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MORE THAN A GAME: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF LIFE STORIES OF ELITE AND PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES

ANKITA SEHRAWAT

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**MORE THAN A GAME: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF LIFE STORIES OF
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At last, I would like to thank *RED'SHINE Publication, Pvt. Ltd.* for this keepsake, and my editorial team, technical team, designing team, promoting team, indexing team, authors and well wishers, who are promoting this journal. As well as I also thankful to *Indian Psychological Association* and President *Prof. Tarni Jee* for gives review team, I also thank you to all Indian Psychological Association members for support us. With these words, I conclude and promise that the standards policies will be maintained. We hope that the research featured here sets up many new milestones. I look forward to make this endeavour very meaningful.

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ABSTRACT

Sport has always been more than a game and can contribute to the personal growth of people. The present study uses qualitative approach to explore the stories of Olympic and elite athletes tell about their journey as an athlete and the impact sports had on their lives. Also the study examines the importance of sports as an important context for learning life skills. For the purpose of the study, in-depth interviews were used to capture the experiences of both male and female elite athletes. Total of 12 elite athletes between the ages of 20 and 60 years (mean= 40), who had participated in the Olympic, Asian Games, Common Wealth, World Championship, National Championships etc.within their chosen sport. A variety of sports and sports types were included within the sample with participants from different sports (wrestling, swimming, basketball, cricket and open waters), and both team and individual sports were represented. The data was analysed using a combination of Narrative Analysis and Thematic Analysis. The finding provide an insight about deep seated motives an elite athletes and how did sports contributed to other aspect of their lives.

Keywords: *Personal Growth, Elite Sport, Life Skills, Narrative Analysis, And Thematic Analysis*

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Healthy nation is always a wealthy nation. One can think of a healthy mind only in a healthy body. Both physical and mental well being are the prerequisites of great achievements in man's life. Therefore, it is necessary to put emphasis on sports. Today one can witness increase participation in sports around the globe since 1970s. This is because of growing awareness about the importance of participation in sports.

People participate in sports for various different reasons such as physical fitness, competition and winning, enjoyment and as an outlet for imagination and energy (Gail, 2002). Sports not only ensure physical benefits but also mental benefits. In fact some of the researchers have reported that the intellectual and psychological benefits may outweigh the physical benefits (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

Sport and physical activity has more to offer than well-known and evidenced well being. Values cultivated through participating in sports, such as passion, integrity and commitment, benefit individuals not just on the field of play but in their personal and professional development. Participation in sports help to shape the character (Sean & Shane, 2012), improves communication and skills such as ability to perform under pressure, solve problems meet deadline, set goals (Danish S. J., 2002), improves interpersonal skills, peer relationship and leadership abilities (Ryan, 1989). Sports develop and encourage the spirit of healthy rivalry and competition. They teach us coolness, courage and self-control. It inculcates team-spirit, a sense of comradeship and discipline. A sportsman has to obey his captain and accept the judgment of umpires and referees. He learns to place the interests of the team above considerations of self. Thus, sports play a vital role in imparting complete education. Also it breeds the sportsman spirit which enables everyone to accept failure and defeats in a positive way and learn from such events. Thus one can say that sports builds the skills and the confidence that help all of us to cope with life's challenges, and to succeed in our personal and professional life .

Thus given the importance of sports the present study examines the stories of elite athletes and how sports have impacted their lives.

Definition of sports

Sport can inspire national pride and transform individuals, teams, communities and an entire nation. Sport is a category that covers numerous different activities. Many include high degrees of physical activity such as basketball or running while on other hand it include sport like chess which emphasis more on strategy and mental exertion. It can also be classified as team sport which involve playing in team such as football whilst individual came which do not, for instance swimming (Chopra, 2015). Sports can be defined as "A subset of leisure and work activities that involves both physical activity and competition. (Jenkins, 2005)."

However at one time sports were considered not as an organised athletic contests played by team or individuals according to prescribed rules but any outdoor recreational activity, such as hunting, fishing, shooting, etc. (Britannica, 1997). According to Oxford dictionary sports can be defined as "An activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another or others for entertainment."

Some researchers have also differentiated between sports and games. The major difference between sports and games is institutionalization of games with formalized sets of rules, national regulations and a governing administrative superstructure of adults. The organizational structure provides for the maintenance and control of the activity through

interpretation of rules by adults who act as officials. Sport is also characterized by formally recorded histories and traditions (Jenkins, 2005).

Effects of sports can be examined through three perspectives; type i.e. team or individual sport, duration which refers to the length of sports participation and engagement i.e. degree of involvement.

Different aspect will influence the direction of effect of sports will have on the persons characteristic development. For instance longer duration of participation in sports more effect of sports characteristics in other aspects of life can be witnessed. Team sport provides better opportunity for collaboration between members and scarify of individual benefits for team benefits on the other hand individual sport creates the context for self expression. Similarly how individual appraises the meaning of sports will determine the direction of influence of sport on their characteristic development.

Sports as a context of life skill development

Participating in organised sports is considered as an important ground for development of life skills (Larson & Moneta, 2006). The World Health Organisation (1999) defined life skills, as psychosocial skills and abilities that can be practised to promote desirable qualities, such as self-esteem, and sociability. Whereas Danish and colleagues defined life skills as “those skills that enable us succeed within the environments in which we live” (Danish & Owens, 2002).

Researchers have primarily focused on youth participation because it is considered as a period in which young people are required to demonstrate a range of skills and competencies such as capacity to make responsible decisions, understand their values, form relationships and communicate with others (Boyd & Briers, 1992). Further sports have been identified as one of the most important context which is particularly effective in transferring life skills to young people. Historical records demonstrate the value that sport has always been considered to play in personal development. Plato (1920) is quoted as saying, “The moral value of exercises and sports far outweigh the physical value”.

Sports participation not only help individuals to learn important skills and values but allow to permeate them in almost every salient social sphere (e.g., family, media, education, economy, religion) and be connected to the larger ideologies of our culture (Coackley & Pike, 2009). These ideologies allow individuals to make sense and give meaning to the world around them as well as identifying what is considered important and right within a particular cultural milieu.

Sports provide an opportunity for continuous planned development with regular achievement because it is a context in which goals are short term, tangible, common and easily measured. Achievement and competence, both are important characteristics as they are considered as powerful mediator of psychosocial development (Danish & Wallace, 2005). Furthermore, it has been argued that life skills are learned in the same way as sports skills, through demonstration, modelling, and practice (Danish & Hale, 1981).

Danish and colleagues also note that what is learned in sport can be transferred to other life domains (Danish & Hale, 1993). Some of the skills that are learned while participating in sports include decision making, leadership, dealing with success and failure, working under pressure. In essence, these key sport skills are reflective of key lifeskills. Thus there is a

continuous need to expose young people to positive and deliberate strategies that specifically target the transference of skills (Danish & Heke, 2004).

