2. The second objective was to describe the organizational characteristics of the teams. Information on how the teams were established and how they operated was gathered. All but one school had a coach that also had other responsibilities at their school such as professor, lecturer, instructor, farm manager, and/or academic advisor. Table 2 displays the results for the remaining questions for objective 1. This objective asked how the teams were established within the school, their non-profit status, where their funding is held, use of the NCAA logo, and scholarships.

Table 2
Organizational Characteristics (N=17)

Question	Theme	f	%
Establishment	Department Team	8	47%
	R.S.O.	8	47%
	Competitive Club	1	6%
Non-Profit Registration	Yes	4	24%
	No	13	76%
Locations of Funds	Through school	11	65%
	Outside school	4	24%
	Mix of both	2	12%
Fundraisers	No	1	6%
	Yes	16	94%
NCAA Logo Use	Yes	8	47%
	Different team logo	9	51%
Scholarships	Yes	3	18%
	Through department	4	24%
	None	10	59%

Most teams were established as department teams or registered student organizations (RSO) with 47% for both categories. One team operated as a club sport. Most of the teams (76%) were registered as non-profits. Over half of the teams (51%) use an internal logo with five teams stating they were not allowed to use the NCAA logo. The majority (59%) of the coaches said their school did not award scholarships to team members for their participation while 24% said their students can receive scholarships through their agricultural department.

Findings for Objective 3. The third objective was to describe the facilities and resources of the team. Table 3 summarizes the most common themes found from the respondents' answers.

Table 3
Facilities and Resources (N=17)

Question	Theme	f	%
Horse Ownership	Mix of School and Personal	6	35%
	Personal	11	65%
Practice Facility	School	15	88%
	Outside facility	2	12%
Show Season Boarding	School	3	18%
	Boarding Facility/Home	7	41%
	Mix of school and other	4	24%
	At school and students pay	3	18%
Horse Care	Team Members/Boarding	11	65%
	Paid Student Workers	3	18%
	Mix of school workers and students	3	18%
Truck & Trailer Ownership	School	7	41%
	Personal	5	29%
	Mix of School and Personal	5	29%
Tractor Ownership	School	14	82%
	Outside resource	3	18%

All the teams used personal horses meaning owned or leased by the team member with 65% using solely personal horses and 35% using a mix of personal and school owned horses. The boarding situation had the most diverse answers with 41% of the team members having the boarding as their own responsibility meaning they found boarding facilities near their practice facility or kept their horse at home if they lived locally, 24% of the teams had a mix of keeping their horses at their school and off campus, 3 teams allowed students to board their horses at the school's facilities without a specific boarding fee, and 3 teams kept their horses at the school's facilities with the students paying a boarding fee.

Findings for Objective 4. The fourth objective was to describe team operations. This objective was intended to determine how teams operated on a day-to-day basis. This objective was fulfilled by asking questions about practice schedules, student hauling, co-curricular course,

leadership positions, and grade point average requirements. Table 4 displays the results of the objective after determining responses.

Table 4
Team Operations

Question	Theme	f	%
Practice	< 2 a week	2	12%
	2-3 times a week	12	71%
	4+ times a week	3	18%
Ride Without Coach	Yes	10	59%
	No	4	24%
	With another person	2	12%
	Only in an outdoor arena	1	6%
Haul to Practice	Yes	9	51%
	No (board at same area)	5	29%
	Some individuals do	3	18%
Co-Curricular Course	Yes	8	47%
	No	9	51%
Leadership Positions	Yes	15	88%
	No	2	12%
GPA Requirement	Yes	15	88%
	No	2	12%

Most of the teams (71%) practiced 2-3 times per week and 59% of the coaches said their team members could use the practice facility without their attendance. About half of the teams (51%) do not have a co-curricular course along with being a member of the team with the other half (49%) having a course. Most of the teams (88%) had leadership positions for the team members within their team. The same percentage of teams had a GPA requirement for participation. The average GPA requirement was 2.12.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The goal of this study was to gather characteristics of collegiate ranch horse teams. These characteristics will be used to help current teams, administration, prospective students, and other

parties involved with ranch horse teams by comparing their functionality to other teams to determine the best fit for themselves and their program. With a 71% response rate of the population, the information gathered can be considered helpful.

From the data, it can be concluded that there is a broad difference between all teams and their demographics. This can be seen as beneficial for other teams knowing that they do not have to meet certain criteria to be established. It can be noted that teams were operating from both two-year junior/community colleges and four-year college/universities. The number of team members also varied greatly from 2 to 36. The age of the coach varied greatly from 22 to 72. This information shows that “any” school can develop and continue the existence of a team.

The most important information from the objective about facilities and resources is that when it came directly to the horses, care of horses, and boarding, the most common responses indicated that students bore the primary responsibility for these aspects of participating on the team. The horses used for team competition were 65% personal horses, 41% of the horses were boarded at an outside facility or home, and 65% of team members either take care of their horses on their own or the boarding facility did so. Most teams did have access to their schools’ truck/trailer (41%), practice facility/arena (88%) and school tractor (82%). For almost every question in the facilities and resources objective, a theme of using personal and school resources was found.

