Sport Specialization (SS): “Year-round intense training in a single sport at the exclusion of other sports.”

- 50% of high school athletes also participate in a club sport. Club sports are associated with high levels of SS.
- School size is positively related to an athlete’s SS level.
- Cutting policies may be an influential factor for high school athletes to SS.

To determine whether cut policy is associated with school size, sport specialization and club participation in female high school volleyball athletes.

Hypothesis: Cutting policy will be associated with school size, SS rates, and club participation.

Participants: Female HS volleyball athletes (2018-2019). Study design: cross sectional. Survey included questions regarding participation in interscholastic, club, summer volleyball participation, and college camp participation during the previous year.

- SS: 3-point scale (low, moderate, high), multisport: more than 1 sport, school size: Large: >800, medium: 400-800, and small: <400, Cutting policy: cutting at all levels or no cutting
- Responses were summarized via frequency and proportions (%), Chi-square test calculated between schools and sport participation habits

Results

2,216 female high school volleyball athletes (age=15.82±1.1 years)

- Low: n=1,219, 55%
- Mod: n=807, 22.9%
- High: n=480, 22.1%
- Volleyball only: n=862, 39.4%
- Multisport: n=1,653, 74.6%

Fig 3. Specialization Classification

Fig 4. Multisport vs Single Sport

x² = 88.89, P < .001

Low: 37.9%, 62.1%
Moderate: 43.9%, 56.1%
High: 37.4%, 62.6%

Fig 5. Frequency of sport specialization by cutting policy using the 3-point specialization scale

x² = 14.35, P < .001

No Cutting: 59.2%, 40.8%
Cutting All Levels: 80%

Fig 6. Frequency of multisport status last year by cutting policy

Fig 7. Frequency of club volleyball participation last year by cutting policy

Attending a high school that cuts at all levels is associated with sport participation characteristics: High SS, club volleyball, volleyball college summer camp, summer volleyball, single sport participation

- Large schools are more likely to implement a cutting policy than small schools
- School policies, such as cutting may influence sport participation habits and sport specialization rates that exclude other sporting opportunities and pressure female athletes to participate in negative sport behaviors that are associated with overuse injury

There is a need to investigate programs and implement policies that uphold a competitive nature without limiting the participation of athletes at all levels

References