However the effect of participation is not always positive. Some studies have reported that participation in sports may result in increases alcohol consumption (Eccles & Hunt, 2003), increased delinquency associated with jock culture (Miller & Farrell, 2007), increased stress and social exclusion (Larson & Moneta, 2006) and self aggrandisement (Adler & Adler, 1989). Because of these negative outcomes and experiences, many critics question the overriding value of sport.

Researchers have responded to these critics by stating that sports psychologists should make decision about which life skill is important and how they should be taught through sports (Danish & Nellen, 1997). Subsequent work has been based on the acknowledgement that the development of life skills must be deliberate and emphasised within sport if beneficial outcomes are to found (Danish S. J., 2002)

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature surveyed the benefits of participating in sports and development of important skills through participation. Researchers have identified numerous benefits of playing sports. No doubt sports benefits ones physical health, improves strength endurance, social integration and psychological well-being but also engrains in inner discipline, competitive spirit, and friendship, and many other skills. (Kizar, Dalkılıç, Uçan, Mamak, & Yiğit, 2015). There is an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence on the positive effects of sport and physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle. The positive, direct effects of engaging in regular physical activity are particularly apparent in the prevention of several chronic diseases, including: cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, obesity, depression and osteoporosis. (Rochelle M, Janet A, Jack T, Melanie J, & Warren R, 2013).

However it is important to acknowledge that the benefits of participating sports is not just limited to physical health but also incorporates many other aspects such as mental health, cognitive functioning (information processing), memory, concentration, behaviour and academic, identity formation, crime prevention, development of life skills, mood, personal wellbeing, self esteem, social behaviour, social cohesion etc. stress leadership discipline time management.

Cognitive Functioning

Cognitive functioning can be understood as information processing. It includes perception, memory, learning, attention, readiness, reasoning capacity and problem solving. (Chodsko-Zajko & Moore, 1994) . It also include psychomotor functions such as time of reaction, time of movement, performance velocity (Suutuama & Ruoppila, 1998).

Positive relationship has been observed between exercise and cognitive functioning across lifespan. (Voss, Nagamatsu, & kramer, 2011) (Chang & Etnier, 2015)(Chang, Nien, & Yan, The brain and cognition in older adults, 2014) (Chu, Alderman, Wei, & Chang, 2015).

Researchers have demonstrated that physically active individuals have lower risk to be attacked by mental disorder (Elasyed, Ismail, & Young, 1980) (Dustman, Ruhling, Shearer, Bonekat, & Shigeoka, 1984) (Van Boxtel, Langerak, Houx, & Jolles, 1996), faster cognitive processing (Colcombe, Erickson, Raz, Webb, Cohen, & Mcauley, 2003) and protector against the cognitive decline and dementia in elder individuals (Laurin, Verreault, Lindsay, MacPherson, & Rockwood, 2001).

A study by Chien-Heng Chu et al., (2015) reported that athletes with intense and prolonged training for competitive sport are generally characterized by superior cognitive functions when compared to those with lower fitness levels, or those who exercise infrequently (Netz, Dwolatzky, Zinker, Argo, & Agmon, 2011). Thus one can assume that such athletes can exhibit adaptations in a range of cognitive functions. The same study also reported that expert athletes when compared to non-expert show superior outcomes across a range of sport-specific cognitive domains e.g., decision making, declarative memory, perception, and visual searching capacity. (Mann, Williams, Ward, & Janelle, 2007).

Leadership

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. (Northhouse, 2007). Often it is believed that organised sports provide individual with experiences that may help them to develop leadership skills. Studies have reported that participating in sports help individual to learn skills and values that are necessary to succeed in education, workforce and throughout the life (Ewing & Seefeldt,

2002). Some of the advantages identified were that athletic participation among college students relates positively to growth in interpersonal skills, peer relationships, and leadership abilities (Ryan, 1989). Danish (1986) defines some of these skills as the ability to perform under pressure, solve problems, meet deadlines and challenges, set goals, communicate, handle success and failure, work in a group and within a system, and receive feedback and benefit from it.

According to a public health researcher, Keith Zullig playing sports help athletes to develop skills like communication and team building, which enable them to function effectively as a leader. (Duggan, 2017). Playing team sports such as football, basketball as well as individual sports like running, boxing and swimming, helps participants learn to treat other competitors with respect, identify strengths and weaknesses, develop winning strategies and manage time effectively. Beside these sports helps athletes to become more confident and efficient in decision making necessary to succeed in leadership roles of all types.

It is believed that sport is highly competitive which pushes athlete to achieve more than their rivals. This is true especially in team sports where competitive atmosphere pushes people towards “taking one for the team”. It is within the cohesion of a team that a captain will stand out and acquire the position of leader.(Hopkin, 2013).

Kniffin, Wasnsink & Shimizu (2014) in their study on Sports at Work reported that employees who participated in varsity-level high school sports appeared to demonstrate higher levels of leadership and enjoyed higher-status careers. These ex-athletes also exhibited more prosocial behavior than non-athletes—they more frequently volunteered time and donated to charity. (Kniffin, Wansink, & Shimizu, 2014).

Academic Performance

In the literature, the effect of sports participation on academic performance is extensively studied. Positive association between academic performance and competitive sports have been reported. For example Whitley (1999) conducted a study which addressed different criteria including grade point average, attendance rate, discipline referrals, dropout rate and graduation rate. Finding reported that the mean grade point average attendance rate, discipline referrals and graduation was higher among athletes as compared to non-athletes whereas dropout rates were lower among athletes (Whitley, 1999). Another study compared the grades of athletes during their respective sporting season and then out of season. The results reported that athletes earned higher grades during season (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005). Also it was noted that female athletes had less of a difference between in season and out season grades compared to their male counterparts (Gorton, 2010).

Beside this studies have reported that sports participation teaches student discipline (Videon, 2002), provides positive contextual environment for socializing adolescents (Chalip & Green, 1998), student athletes express higher educational aspirations (Marsh & Kleitman, 2003). Feldman and Matjasko (2005) reported that students develop mutual trust and commitment through sports participation. It was noted student athletes had higher levels of attachment to other students, family members and school authorities than non athletes (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005). Coakley (2006) notes the potentially important role sport participation can play in developing a student’s commitment to education.

Emotional Intelligence

It can be defined as “the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Salovey &

Mayer, 1990). It includes four major themes (1) perceiving emotions, (2) using emotions, (3) understanding emotions, and (4) managing emotions.

Few studies have identified significant link between sports and emotional intelligence. In particular team sports are considered to be an important venue for individual to develop and refine skills included in emotional intelligence. Team sport encourage individuals to work towards a common goal and even sacrificing their own success for overall team success. (Fox, Barr-Anderson, Neumark-Sztainer, & Wall, 2009).

Devonport, Lane, Lowther, and Thelwell (2009) discussed how sport psychology and emotional intelligence are intertwined. “In terms of relationships between specific psychological skills and subcomponents of emotional intelligence, results show that participants who use self-talk are more likely to be able to appraise their own emotions, appraise others' emotions effectively and regulate their emotions”. Enhanced emotional intelligence help athlete to cope with number stressors, including competition stress and also stress experienced in everyday life. (Deonport, Lane, Lowther, & Thelwell, 2009).