From the objective describing organizational characteristics something important to notice is that a majority (59%) of the teams did not provide any sort of scholarships for their team members. Meanwhile, most teams (94%) participated in fundraising. Club sports, student organizations, and departmental team funds are handled by university administration (Czekeanski & Lower, 2018). There is a lack of financial support for collegiate ranch horse

teams and that is a key piece of information for future teams and current teams who may be hoping to grow their support.

The study agreed with the conceptual framework upon which it was based—Daft's (2016) Organizational Theory as well as other concepts in applied studies on collegiate clubs and organizations. Many coaches stated that their team operated with either captains or a student board of leadership. Similar student executive boards have been described by Czekeanski and Lower (2018) as having goals of improving administration operations, increasing the number of participants, winning contests, and creating an environment to ensure students can build social networks. The five dimensions of Organization Theory by Richard Daft (2016) agree with collegiate ranch horse teams. The first dimension is centralism, or the hierarchy of authority. Daft defines two forms of authority, centralized (one or a small group) and decentralized (individuals at multiple levels). The study showed that teams operate with both central and decentralized authority. The second dimension is formality or by- laws, both formal and informal. This dimension is discussed in the first and second objective, team demographics and organizational characteristics. Ranch horse teams have many forms of formality including being a departmental team, student organization, and club sport. The third dimension is specialization. This is how labor and tasks are divided between the members (Blau et al., 1996). This dimension relates to a particular question on the instrument, “Do team members have any assigned leadership responsibilities/position? Explain.” The responses to this question included discussing the different positions students have within the team and tasks that student leaders are responsible for. One team has a student designated as a treasurer who handles money, historian who does social media, and a show secretary who manages show information. Many teams also discussed that members help put on shows by the team. The final dimension is communication.

Most communication between collegiate ranch horse teams happens at practice. Most teams practiced 2-3 times a week, with other responses being less than twice and more than 4 times a week. Each team operates within its own unique structure and makes decisions for the team to operate based upon the resources made available to the team.

Assumptions & Limitations

It is assumed that each respondent answered openly and honestly. There were multiple limitations to this study that need to be considered when evaluating the results. One limitation to this study is that the establishment of collegiate ranch horse teams is still evolving. At the time of the subject selection, there was not a governing body for collegiate ranch horse teams. As a result, it is possible that not all United States Ranch/Stock Horse Teams were identified through the selection process. However, the most accurate source for this information was the Stock Horse of Texas Association. Since the data collection for this study, a new governing body for collegiate ranch/stock horse teams, the National Intercollegiate Ranch & Stock Horse Association, has been created.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Practice

From the results of this study combined with the researcher's experience from participation on a start-up collegiate ranch horse team, recommendations for practice have been created. The overall point from this study is that collegiate ranch horse teams rely heavily on their school's resources and permission to operate. The goal of this study was to provide information that was useful to administration, future and current teams, future students, and anyone else who may have interest in collegiate ranch horse teams. The study has proven that it

takes cohesive efforts from each of these parties for a collegiate ranch horse team to function. The recommendations for practice fit into two overall categories of communicating with administration and operations within the team.

For new schools or participants wanting to start a team at their school, communication to establish a plan with administration from the inception of the team will be most important to have a successful team. The first recommendation is to have a plan for the establishment of the team. About half of the teams (47%) were established through their department and half (47%) were registered student organizations. This would also include if the team had a co-curricular course offered along with participation. In the study by Czenkanski and Lower (2018) they noted that the size and diversity of a program was very dependent on student interest and availability of university resources. One recommendation about the facilities and resources is to communicate with the school about what would be needed and what would be allowed for them to use. For instance, if a school has a horse barn and riding area on campus, it needs to be determined if the ranch horse team would have permission to use those and what rules would be established. There were nine teams (51%) that had to have their students haul to practice from a boarding location. Establishing permissions for use of other resources such as a tractor, truck, and trailer also need to be discussed.

The second category of recommendations surrounds the functioning within the team. Both current and future teams can analyze the information from this study and determine their best plan of action for their team. The majority of the teams (88%) had leadership positions for the team members. It also needs to be known that 65% of the teams used personal horses for competition and the remaining 35% used a mix of school and personal horses.

Recommendations for Research

The study included a question about the coaches' establishment within the school. The questions did not supply the study with good information. If this study was to be repeated, it is recommended that the question be worded to clearly know that one question asks their official title within the team and how their title at the school relates to the team. This would be more beneficial for teams if they knew that the coach was hired for their own participation in ranch horse competitions or if they were hired for the educational position.

Another recommendation is to determine how the ranch horse team has directly impacted the university. This study could use well established teams such as Texas Tech and Texas A&M. This would agree with previous research from Anderson and Karr-Lilenthal (2011) that involvement aids in student retention and helps build loyal alumni. This would determine the return on investment for having a team at the university.

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CHAPTER III: TEAM MEMBER PERCEPTIONS OF BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

Introduction

Background

While pursuing degrees, higher-education students learn both inside and outside of the classroom. Co-Curricular and extracurricular activities are ways for students to gain experience and knowledge that they would not be able to solely from the classroom. Participation in co-curricular activities helps students gain interpersonal skills (Birkenholz & Schumacher, 1994). Extracurricular activities have been found to be important for students' social and personal growth (Rubin, et al., 2002).