One of the most interesting study on emotional intelligence and sport by Perlini & Halverson (2006) reported that National Hockey League players score above the population average on emotional intelligence. They concluded that a) self-awareness, b) emotional management and stress tolerance, and c) an elevated general mood, are significantly higher amongst NHL players than they are in the general population” (Perlini & Halverson, 2006)

Stress

Athletic stress help individual to develop coping skills. It is believed participating in sports activity places both physical and psychological demands on athletes and are forced to cope with the stresses. Although there is no question that there are individual differences in their ability to cope successfully with stressful situations. These differences results from attitudes and skills acquired in early childhood and adolescent years. Athletics can be an important arena in which such skills are learned. Through their athletic experiences individuals can develop attitudes, beliefs and coping skills that carry over into other areas of their lives. Although there are no such studies which reveal that athletes are better in handling stress.

However in book, *What Business Can Learn From Sport Psychology: Ten Lessons for Peak Professional Performance*, authors mentioned because athletes often have to function under extreme pressure, and often in fronts of lots of people. They often develop skills not only to perform under such situation but also give their best. Such skills can be learned and applied by other in their lives especially business men who are suppose to work constantly under pressure, deadline, changing market and economy.

Self esteem

Self esteem is defined as “general feelings of self-worth or self-value”. Self-esteem encompasses many factors including aspects such as body image, feelings of competency and self- satisfaction (Jafee, LynnWu, & Peggy, 1996). Many researchers have well documented that self esteem is important key to financial success, health, and personal fulfilment, and it is regarded as the antidote to underachievement, crime, and drug abuse (Branden, 1994) (Mecca, Smelser, & Vasconcellos, 1989).

Whereas it is believed physical activity and sports can increase and maintain individuals self esteem (Gilbert, 2001). Literature supports positive association between improving self esteem and sports participation. For instance a study by Bowker showed that sports participation was positively correlates with physical competence, physical appearance,

physical self-esteem, and general self-esteem in the sample. Although the correlation was strongest for physical self esteem. (Bowker, 2006). Another study reported that 90% girls believed that team sports had a positive impact on their self esteem (Perry-Burney & Takyi, 2002). Similarly a study by Talyor and Turek reported that sport participation predicted higher self-esteem in those who also experienced positive associations from the underlying elements of social acceptance and social competence. (Taylor & Turek, 2010).

Further a Diener (1995) suggested that self-esteem is closely associated with happiness. Higher self esteem results in higher level of happiness or subjective well being. (Diener & Diener, 1995). Literatures have reported a link between sport participation and individual's overall sense of well-being, or happiness. Thus it can be assumed that participation in sports not only have physiological benefits but also promote psychological benefits which may lead to happiness and increased success (Varca, Shaffer, & Saunders, 1984) (Downward & Rasciute, 2011) (Rasciute & Downward, 2010). for instance Jewitt et al., conducted a longitudinal study to understand early sport involvement affects mental health as they become adults. The study reported that sport can enhance self-esteem, mastery, emotional well-being, self-concept, and quality of life; all leading to better mental health (Jewitt, Brunet, O'Loughlin, Scarapicchia, & O'Loughlin, 2013)

Personality and Character building

Personality is the set of psychological traits and mechanisms within the individual that are organized and relatively enduring and that influence his or her interactions with, and adaptations to, the intrapsychic, physical, and social environments (Larsen & Buss, 2005).

Mixed evidence has been found regarding whether sports promote personality development. According to Conzelmann and Müller , there are no evidences that participation in sports result in developing personality. However the studies suggests that cognitive personality traits (e.g., self-concept) can be influenced more strongly through sporting activity than by static personality traits (global traits) (Conzelmann & Müller, 2005).

On the other hand Shariati & Bakhtiari (2011) reported that participation in sports has a positive effect on the personality characteristics of an individual. In their study they compared the personality characteristics of an athlete with non-athlete the result reported that there was a significant difference in terms of personality characteristics; neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness with athletes showing more positive personality. Although whether participation promotes these characteristics was unclear.

However there is good number of evidences that suggests that there is a difference in personality of individuals who participates in sports in comparison to who do not. Athletes demonstrate higher level of extraversion (Colley, Roberts, & Chipps, 1985), emotional stability (Egan & Stelmack, 2003), openness to experiences (Kajtna, Tušak, Barić, & Burnik, 2004) and conscientiousness (Rhodes & Smith, 2006).

An individual's character is that person's collection of characteristics traits, and these can be defined as relatively stable dispositions to think, feel, and behave in certain ways in certain situations. (Webber, 2006). Characters area set of morals and beliefs that defines how we treat or behave with others and ourselves. Sport has been widely accepted as an excellent training ground for developing character. (Sean & Shane, 2012). It is widely believed positive character traits can and should be learned in a sport and physical activity setting (Parker &

Stiehl, 2004). The sports and physical activity setting merely provides opportunities to athletes to learn skills, strategies, sportsmanship, commitment, respect and disciplines.

Sport participation has been linked with better attendance in school, lower drop-out rates, fewer discipline problems, and less drug use (Bredemeier & Shields, 1995). Other than this sport participation results in results in positive peer relationships (Evan & Roberts, 1987) individual display courage, respect rules, become competitive, (Larson, 2000) show leadership and foster citizenship (Wright & Côté, 2003).

Resilience

Resilience can be defined as “a person’s ability to positively adapt to stressful situations and thereby function normally despite being exposed to stressful stimuli” (Bonanno, 2004). Recent study reported that participation in an organised sports correlates positively with the resilience score (Hjemdal, Friborg, & Stiles, 2006).

Few other studies have also examined this association between sport participation and resilience. One such study conducted by White and Bennie (2015) investigated gymnast and coaches perceptions about development of resilience through gymnastics participation. The results indicated gymnastics environment created stress and exposed gymnasts to many challenges in training and competition. Some of the features of sports environment, such as interpersonal relationship and positive coach behaviour supported gymnasts through these challenges and encouraged them to overcome failure. The study further concluded that gymnastic participation was perceived not only to develop resilience but also life skills, self efficacy and self esteem (White & Bennie, 2015). Thus sports can be viewed as an intervention activity that increases the protective factors associated with enhanced resilience (Cohu, 2005). Thus it can be concluded that sports may be an appropriate context for the development of resilience.

Social competence/communication skills

Social competence can be viewed as a multifaceted construct which involves social cognitive skills, interaction with other, social assertion, positive self concept, communication, popularity with peers and so on (Dodge, 1985). Recent empirical research studies have reported that sport participation involves many robust positive effects and the largest effects relate to social self concept (Marsh & Kleitman, 1993). Sport is a means to develop important social skills reported in The President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. (The Center for Research for Girls and women in sport. Minnesota University, 1997).

Through their participation in sports athlete learn to cooperate (Marsh H. , 1992), respect others (Donaldson & Ronan, 2006) and negotiate (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003). Beside this athletes also learn tolerance, selflessness, legitimate expression of talent, develop communication skills, empathy and understanding for others viewpoint (McGee, Williams, & Howden-Chapman, 2006). Sports participation also provided opportunities to experience loyalty and intimacy with others.

Problem-solving skills/resourcefulness

Sports participation provides athletes opportunities to learn important lesson including problem solving (The Center for Research for Girls and women in sport. Minnesota University, 1997) and emotional self-regulation (Baily, 2006) Sports is also an important context for athletes to establish a mechanism which help them to respond to any given situation or problem, and facilitate their ability to identify their resources to meet variety of challenges (Hawkins & Mulkey, 2005). Besides this sports requires athletes to develop

competencies to limit the disruptive effect of emotions on attention and performance and establish goal directed behaviour (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003).

In comparison to any other activities, participation in sports is positively correlated to increase self knowledge and improved emotional self management (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin., 2003). Through participation athletes gain important knowledge regarding how to achieve a goal including autonomous decision-making, and action and time management (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003). Furthermore after losing a game athletes and coaches' review overall game strategy and identify problems and devise a better strategy for future matches to improve performance in deficit areas. This strategy significantly reduces the negative reaction after losing a game and promotes constructive analysis of strength and weaknesses with an aim of improvement (Hawkins & Mulkey, 2005).

Persistence

Sports is a valuable avenues in which athletes learn to set achievable goals for themselves and learn about effort and continue in course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003). Sport requires consistent commitment from athletes in form of practice and conditioning (Hawkins & Mulkey, 2005). Thus sports require discipline and continuity of effort (McHale, Crouter, & Tucker, 2001).

Through their participation athletes learn to push themselves, remain focuses and work hard. There are evidences that organised sports can influence behaviours such as risk taking and perseverance to large extent than any other informal physical activities (Donaldson & Ronan, 2006). Athletes set goals for themselves and strive to obtain throughout the season. In pursuit if their goal they experience physical, emotional and mental challenges (Cohu, 2005). Through their adverse experiences they learn to use challenges for self enhancement (Galli & Vealey, 2007).

Sports and Business success

Often the physical benefits of playing sports are overemphasised and are well documented. While, no doubt that staying active has number of health benefits throughout but there are other benefits that sports can have when it comes to doing well in career. It was believed that playing sports when younger can help lead to business success later in life, and now research suggests that this is often the case. Sports can provide you an important context where you can learn essential skills and qualities that can help you in your career. One such skill is self discipline. It is believed if you want to succeed you need dedication and desire to continually improve, and this helps you to see how hard work pays off—a crucial skill at work.

Sports provides athletes competitive environment. They know there will always be someone better than them and they should always do your best and continuously improve. This is something which organisation desire to see in their employees, that is always giving their best.

Recently many researchers have identified the benefits of playing sports on individual's work-life. A study reported in Fortune by the Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies reported that sports players often went on to develop better leadership skills, more confidence, and better team-working abilities (Russell, 2015). Whereas another report called 'Making the connection: women, sport and leadership' released by the EY Women Athletes Business Network and espnW reported that female executives were more likely to have been involved in sports when they were younger. (EY & espn, 2017). The report showed 94% of senior business women in the C-suite played sports and over half played at university level-

suggesting a strong correlation between their success in sports and their success in business. Further the report found out that of the 400 women EY surveyed, 75% said that a candidate's background in sports positively influenced their decision to hire them. These women put a particular premium on female athletes because they know — very personally — how participating in sports can impact work ethic.

Similar finding was reported by Investec who survey 1,000 female business executive. Some of finding were; Of women who play sport three or more times a week, almost half (48%) have a degree or 'other' higher degree. By contrast, amongst non-sports playing women, only 24% have a degree, also women who play regular sport showed higher levels of confidence. A quarter of women who play sport three times a week or more, said that the statement 'I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events' was exactly true for them, compared to just 19% of women who do not do any sport at all. The same study also interviewed some business leader who talked about the impact on recruitment and sport on CVs or application forms. One leader commented that candidates who participate in sport are more likely to display such valuable traits as being accountable and efficient with minimum supervision. "They have a different approach to their self-development. The kind of people who do stuff well are the kinds of people who challenge themselves in sport, the kinds of people who put themselves up for leadership positions. Those who have been part of a formal team are often very different from the people who have not." (Investec).

Two other studies by Cornell's Kevin Kniffin and two other colleagues published in the Journal of Leadership & Organisational studies (2014) reported that teenagers who played sports developed stronger leadership skills, worked better in teams and demonstrated more confidence. Kniffin reported that participation in sports 'spills over' to occupationally advantageous traits that persist across a person's life," (Casey, 2014).

The first study conducted by Kniffin, his Cornell colleague Brian Wansink and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's Mitsuru Shmizu surveyed the views of 66 adults about their perceptions of those who played sports and those who did not. Those who participated in organised sports were seen as having "significantly higher levels of leadership, self-confidence and self-respect."

The second study, was a longitudinal in nature, using data collected from more than 900 World War II veterans, examined correlation of participation in high school sports. Among other things, that study demonstrated a "positive relationship between participation in competitive youth sports and several measures of long-term personal success and pro-sociality." And the 43 percent of male veterans who played varsity sports scored had careers of "higher status" and more success in upper management jobs and those in the trades. Thus one can say that participation in high school sports helps youngsters develop a host of crucial skills which give them a leg up as they enter the work world and achieve success for decades afterward.

Objective

This study was designed to explore stories of elite and Olympic athletes, to establish the importance of sports on individual's life and also identify the life skills they have learned through sports. For the purpose of this study athletes who have taken sports as a career and excelled in it were interviewed.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the methodology employed for the present research. The sub-headings are as follows

1. Qualitative Research Paradigm
2. Narratives
3. Narrative research in sports
4. Sampling and Participant Profile
5. Data Collection
6. Data Analysis
7. Researchers positionality

Qualitative research paradigm

Qualitative research is a world view where the researcher becomes the ‘research instrument’. The beauty of the paradigm is such that it brings forth the importance of researcher and acknowledges the active presence of the researcher in the whole process. Qualitative research emerges out as an engaging dialogue; hence it is also a dialogical research process. All the voices in the process are heard and valued as everything in data. Patton (2002) defined it as “a process of inquiry that seeks to understand phenomena in real-world settings where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate phenomenon of interest. Understanding the particularity of a context and the interaction that happens within that context is the task of qualitative research. (Tinning & Fitzpatrick, 2012). It allows researcher to make sense of experiences by describing and interpreting them (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010) and have the ability to “delve into complexities and processes” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The core of such method is the ability to provide insight into behaviour, perspective and personal experiences. Further qualitative research can be described as a activity that locates the observer in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Rather than seeing qualitative research as wholly predetermined it should be viewed as emerging and evolving (Jones, Brown, & Holloway, 2012). Researchers enter the field with the aim of uncovering their assumptions and setting them aside.

Interpretative materials are part of the research practices which make the world more visible. These practices turn the world into a series of representations that allow us to increase understanding of experience. And hence qualitative research is inductive in nature which gives researcher freedom to move from specific instances to discover patterns or regularities, giving the data primacy.