Agricultural colleges have taken advantage of co-curricular activities and the benefits they provide for students. Some forms of involvement in agricultural colleges include judging teams, quiz bowl teams, rodeo teams, etc. Academic curriculum is created to teach students course matter, while participation in extracurricular activities, specifically animal evaluation teams, has proven to increase life skill development and preparation for the work force (Nash and Sant, 2005). Certain skills gained from participation in animal evaluation teams are improved verbal communication, patience, confidence, social skills, and critical thinking (Cavinder, Byrd, Franke, and Holub, 2011). Decision making skills, industry knowledge, and improved teamwork are also skills that can be learned from participation on a collegiate animal evaluation team (Field et al. 1998).

One specific area of interest for students is horse showing. Participation in a collegiate equestrian club/team provides an opportunity for members to compete individually with the support of a team, leading to increased knowledge of teamwork (Mikulec & McKinney, 2014). Equestrian teams also provide their own benefits to students. One study found that participation

impacted development of personality traits, life skills that were essential to professional growth. These include working with others, communication, behavior around horses, responsibility, teamwork, organizational skills, and relating to other people (Anderson and Karr-Lilienthal, 2011).

There are multiple ways for students to be a collegiate equestrian. This study will focus on collegiate ranch horse teams. These ranch/stock horse teams give students the opportunity to compete in different disciplines other than NCEA and IHSA teams.

Statement of the Problem

The problem that this study is designed to address is that there is currently no research on team member perceptions of benefits of participation on collegiate ranch horse teams.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gather descriptive data about team member perceptions of benefits from participation on collegiate ranch horse teams.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives guided the study: (1) to describe team member demographics; (2) to describe team members' perceptions of life and professional skills gained; (3) to describe team members' perceptions of equestrian skills gained; (4) to describe team members' perceptions of effect on undergraduate and/or graduate experience; (5) to describe team member perceptions of negative aspects of participation.

Overview of Literature

Foundation of Ranch/Stock Horse Type Teams

The literature review will discuss the impact of participation on college ranch/stock horse teams on the team members. There is currently no specific literature on these teams, which is the problem that this study is intending to solve. These collegiate ranch/stock horse teams have been an option for students to become involved for ten years. As they grow in popularity, college and university administrations will need research to guide their decision making about adding a team to their options for student involvement. The research objectives that guide this study are to describe the life and equestrian skills gained and impact on college experience from participation on a collegiate ranch/stock horse team. The existing literature that will be used comes from studies on involvement with agricultural college co-curricular teams, other collegiate equestrian associations, and NCEA registered collegiate equestrian teams.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used to guide this study was centered around perceived benefits from participation on collegiate ranch/stock horse teams. The concepts used started broad with co/extracurricular activities to participation on agricultural teams, and conclude with equestrian teams. The main concepts of this study were life skills, equestrian skills, and impact on college experience. Another concept that was focused on is retention by engagement. As this study was to be used as a guide for administration, aspects of how a ranch/stock horse team impact the school itself will be important to discuss.

Retention by Engagement

Student engagement was defined as “the ways in which school leaders, educators, and other adults might “engage” students more fully in the governance and decision-making

processes in school, in the design of programs and learning opportunities, or in the civic life of their community” (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2016). The more satisfied students are the more likely they are to remain in school (Wood et al., 2010). A positive learning environment that increases confidence, skills, and knowledge improves retention 2 The ranch horse teams gave students an opportunity to be engaged with their school, thus retaining their institution’s academic program enrollment.

Participation in Extracurricular/Co-curricular Activities.

By definition, a co-curricular activity is one that requires a student’s participation outside of normal classroom time as a condition for meeting a curricular requirement. An extracurricular activity can be directly or indirectly related to a student’s major (Bartkus et al, 2012). As students who are involved in extra/co-curricular activities are more likely to remain enrolled, they are also developing skills. Higher education institutions recognize that participation in extra-curricular activities is a strategy to develop leadership skills and not just a social activity (Birkenholz & Schuacher, 1994). Student participation in extra-curricular activities leads to social and personal growth when they are not seen solely as social events (Rubin, et al., 2002). As students participate in more out-of-classroom activities, they apply leadership theories and skills (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). These extracurricular activities allow students to reinforce what they learn in the classroom in out of classroom settings (Cavinder, et al., 2011). There is another aspect of participation in extra and/or co-curricular activities, having leadership roles. Being in a leadership position for an activity can lead to higher levels of learning experiences and personal growth (Astin, 1999). The focus on these hands-on experiences better prepares graduates to meet employer expectations upon graduation (Hart, 2007).