Qualitative approach to data collection was adopted for this particular study as it reflects the epistemological and ontological approach of the research by validating and privileging the voice of the participant (Davidson, 2003). Qualitative inquiry process is iterative, it moves back and forth from identifying some initial participants for the study, gathering data from a few, revisiting our reasons for the research refining it, going back to look for more participant and so on. Qualitative research is also reflexive; the researcher must be aware of the discipline and methodology biases, be explicit about them, and pause at different occasions during research process to question the source of emerging understanding and their meanings in relation to other source of relevant information and collaborators’ understanding.

Since the aim of the study was to understand the life journey of sportsman and how sports influence their life, the study adopted an open approach order to be responsive to the multiplicity of meanings that the participants brought to their experiences. Therefore, the aim of this study was to describe, understand and interpret athlete experiences. Also, semi-

structured approach to questioning was used so that the researcher could balance between what the participants want to speak and what they did not want to speak. This paradigm allowed researcher enough freedom to tap the unsaid voices and concealed perspectives from the participant's data. The tool used for data collection was semi-structured interview and further it was analyzed through a combination of Thematic Analysis and Narrative analysis.

Narratives

Narrative is inherently multidisciplinary, and is an extension of the interpretive approaches in social sciences. Qualitative enquiry uses narrative to capture the rich data within stories. It is believed that questionnaires, surveys and quantitative analyses of behaviour are not sufficient enough to capture the complexity of meaning embodied within stories. Narrative analysis takes the story of individual or a group as the object of study. Thus the focus is on how individuals or groups make sense of events and actions in their lives through examining the story, and the linguistic and structural properties (Riessman, 1993).

Narrative methods prioritise a specific individual's experience through eliciting stories of concrete events and happenings that have occurred in their life. By recounting moments of experience within a storied form, the individual's emotional and subjective responses are made accessible, bringing meaning to personal experience (Careless & Douglas, 2013).

The main goal of narrative enquiry is to understand how people organise and bring order to experiences (Willig, 2008). People make connection between events and interpret them via constructing narratives about their lives.

Defining narrative is difficult: the key writers also find it challenging to draw a precise boundary around its meaning (Smith & Sparkes, 2009): "narrative contains a multiplicity of meanings" (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007) and narrative research is conducted in a variety of ways. Narratives should be viewed as an ongoing and plural enterprise as it fails to offer singular perspective (Smith & Sparkes, 2006).

Murray (2003) defines narrative as: "An organised interpretation of a sequence of events [which] involves attributing agency to the characters in the narrative and inferring causal links between the events."

In simpler term, Holloway and Freshwater (2007) explained narratives as continuous stories with connected elements that include plot, a particular problem, and a cast of characters or actors who have an impact on a personal story. The narratives provide such an account of people's experiences that they are easily understood and communicated to others. It is believed that a narrative design "focuses on the elicitation and provocation of story-telling or narration." (Wengraf, 2001). However, Smith and Sparkes (2009) point out that narrative and story tend to be utilised interchangeably within the literature, and that this is not universally accepted. People do not tell narratives, instead they tell stories and therefore researchers often use narrative and story interchangeably (Frank, 2002). The story relates to the tale that an individual or group tells or performs (Frank A. , 1995).

By creating structures, narratives allows to discuss the properties or general dimensions of stories such as plot, tellability and cast of characters. Thus narratives has been characterised as providing a method for "telling stories" (Murno Hendry, 2007).

The use of narrative emerge from the argument that a person at their most basic level is a story-telling animal (Smith & Sparkes, 2009) naturally constructing stories out of cultural life (Polkinghorne, 2005).

For many scholars narrative analysis and personal stories are important because not only identity and sense of self are created and sustained through narrative means (McAdams, 1993) but also telling stories of our experiences over time allows the development of a 'narrative thread' which constitutes the core of identity and sense of self (Spence, 1982).

Somer (1994) stated "people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives." (Somer, 1994). Thus it can be said that narratives shapes individuals identity lifestyle possibilities and horizons. It can be said that stories and narratives matter (Charles & Douglas).

Narrative Research in Sport

In recent years researches concluded that stories and narratives matters in sports. The studies have explored how narratives have very real consequences for long -term mental health and identity development (Charles & Douglas).In narrative analysis, unique aspect of an story are highlighted and understanding are formed against a backdrop of previous life experiences (Carlick & Biley, 2004).

Smith and Sparkes (2009) believe that sport and exercise behaviour needs to include an exploration of meaning systems that form human experience (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Woike (2008) comments that narrative analysis may be a good choice for researchers interested in complex subjective experiences and can help us to find meaning within them (Woike, 2008). Till date, narrative inquiry has received little attention within sports and exercise domain (Charles & Douglas). However some researchers view it as medium which allow us to share lived experiences of "what is out there in society" (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Smith & Sparkes, 2009 believe that strength of narrative lies in its ability and power to:"Lift the veil of conventionality from people's eyes as stories subtly raise different and sometimes troubling questions about the necessity and desirability of conformable and familiar practice within sport and exercise settings."

This leads to greater understanding of idiosyncrasies or common differences in practice within the sport setting, especially as the dominant discourse revolves around success and achievement. The narrative approach allow athletes to share their personal stories of success, failure, struggles etc., through providing accounts of their personal life story, tales of significant moments within their sporting lifespan.

The data was generated through an understanding of individual athletes stories and thus responds to the call for greater adoption of the narrative method within the sport and exercise domain. Narrative interviewing allows the participants to tell their own stories and not directed by researchers and therefore this approach minimize the influence of the interviewer and allows participants greater voice. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Further researchers believed that such kind of interviewing enables us capture experiences and allows participants to express themselves in their own words and at their own pace (Brewer, 2002).Unique aspect of individual stories can be gathered without directing their content or structure because interviews permit flexibility and spontaneity (Mason, 2002).

Sampling and Participant Profile

The participants of this study included 12 elite athletes both male(5) and female(7) between the age of 23-58, who had competed at various international and national tournaments like Olympics, Asian Games, Common Wealth, World Championship, National Championship etc. Out of 12 participants 9 participants were Indian where as one from China, one from

America and one from Iran. The athletes competed across different sports (wrestling, swimming, basketball, cricket and tennis) and both team and individual sports were represented. Further information on the participants can be found in table 1(next page)

Table 3.1: Athlete participant demographics

No.	Country	Age (in years)	Gender	Sport	Sport Level	Age Started (in years)
1	India	57	Male	Wrestling	International	13
2	India	37	Female	Swimming/Open waters	International	0.5
3	India	45	Male	Wrestling	International	15
4	India	24	Female	Wrestling	International	12
5	India	58	Female	Basketball	International	6
6	India	22	Female	Wrestling	International	13
7	India	42	Male	Wrestling	International	11
8	India	23	Female	Swimming	International	3
9	India	23	Male	Cricket	National	2
10	America	26	Female	Wrestling	International	7
11	China	25	Female	Wrestling	International	15
12	Iran	43	Male	Wrestling	International	14

The study adopted non-probability purposive sampling for selection of participants. Purposive sampling is a technique of selection in which the person or events are deliberately selected in order to provide information that cannot be obtained from other sources (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Purposive sampling allows researchers to choose the participant that will allow research question to be addressed (Creswell, 2007). In purposive sampling is a process in which a sampling criteria is formulated and then participants are chosen accordingly (Jones & Holloway, 2012).