Participation in Agricultural College Teams

Some of these activities and opportunities for students to become involved were affiliated directly with their college or universities agricultural college. These teams included livestock judging, meat evaluation, etc. One study found that participation on a collegiate judging team leads to skills outside of evaluation such as confidence, time management, patience, and oral communication (Cavinder et al., 2011). These benefits from animal evaluation teams lead to life-skill development and work force preparedness (Nash & Sant, 2005). The ability to make decisions as learned from these teams is valued by employers in the agricultural field (Berg, 2002). Participation on these teams led to confidence in social settings and as a leader (Cavinder et al., 2011). Students who participated in intercollegiate judging competitions had increased communication and decision-making skills, they also had an increased knowledge of the industry (Field et al., 1998).

Equestrian Related Coursework

In most situations, for a college or university to have a competitive ranch/stock horse team, it was necessary that they have an equine science program to some degree. Students with various backgrounds and majors enrolled in equine coursework (Wood et al., 2010). Students enroll in equine courses even if they do not plan to have a career in the equine industry (Anderson & Lilenthal (2001). Respondents to a study by Wood, Gasser, and Winward (2010) agreed that the equine courses positively impacted their college experience, quality of education, and believed that it was a tool to recruit students to their college. A study by Pratt-Phillips and Schmitt (2010) found that previous equine experience did not impact final grade outcomes in introductory equine science classes. One of the important components of equine classes was interacting with other students, which increases the satisfaction of the college experience, thus

increasing retention (Wood et al., 2010). Horse programs should focus on horsemanship skills, safety, health management, and nutrition (Smith et al, 2006). Respondents to Wood, Gasser, and Winward's (2010) study agreed that they had developed confidence, overcome fears, and expanded both their knowledge and skills from enrollment in equine courses. It was also found that students enrolled in equine courses had "reduced stress and increased self-confidence (10)."

Participation on Collegiate Equestrian Teams

Across the country, there are multiple ways for students to compete in horse showing at the collegiate level. Anderson and Lilienthal (2001), in a research study to determine the perceived benefits of student participation on an Intercollegiate Horse Show Association team, found that the time and financial commitments of participating on the team did not impact their desire to participate. This study determined the benefits gained from participation on a collegiate ranch/stock horse team.

Intercollegiate Horse Show Association team members gain life skills such as working with others, communication, behavior around horses, responsibility, teamwork, organizational skills, and relating to different people (Anderson & Lilenthal, 2001). Respondents to Mikulec and McKinney' (2014) study reported that students who participated in the organization had to learn to work with others such as teammates, coaches, faculty and equine professionals that "did not always share their same point of view." Participation with the IHSA team taught members to work and communicate effectively with others. Being on a team gave members the opportunities to network with professionals and build foundations for careers after graduation (Mikulec & McKinney, 2014). Mikulec and McKinney also found that the ten life skills gained by participation on the IHSA team were 1) working with others, 2) communication, 3) behavior

around horses, 4) responsibility, 5) teamwork 6) organizational skills, and 7) relating to different people.

Another aspect learned from equestrian teams is equestrian skills. Team members gain appreciation for quality horse care, horsemanship skills, training skills, and proper behavior around horses (Anderson & Lilenthal, 2001). Team members develop as riders and improve their horse care/management (Mikulec & McKinney, 2014). Respondents to Mikulec and McKinney stated that they joined their college's IHSA team to "continue to ride and develop as a rider at college (p. 97).

Additionally, this study filled a gap for how participation on teams such as ranch/stock horse teams impacts their college experience. Students from one IHSA team responded that the team experience was an asset to their undergraduate experience. They also said that the team increased their university pride (Anderson & Lilenthal, 2001). Students who are members of teams have the opportunity to spend time with peers who have shared interest (Mikulec & McKinney, 2014). These researchers also found that participation on the team allowed them to compete for the school in an individual sport but still have a team atmosphere.

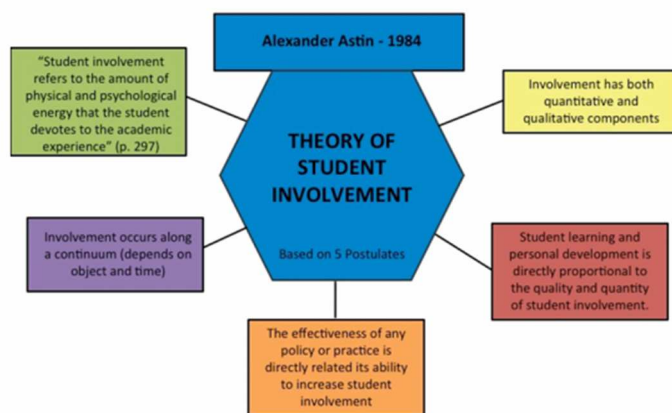
Theoretical Framework

Student Involvement Theory. This theory proposed by Astin in 1999 was relevant to this study. This theory was first proposed to fill the gap found in traditional higher education. This theory is designed to be a tool to help administrators and faculty create effective learning environments. Astin defines student involvement as the physical and psychological energy students put into their academic experience. Highly involved students devote energy to studying, spending time on campus participating in student organizations and interacting with faculty and other students (Astin, 1999). There are five postulates of Astin's Theory of Student Involvement.

The first is that involvement means the investment of energy, either psychological or physical, in various objects. These objects can range from being highly general or highly specific. The second is that involvement occurs along a continuum. Different students manifest different levels of involvement for different objects at different times. The third postulate is that involvement has a qualitative and quantitative way of measurement. The fourth is that student learning and personal development gained from an educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program. The fifth and final is that educational policies and practices effectiveness is directly related to the ability of the policy or practice to increase student involvement.

This theory is directly related to the study because it explains how team member involvement can truthfully lead to these benefits gained. Team members who participated on ranch horse teams were involved in either co-curricular or extracurricular activities, therefore they are benefiting from the participation itself.

Figure 1
Astin's Theory of Student Involvement



Astin, A. W. (1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. Journal of College Student Development, 40(5), 518-529.

Summary

This literature review guided the study with both conceptual and theoretical framework. The key points discussed from conceptual framework are that involvement on co/extracurricular teams, agricultural teams, and equine teams in college leads to life skills development, equestrian skill development, and impacts the college experience of team members. The key concept from the theoretical framework of Astin's Theory of Involvement is that involvement leads to more gained from the college experience.

Methodology

Design of the Study

This study was conducted using a quantitative non-experimental survey design. Surveys allow respondents to provide their input by responding to prompts or questions using a numerical scale such as a Likert-type scale (Cook & Cook, 2008). This design was the most appropriate design as it gave the researcher the ability to ask questions on a Likert scale which provided student opinions in a numerical form.

Subjects

Subject Selection

This study involved a census survey. The population consisted of all current team members at both the undergraduate and graduate level of collegiate ranch/stock horse teams in the United States. As identified in the composite list of teams from the Stock Horse of Texas Association, see Table 5.

Table 5

Current Teams

College/University Name
University of Arkansas
Texas Tech
Missouri State University
Texas A&M
West Texas A&M
Clarendon College
University of Wyoming
New Mexico State University
Middle Tennessee
North Central Texas College
Colorado State University
North Eastern Junior College
Sam Houston State University
Texas A&M Commerce
Weatherford College
Sul Ross State University
Tarelton State University
Stephen F. Austin University
Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture
Eastern New Mexico University
Oklahoma State University
Laramie County Community College
University of Findlay
Oregon State University
Hill College
University of Nebraska Lincoln

Subject Recruitment Procedure

The subjects were identified using a time and place, census sample. For the first part of this study, people in designated leadership positions (coaches) of each team received emails to complete a Qualtrics survey on the functions of their teams. They were then asked to forward the second part of the survey to each student they considered to be a member of the team as of March 17, 2021, including those who would be graduating.

Human Subjects Protection

These methods were reviewed and approved by a Human Subjects Board. The approval number is #2101308423.

Instrumentation

Instrument development

The instrument was designed to answer the five objectives. The first objective used multiple choice answers. The following three objectives included multiple statements that students responded to using a Likert-type scale. A Likert-type scale provides a scale of answers for respondents to measure their level of agreeability with the statement (Jamieson, 2002). The statements were developed by the researcher using personal experience, general knowledge of the teams, and guidance from similar studies such as “Team Members Perceptions of Benefits of Participation on a University Equestrian Team” by Kathy Anderson and Karr-Lilienthal. Respondents were offered a scale of 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree. The final objective was answered with a single open response question.

A pilot study was conducted prior to sending the survey to participants. The pilot study was used to ensure understandability of the questionnaire (Crewell, 2013). The pilot study was sent to the coaches of all NCEA DI reining teams who forwarded the coaches to team members. The pilot study resulted in adjusting the wording of the question about years of horse showing experience.

Validity of the Instrumentation

Face validity was used as a group of experts reviewed the instrument and provided feedback. Face validity ensured that the content was relevant to the person taking the test (Taherdoost, 2016).

Procedures for Data Collection

The survey was sent via email beginning March 17, 2021. The first part of this study was finding characteristics of the teams and the survey was taken by the person in designated leadership position of the team. Once they completed their survey, they were asked to forward the second part of the survey to all students they considered to be team members as of March 17, 2021 including those who may have been graduating in May of 2021. The survey resulted in 85 responses, which constituted a 37% response rate.

Data Analysis Procedures

Three forms of data analysis were used to analyze the results of the survey. Descriptive statistics were used for the first four objectives. Location statistics were used to analyze the first objective to describe team member demographics. The mean, average of all values, was used to determine the average age, year in school, and semesters on the team of the team members. The second, third, and fourth objectives were also analyzed with descriptive statistics. The means of each statement described the most common answer. The mean was used to understand how a majority of the respondents felt toward the statement. Standard deviation was used to describe how concentrated the scores were around the mean or how spread out (Larson, 2006).

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the open responses to objective five by pulling common themes from the responses. Thematic analysis is a flexible approach that consist of identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Finally, chi square test of association was used to determine an association between two variables. This test was chosen because it can determine if there is a significant association between two variables. This test was chosen as the goal was to determine if a respondent's

demographics such as year in school or years of showing experience impacted their perceived negative effects from participation. The level of significance was established *a priori* at $p \leq .05$. (Ugoni & Walker, 1995).