The criteria identified for this research was as followed

1. Athletes should be either participating or should have participated at an elite level (national or international)
2. The sample should include both female and male participants
3. Athletes should be over the age of 18

Data collection

The researcher employed one-to-one interview-in line with narrative life story approaches biographical, historical, and cultural context for each athlete’s current life situation and experiences. The interviews were employed in order to understand each players life history, details of his experiences and meaning associated with those experiences. (Dale, 1996).

Success of any interview is dependent upon researcher’s ability to build a rapport with the participant. Participants should feel comfortable and establish a sense of trust with the researcher. This relationship allows participant to share detailed information with the researcher with ease. To develop this rapport each participant was assured of confidentiality of data and that all the information provided by the participants would be helpful information (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Each participant was presented with identical sequence of open ended questions and all the interviews were audio-recorded. Before commencing the interview each athlete was given a

consent form recognizing that their participation is completely voluntary and agreeing to have their interviews audio recorded (Appendix). The consent form also indicated that athletes was required to not answer any question that they found to be uncomfortable and they could stop the interview at any point of time without any repercussion.

The questions were designed to gather as much as information about the athletes life experiences. Throughout the interview probes were used to encourage athletes to provide fuller information. Finally all the interviews were fully transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis which is the process of classification and present themes (patterns) that relate to data. Thematic analysis allows bringing order to data, organising what is there into patterns, categorises and looks for relationship between them (Brewer, 2002). In thematic analysis the focus is on the content of the story, rather than how it is told (Riessman C. , 2008). The process of thematic analysis is complex, non-linear and dependent upon researcher working in orderly, systematic and structured manner (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). Further Holloway and Wheeler suggested that thematic analysis is an iterative process as researcher moves back and forth from collection to analysis and back again to refining the questions that they ask of data. Hammersley describe it as process of analyzing data that involves thinking which is both self conscious and systematic, therefore exploring, managing and interpreting data collected over time is integral part of qualitative data analysis (Jones, Brown, & Holloway, 2012).

Guidelines stated by Braun and Clarke (2006) for data analysis was followed. They defied the process as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data”. In thematic analysis, the researcher analyses the narrative as a whole in order to reflect the “core of the experience that truly represents the narrators’ accounts” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The focus of thematic analysis is more on what is said rather than to whom, how or for what purpose (Riessman C. , 2008). Thematic analysis examines the narrative material or life stories by breaking the text into relatively smaller units of content rather than processing the structure of stories as a whole (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Thematic analysis can be valuable in examining similarities and differences between stories provided by number of people (Smith & Sparkes, 2009) since it is a process which involves dissecting the original story; sections or single words belonging to a defined category are collected from the entire story or from several texts belonging to a number of narrators. Thus this helps to develop general knowledge about the core themes that make up the content of the stories generated (Sparkes, 1999). Manual process of analysis was adopted and the use of computer software analysis was avoided to prevent the analysis becoming too mechanistic.

The six phases presented by Braun and Clarke (2006) for conducting thematic analysis was followed. These six phases are outlined in table 3.2 (next page)

Table3.2: Phases of Thematic Analysis

S.no	Phase	Description
1	Familiarising yourself with the data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2	Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set collating data relevant to each code.
3	Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.

S.no	Phase	Description
4	Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2)generating a thematic map of the analysis.
5	Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells
6	Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid compelling extract examples

(Source: Adapted from Braun and Clarke 2006, p.87).

The stage one took place immediately after transcription process giving a holistic impression of the data. The codes and themes identified; there was no attempt to anticipate the findings, rather the study was data driven and inductive in nature (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

In stage two codes were generated by highlighting the recurring words or statements. Each transcript was reviewed several times to ensure no important information is missed out. In stage three sorting of codes took place where similar codes were grouped together leading to the emergence of theme, which is a conceptual label for a group of linked codes. These themes are important because they capture important links between the data in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A bottom up approach was adopted in which patterns were identified in an inductive manner. The data was organised and reorganised. The whole process involved constant moving backwards and forward across the data.

Researchers Positionality

Any research process is a human affair, as the researcher occupies a central position in the work, hence it becomes a natural thing that the process would be infected with personal biases and subjectivity preferences. In qualitative paradigm, the researcher becomes the researching instrument. This particular aspect may lead to results varying greatly depending upon who conducts the research (Webb & Auriacombe, 2006). In order to affirm the validity in the research process and to provide a more transparent account of research, it is important to look at how the researcher and the inter-subjective elements have impacted the research in any manner. Since, the researcher is viewed as an active participant in the research it is of utmost importance to understand the researchers location of self, i.e. where he stands in the power of structure if the research. Researchers are not seen as just an individual scholar but a complex collection of interests and positions. In the present study as the researcher situates herself, her position is unmasked through personal accounting.

The researcher is deeply connected to the topic, as she is herself a sports person and values the importance and influence sports had in her life. She strongly believed that sports can teach you a lot beside sports which has made her read and research a lot about it. With such intense motivation to research about the sports persons journey and the impact of sports on them, the researcher was obviously aware of her biases and preconceptions coming in the way of how he would see the data and stories gathered from people. The researcher started off by questioning herself about her journey as sports person so as to bring the deep-seated motives of the researcher to the surface.

As a researcher, it was a necessary step as it helped in placing the researcher at a pedestal where all her biases are eliminated to a great extent. This in turn helps in a smooth research process to be carried without any judgments and evaluation of the stories and motives of sports person. As the researcher also stems from society and is a part of the socio-cultural milieu, he is bound to have certain set of beliefs and values that would influence her

perception about the participants. Finding researcher's position in the current research helped in toning down the biases of the research, so that there is a sense of acceptance towards the subjective data that is gathered from the sports persons about their life journey.

But as a qualitative research is known as the lens into the subjectivities of others and researcher delves deep into the data from others, she encounters a lot that exists within her that is similar or different from what she found. Also, these new understanding that emerged from the data from outside and especially from 'within' helped the researcher to formulate better perceptions and understanding about future course of the study. This explains how for any qualitative research, it is necessary for the researcher to locate herself in socio-cultural milieu.

CHAPTER IV ANALYSIS

Thematic framework and Narrative Analysis were chosen to analyse the data in the study. Initially after the qualitative interviews, the interviews were transcribed and Line-by-line Coding (Saldana, 2015) was used to come up with summative codes from the vast data gathered. The data analysed using thematic framework helped to identify certain themes and sub themes. There are total of 4 themes presented and discussed in the following section.