Findings

A total of 85 team members completed the survey. This was a response rate of 37% based on a population size of 230 gathered from the coach's response to their number of active team members. The respondents were considered to be team members as of the date their coach completed the survey and forwarded their survey section to them. The survey was broken into five objectives. The first objective was completed using fill in the blank responses. The next three were addressed using multiple-choice questions and a five-point Likert-type scale. For these three sections, the students were given a statement and asked to rate their agreement with the statement. The last objective was addressed using an open response style format. The results of the survey were analyzed. The frequency and percentage of respondents were gathered for the first objective. The mean and standard deviations of responses were computed for the three objectives using Likert-type scales. A thematic analysis was conducted for the final objective.

Findings for Objective 1

The first objective was to describe demographic characteristics of team members. Information regarding the age, gender, year in school, semesters on the team, and years of horse showing experience were collected. The ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to 25 with a mean of 20.729. The majority of the respondents were females (88%), with males being in the minority (12%). The mean response for year in school was 2.918, with 1 representing freshman, 2 representing sophomore, 3 representing junior, 4 representing senior, and 5 representing graduate students. The students were asked which semester this was for them to be

on the team from 1 to 8 (the American Stock Horse Association allows eight semesters of eligibility for college students). The mean response was 3.235. The students were asked how many years of showing experience similar to events of the ranch horse team and 44% of respondents had 1-3 years of similar showing experience.

Findings for Objective 2

The second objective was to describe team member perceptions of life and professional skills gained from participation. Ten statements about working with others, goals, and personal growth were presented to the respondents. Table 6 shows the results from the Likert-type scale questions.

Table 6
Team Member Perceptions of Life and Professional Skills (N=85)

Skills	n	Mean	SD
I work harder at my goals.	83	4.373	.874
I learned how to work with people with different personalities.	84	4.262	.804
I have a stronger work ethic.	64	4.219	1.152
I am more confident.	83	4.169	.876
I am more responsible.	84	4.107	1.091
I learned better conflict management skills.	84	4.036	.993
I am more organized.	82	3.915	.844
I gained better communication skills	83	3.892	.932
I can work better with others.	84	3.869	1.067
I gained more critical thinking skills.	81	3.815	1.020

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

All statements in this section received scores higher than 3. The most agreed with statement was about working harder at goals and the least agreed with statement was about gaining critical thinking skills. There was a significantly lower response rate for the final question.

Findings for Objective 3

The third objective was to describe team member perceptions of equestrian skills gained. Statements about being a better rider, feeling comfortable around/riding horses, and showing in a new event were presented to the respondents. Table 7 displays the results from the objective.

Table 7
Team Member Perceptions of Equestrian Skills Gained (N=85)

Skills	n	Mean	SD
I am more comfortable around and riding horses.	82	4.329	.898
I feel like I am a better rider.	45	4.244	1.036
I showed in an event I had not done prior to being on the team	75	4.187	1.293

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

The statements in this section all received scores of 4 or higher for their mean. There was a very low response rate for the first question. There was a very low deviation for the second question meaning that many respondents felt a similar answer.

Findings for Objective 4

The fourth objective was to describe team member perceptions of participation's effect on the college experience. Statements about the team experience with others, college or university recognition. Table 8 displays the data for objective 4.

Table 8
Team Member Perceptions of Effect on Undergraduate Experience (N=85)

Skills	n	Mean	SD
I was proud of my participation.	49	4.633	.720
I feel like I found a group of people similar to me.	70	4.343	.809
I felt more compelled to have good grades because of my participation.	82	4.073	.947
I spent time with team members outside of team requirements.	82	3.988	1.110
The team was recognized at college/university events.	82	3.829	1.228

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

The statements in this objective received an overall mean response of 4.173. The statement with the highest score was the statement that they were proud of their participation, but this statement also had a much lower response rate.

Findings for Objective 5

The fifth objective was to describe team member perceptions of negative aspects of team participation. The students were asked to consider the three topics of life/professional skills, equestrian skills, and collegiate experience and describe any negative aspects of being on the team. The responses were analyzed and themes along with their occurrences were determined from the answers.

Table 9
Negative Aspects of Participation (N=64)

Theme	n	%	M Age	M Year	M Semester	M Showing
Time management	22	24%	20.76	3.00	4.29	2.19
Drama	12	14%	21.00	2.71	3.00	2.29
No negative aspects	9	10%	20.78	3.00	3.11	1.89
Working with others	9	9%	20.12	2.63	2.00	1.50
Pressure to perform	4	6%	19.80	2.60	2.80	3.40
Favoritism from the coach	3	5%	21.00	3.50	6.00	4.00
Learning a new discipline	2	2%	21.50	3.50	3.50	1.00
Lack of school support	2	2%	20.50	2.50	4.00	1.00
Financial	1	1%	23.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

From the data, it can be concluded that time management and drama are considered the most common perceived negative impact. A total of 21 respondents did not answer the question for objective five.

The Chi Square Test for Association was used for semesters of participation, year in school, and years of showing experience similar to ranch horse team events and the themes found as a negative aspect of participation. The results are shown in Tables 10, 11, and 12.

Table 10

*Chi Square Test Results of Semesters * Theme*

Theme	DF	X² Value	P Value
Coach	7	13.8089	.0547
Time	7	9.0176	.2514
Others	7	8.7902	.2681
Discipline	7	7.7665	.3536
Pressure	7	7.5248	.3763
Money	7	5.4857	.6009
School	7	5.0138	.6583
Drama	7	4.4329	.7288
None	7	4.0314	.7762

The results of the Chi Square tests show that there is no significance between semesters of participation and opinion of negative impact of participation. The P Value for the coach having a negative impact on participation was very close to being significant.

Table 11

*Chi Square Test Results of Year in School * Theme*

Theme	DF	X² Value	P Value
Pressure	4	13.9378	.0075*
Drama	4	7.4028	.1161
Time	4	5.0917	.2780
None	4	3.9621	.4112
Money	4	3.3185	.5060
Discipline	4	2.3398	.6735
School	4	2.3398	.6735
Others	4	1.7555	.7806
Coach	4	1.3290	.8564

Note. *Indicates significance at $p \leq .05$.

The results of the Chi Square test show that there is significance between year in school and feeling pressured to perform. All four participants that responded to pressure to perform being a negative aspect of participation were juniors.

Table 12

*Chi Square Test Results of Years of Showing Experience * Theme*

Theme	DF	X² Value	P Value
Time	3	13.2168	.0042*
Drama	3	4.3840	.2229
None	3	.8628	.8344
Others	3	5.0701	.1667
Pressure	3	10.0848	.0179
Coach	3	5.5568	.1353
Discipline	3	3.6802	.2981
School	3	3.6802	.2981
Money	3	4.4021	.2212

Note. *Indicates significance at $p \leq .05$.

The Chi Square test shows that there is a significance between years of showing experience and both time management and pressure to perform. There were three of the four respondents who said to have 10+ years of showing experience that marked pressure to perform as their negative aspect of participation and one person who had 7-10 years of experience.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The goal of this study was to describe team member perceptions of gained benefits of participation on collegiate ranch horse teams. The first objective was to describe team member demographics. The majority of the participants were females, sophomores, and around 20 years old. The next three objectives were answered using Likert-type scales to determine their perceived benefits of participation on their life/professional skills, equestrian skills, and collegiate experience.

The second objective was to describe team member perceptions of gained life/professional skills from participation. There were 10 questions in this section and the mean response for all 10 was 4.06. This was right above the “Agree” level on the scale. This

information agrees with the guiding theory of the study, Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1999). This theory has five postulates. One study found that "participation on a collegiate judging team leads to skills outside of evaluation such as confidence, time management, patience, and oral communication" (Cavinder et al., 2011). The study done by Anderson and Lilienthal (2001) found that participation on the intercollegiate horse show association team lead to increased life skills such as communication, working with others, organizational skills, and responsibility.

The third objective about equestrian skills gained also had a mean response rate above a 4, "Agree". Previous literature on collegiate equestrian teams found that participation on a team lead to team members developing as riders and improving their horse care/management skills (Mikulee & McKinney, 2014).

The fourth objective to describe gained benefits of collegiate experience. The mean response across all 5 statements was 4.173. Previous literature did find that team participation lead to increased university pride (Anderson & Lilenthal, 2001), and giving them the opportunity to spend time with peers with the same interest (Mikulec & McKinney, 2014).

The second through fourth objectives that were answered using Likert-type scale responses agree with the third postulate of Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1999) that involvement has a quantitative and qualitative way of measurement. In this study, students were asked to give a quantitative measurement by giving a number on the Likert-type scale that agreed with their opinion on the statement. These objectives also agree with the fourth postulate that student learning and personal development gained from an educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program.

In the fifth objective, students were asked to describe their perceived negative aspects of participation. The most frequent theme pulled from the thematic analysis was time management. There were 22 students who responded that time management was the most challenging aspect of being part of their school's ranch horse team. Years of showing experience had a significant impact on a time management response. The average for showing experience of those who said time management was 2.19. The number 2 was coded to represent 4-6 years of showing experience. The next most common negative aspect of participation was drama and stating that there was no negative aspect of participation. This objective agrees with the second postulate of Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1999). The postulate says that student learning and personal development gained from an educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program. This can explain why there were multiple different answers for negative aspects of participation.

Assumptions & Limitations

It is assumed that each respondent answered openly and honestly. There were multiple limitations to this study that need to be considered when evaluating the results. One limitation to this study is that the establishment of collegiate ranch horse teams is still evolving. At the time of the subject selection, there was not a governing body for collegiate ranch horse teams. As a result, it is possible that not all United States Ranch/Stock Horse Teams were identified through the selection process. However, the most accurate source for this information was the Stock Horse of Texas Association. Since the data collection for this study, a new governing body for collegiate ranch/stock horse teams, the National Intercollegiate Ranch & Stock Horse Association, has been created.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Practice

The first recommendations for practice come from the open response portion regarding negative aspects. Administration wanting to create a ranch horse team should understand that there are negative aspects and disagreements within every group of students.

The highest response for a negative aspect of participation was the time commitment. Coaches need to discuss this with their team members ahead of time and establish plans to ensure the team members can have flourishing lives outside of the team. Previous research suggest that the time commitment was a problem but did not impact team members desire to participate on the team (Anderson & Karr-Lilienthal, 2011), but it would still be good to have a plan in place.