The detailed tabular representation of the themes and sub themes from in-depth interviews of the sports person are mentioned below in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: The Thematic and Sub thematic framework

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes	Verbatim
Becoming Athlete	Critical Introduction to sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Started playing as a kid At least one family member in sports Enjoyed sports Role Models Played more than one sport 	<p><i>“i started playing when i was just three years old”</i></p> <p><i>“papa athlete the toh unhone sports start Kara tha”</i></p> <p><i>“muje humesha se cricket ka bohout shauk tha”</i></p> <p><i>“when i used to read about legends swimmers like meher sen bhula chowdry wow they crossed English channel this and that i was like i am gonna do this one day”</i></p> <p><i>“starting meh kabbadi fir uske baad wrestling”</i></p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realisation of one’s capability 	<p><i>“She had started her swim before me and yet when I finished on the other side of the pool, she was still swimming! My whole body was burning hot</i></p>

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes	Verbatim
Becoming Athlete	Potential for success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should make career in sports 	<p><i>because of the strength I had put in. It was a very important event in my life”</i></p> <p><i>“joh jab ek normal sports person key life chal rahi hai normal se aur usme ek turn ajata hai. App fir serious ho jate ho, mere junior Olympics ke baad laga ke muje apna career sports meh he banana chayie”</i></p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intrinsic motivation • Commitment 	<p><i>“You have to push yourself nobody is asking to do it. Its the passion and the will that you wanna get into those waters and conquer those waters”</i></p> <p><i>“ jab meh kushti meh acha hua, meine apna saara dhyan uss meh he laga diya”</i></p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from family 	<p><i>“ meh Haryana ke goan se hoon...fir meri family ne muje bohout support kara.. uder lardkiyo ke 10th meh he shadhi ho jati hai”</i></p> <p><i>“the biggest role in</i></p>

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes	Verbatim
<p>Importance of social support</p> <p>Importance of social support</p>	<p>Role of family</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance • Mentor • Supported in bad times • No restriction • Role of friends 	<p><i>my life and my career. She has been my guide, mentor, instructor, cook, nutritionist and the person who finds the best way out for me. She was the one who fought for my swimming career before I had started performing as an athlete”</i></p> <p><i>“ my dad was my coach, my mentor”</i></p> <p><i>“actually my family was there that at least with me in my bad times...they told me you had achieved this and it’s really difficult to achieve this also”</i></p> <p><i>“papa be kabhi band kar nhi rakha key iss cheese ko nhi khana”</i></p> <p><i>“humesha se 4-5 friends he rahe hai zayda nhi”</i></p> <p><i>“My coach, XYZ and my physical trainers. Without an expert guide, an athlete can’t become a professional. I know I certainly wouldn’t have been able to”</i></p>
	<p>Role of others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of coaches 	

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes	Verbatim
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of significant others 	<p><i>“Touchwood by god’s grace I had very good teachers and friends”</i></p>
Being an athlete	Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training extra than others 	<p><i>“ I used to have individual practices everyday 45 minutes beside the team practices. It’s for minimum 10-8 years I did that. I mean individual practice. I used to be the only person on the court in gymkhana court who would be reaching, because people used to be sleeping on court”</i></p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of good training 	<p><i>“ you have to realise people to train well, can achieve something”</i></p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple training 	<p><i>“ ek acha khilardi kam se kam din meh 2 bar practice karata hai”</i></p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes away normal life 	<p><i>“I feel I never knew what was Diwali what is dushera, always playing”</i></p>
Being an athlete	Sacrifice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No social life 	<p><i>“as a child I used to feel that my other friends are enjoying they are going out specially every time I had to turn down all the birthday parties”</i></p>

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes	Verbatim
Being an athlete		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying away from family 	<p><i>“meh jab 16 saal ka tha tabhi se hostel meh aur camp meh reh raha hoon.”</i></p>
	Physical Injuries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple injuries 	<p><i>“ har roz apko nayi jagya chot hoti hai. Kitna dard hota hai fir bhi app har roz practice karte ho. Specially ek wrestler ke life meh. Jab humare khan thot te hai toh itna zabardast pain hota hai ke raat ko neend bhi nhi aati”</i></p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intense Fear of injuries 	<p><i>“mere khyal se ek player ke life meh sabse barda down ek he ho sakta hai jab usse koi bardi injury hui hai, har koi use darta hai”</i></p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self doubt when injured 	<p><i>“injury ke baad bohout dar tha key meh vapass aa bh paungi...”</i></p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing with injuries 	<p><i>“muje match se phele chot lagi thi fir bhi meh agle din khelene gaya”</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure of Competing 	<p><i>“ i go completely blank before all my matches. It’s not a good feeling. My head my body everything hurts”</i></p>	
			<p><i>“ uss time laga sab khatam hogaya hai.</i></p>

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes	Verbatim
	Psychological injuries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Strain after injury • Grief after retirement/ separation from sports • Dealing with failure 	<p><i>Surgery ke baad”</i></p> <p><i>“ bohout yaad aati hai, man toh humesha karta hai kash voh zindagi vapas aajaye”</i></p> <p><i>“harne ke baad apko pura toh lagta hai, joh apse ache nhi hai aur app unse har jayo, toh appka dimag chalna band hojata hai”</i></p>
	Winning Mentality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred to compete against advanced players 	<p><i>“ meh humesha sab se acha karne ka socha, sabse zayda.. extra practice karta.... aur cha karna hai aur acha karan hai, humesha apne se ache ke saath practice karne ke socta”.</i></p>
	Winning Mentality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love Challenges 	<p><i>“I remember, it was snowing that day and they told me that they would they would help me if I will swim the freezing lake. I say freezing because there was a thin layer of snow on top of the lake. But I really wanted to know what they knew, so disregarding that the outside temperature was 2 degrees Celsius, I swam in the lake”</i></p>

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes	Verbatim
Being an athlete	Rewards recognition and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awards • Cash prize • Honour 	<p><i>“ Olympics ke baad muje Arjun Award mila tha.. voh meri life ka sabse acha pal tha”</i></p> <p><i>“joh cash prize” mila tab kafi facilities joh nhi mil rahi thi, miley. “joh meri zaroorat ke thi voh papa ne muje le kar di”</i></p> <p><i>“HAU meh college meh bhi mera honour kara , fir goan walo ne kara”</i></p>
Life skills	Inter personal Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social skills(make friends, get along with others) • Team work 	<p><i>“when I came to Sweden 86 is many years ago 32 years ago. I didn't have any ... it was important for me to find wrestling club because wrestling can have all my friendsI have 20 friends now sports help you and get along no alone.... Same time I could feel I know these people many years..but feel family sports family”</i></p> <p><i>“We had players from Punjab and Delhi and you know North South. Then it</i></p>