The next highest answer was for drama. It is recommended that coaches and team members are proactive about preventing drama. This could include acknowledging leadership roles within the team, having team bonding activities, and encouraging communication between team members.

Recommendations for Research

If a similar study were to be done in the future, one aspect to include would be team member majors. This could be used to compare and understand how being part of an agricultural activity determines major in school.

A follow-up study could be done to determine team members' thoughts about their team participation after graduation. This would determine their return on investment from participating on the team. Being on equestrian teams has shown to give members opportunities to meet professionals in their potential field of work (Mikulec & McKinney, 2014). It was also found that participants on equestrian teams learned life and professional skills, as in this study.

Participation on ranch horse teams was found to increase university pride as well (Anderson & Karr-Lilienthal, 2011), so questions about donations, continued attendance of sports events, and others about a lasting connection to their college or university would be interesting to learn.

Based upon this information from this study and the first study, a follow up study could be done to combine the concepts of both. It would be interesting to know the perceptions of team members about their specific teams. Such as asking the perception of a team member on a team that operated as a registered student organization verses a departmental team. This could be done with team member size, two-year verses four-year school, and many of the demographics from the first study.

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CHAPTER IV: OVERALL CONCLUSION

The first article in this study was designed to determine characteristics of collegiate ranch horse teams. The study used a researcher created survey delivered by Qualtrics and answered by the coach of each ranch horse team across the country. The first objective was to describe coach and team demographics. This objective found that the average age for a coach was 36 years old. The majority of teams were four-year universities with an average of 13.5 team members. The second objective was to describe the organizational characteristics of teams. Significant findings included that teams are most likely either departmental units or student organizations with 47% of teams for both categories and that 65% of teams held their funds within the school. The third objective to describe facilities and resources found that for most categories, a mix of school and personally owned resources were used. This is key information for the functionality of teams. The fourth objective to describe team operations described how teams operate on a day-to-day basis including 71% practicing 2-3 times a week, 51% of teams having a co-curricular course, and an average GPA requirement of 2.12 for the 88% of teams to have a GPA requirement. Conclusions made from this article in the study were that there were not specific requirements for a team to function meaning that most schools would have the ability to start a team. Ranch horse teams also agree with Richard Daft's Organization Theory (2016). The five dimensions of the theory all correlated with an aspect of the survey. Specialization shown as an important aspect of the teams with 88% of teams having leadership positions within their team which provides example of labor and tasks being divided between the team members (Blau et al., 1996). Recommendations for research were drawn from a point of confusion within the survey. When respondents were asked their official title and position/other responsibilities within the school, clear and concise answers were not found. It is recommended to ask these questions in a

different format because knowledge of how and why a coach was hired to be the coach of a team is important information. Recommendations for practice from the perspective of administration can be to understand that resources such as horses to show, care for horses, boarding, arena and arena tools come from a mix of school owned and personal owned (either student, coach, or other). This is important for them to understand how to manage the liability and legality of the teams' functioning.

The purpose of the second article of this study was to describe team member perceptions of perceived benefits of participation on collegiate ranch horse teams. The coaches of the previous study forwarded a second researcher-created Qualtrics survey to all current team members of their team. The first objective used open response and multiple-choice style questions to gather the respondents' demographics. The average responses were 20.729 years of age, 2.918 years of school, and 3.235 semesters of participation on the team. The survey found that 88% of respondents were females and 44% had 1-3 years of horse showing experience similar to the type of competition on the ranch horse team. The following three objectives used Likert-type scale responses. The second objective was to describe perceived benefits of participation on life and professional skills. The respondents were given 10 statements to which they gave a 1 for Strongly Disagree, 2 for Disagree, 3 for Undecided, 4 for Agree, or 5 for Strongly Agree. The average response was above 3.800 for all 10 statements. The third objective was to describe perceived benefits on equestrian skills gained. For each of the three statements in this objective, an average score above 4 was given. The fourth objective was to describe perceptions of participation's effect on the college experience. The respondents were given five statements to which they responded with averages above 3.8. These scores were not as high as the scores in the third objective about equestrian skills but it still also almost an agree level score.

The bulk of the second article came from the fifth objective which was to describe team member perceptions of negative aspects of participation. The respondents were given an open response style for this objective and there were 64 responses. The responses were then examined for common responses and grouped into themes. The highest response was time management with 24% of the 64 responses. Drama received 12 answers or 14% of the responses. The other themes pulled were no negative aspects, working with others, pressure to perform, favoritism from the coach, learning a new discipline, lack of school support, and finances. A Chi Square Test was used to determine correlation between years of showing experience and the themes. There was a high correlation between years of experience and both time management and pressure to perform. There was also a high correlation between pressure to perform and year in school with all four responses being juniors. These scores were used in the recommendations section to discuss key points that a coach would need to know for their students to have the most beneficial experience. The main recommendation for research from this article was for a follow up study to include team member majors and use that as a comparative aspect. In conclusion, it was found that this study did agree with previous research on similar types of teams/activities.

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