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes	Verbatim
<p>Life skills</p>	<p>Intra Personal Skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-social behaviour • Respect • Time management 	<p><i>used to be always there, we used to be all together. We had a very good team work”</i></p> <p><i>“jab app sports karte ho aur dekhte ho ke sab apke liye kitna kar rahey hai. Apko kitna support karte hai. App meh bhi yeh bhawana jaga deta hai dosro ke madat karane. Sports apko seekhta hai dossro ke liye kuch karan”</i></p> <p><i>“you need to respect your coaches, your family that they have given you this opportunity....you also learn to respect your opponent.</i></p> <p><i>“lifebegin somewhere 4 4:30 am every morning and we would get about 15-20 min to get ready and start running ...workout for 2-2.5 hours and we swim we come back whatever little bit time we had we changed our clothes and have breakfast. 8oclock sharp I used to be in school and at 1:45 my school used to get over ..pack your bag and go to swimming ..by the time I used to finish my evening workout ...we got to breathe</i></p>

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes	Verbatim
Life skills	Intra Personal Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punctuality • Discipline • Determination • Dealing with success and failure 	<p><i>was that 10 min drive from swimming pool to back home”.</i></p> <p><i>“meh subha practice kar ke class jata tha fir bhi meh aaj tak class meh kabhi late nhi hua. Apko samj na pardega ke ager app time ke kader nhi karo gay toh app kuch nhi kar sakte.</i></p> <p><i>“ dekho apka discipline hona sabse important hai”</i></p> <p><i>“ you don’t give up on anything, we don’t give up. Sports person till the last minute we fight till the last whistle I mean till the end of the game”</i></p> <p><i>“Though very simple, it is very difficult to understand every up has a down. And every down is accompanied by an up. And if the up doesn’t come, you don’t need to give up. All you need to do is find a new arena to continue”</i></p> <p><i>“ I just want to swim more and more explore more watersgo beyond physical limits as humans”</i></p>

Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes	Verbatim
Life skills	Intra Personal Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pushing the limits • Resilient • Self motivation • Perseverance/ Persistent 	<p><i>“dekho failure har khilardi ke life meh atti hai par ek acha khilardi apne failure se seektha hai aur agli par aura cha karta hai”.</i></p> <p><i>“You are self disciplined you are self motivated..! You have to keep motivating yourself..i ask you if you have to go and train for something which is so uncertain a channel like English channel. You go to dover harbour its 17-16 degrees, damn cold water. You have to push yourself nobody is asking to do it”</i></p> <p><i>“I remember exactly 30 days after my first delivery i was on court”</i></p>

Central to all these themes are skills developed in the context of sports. In addition participants provided an insight into life of an athlete, their struggles, family support, injuries, stories of success and failure etc.

Narrative analysis was also used along with Thematic Analysis. The narratives of the twelve participants were written down which incorporated the major milestones of their journey towards power. Right from the introduction to sports, education, family contributions, their major achievements, success and failure etc. were included in the narratives of the participant. Those narratives were aligned with the thematic networks to look for common themes of sports person. After the explanation of the themes and sub themes, this section will have detailed narratives of twelve participants.

Thematic Analysis

There are a total of four themes presented and discussed in the following chapter, whose structure remains true to the narrative form and takes the reader on a journey from becoming to being a high performance athlete from the early stages of positive introductions to the sport through to selection and peak performance. Central to the narrative accounts is the skills they have learned while participating in sports. These skills are something which not only helped them to excel in sports but also other domains of life.

Becoming an athlete

This theme identified describes the process of becoming an athlete. The interview allowed participants to share their sporting experiences and reflect upon their path to elite performance. This particular theme will help the reader to understand how the careers of athletes are shaped. This theme was further divided into two-sub themes of critical introduction to sports and potential for success.

Although each participant had a different story to tell about their life but all these stories reflected a similar pattern. For each participant sport was something which was introduced to them in their early life. Although when they started with their competitive careers differed. Few participants identified their competitive career started as early as at the age of 3, 8, 12 years while for some it started in their late teens.

Participants recalled their early experiences. One Participant recounted that sports was something she started when she was just 6 months old baby. She said

“I started when I believe I was just a six month baby. When I was taken to a swimming pool by my parents. And I was 2 when I won the first club level come egotism and I think I was 5 I was delhi’s best swimmer and by the age of nine I won my first nationals medal that silver at sub junior nationals in guwathi”.

This early engagement provided participants an opportunity to explore *the process of taking part in their sports for the intrinsic benefits, such as enjoyment, personal development and personal achievement.*

Besides this the participants also identified at least one family member who was into sports before they started. This could be their mother, father, brother or anybody else. These members played an important role in shaping their decision to enter into sports. A participant mentioned;

“mere papa athlete the toh unhone sports start Kara tha. Unko shok the sports ka.....unhone decide Kara ke mere bache sports meh jay”.

Whereas others said;

“my father was into sports.. toh muje bhi tha meh bhi karu sports”

The above quotations demonstrate the emphasis interviewees placed on the family members during the early years and highlights how family members could shape the critical introduction to sport.

This was true for almost every participant except one, for whom although none of the family member was into sports but he identified a role model who inspired him to join sports. He said:

“meh dekha karata tha XYZ (name changed). voh bohout acha khelte the. Sab unko bohout pasand karte the. Unka bohout naam tha, tabhi meine soch liya tha, meh bhi sports karunga”.

For all these participants' their role models which could be their family member or any other player, who played an important role. They observed them working hard, being rewarded or heard their stories of success which also motivated them to be an athlete.

Beside this participants described their first victory to be very important in their sports career. They identified it to be as an important event in their life which gave them confidence and motivation to pursue sports. Although these competitions were at local or state level but played a major role. As one participant said; *“jab mere state ka medal aya, tab muje laga meh bhi kuch kar sakta hoon”.*

Whereas other participant said; “I remember, one day, we had a friendly relay match and I was the last person to swim from my team. And the last person to swim from the opposite team was an experienced swimmer. And I really wanted to win. She had started her swim before me and yet when I finished on the other side of the pool, she was still swimming! My whole body was burning hot because of the strength I had put in. It was a very important event in my life”

All of the participants described these victories process as a pathway to performance or a ladder that they were climbing that took them through the various levels of competition. And believed their first victory was integral to the process of becoming an elite performer.

Social support

Another major theme identified through narrative analysis was social support. This theme was further divided into role of family and role of others. Most of the participants have acknowledged the role of their family members. These family members not only played an important role in introducing the sports to athletes but supported them throughout their journey. Few participants in fact not only acknowledged their family support but gave them credit of their success. One participant mentioned,

“Toh meri success ka bole ke 80% joh hai voh mere father ka hai. Aaj joh meh hoon unkey vaja se hoon”.

Participants at different point identified their family members playing different roles such as mentor, nutritionist, coach, etc. without their constant support they believed they could have never reached where they are right now. One participant said

“I used to finish my evening workout it was that time that someone should take me out take me home no relaxation there also the only time we got to breathe was that 10 min drive from swimming pool to back home and my mother would be ready with food all the nutrition was taken care by my mother a very strict diet of Daliya egg and stuff”.

Whereas other participant said; *“my father was my guru my coach”.*

Another participant described that her mother sacrificed her personal interest and gave her full him to his training. He described;

“meri mom he na sab kuch kara hai, muje subha practice le kar jana, school le kar jana, muje kya khanna hai, kya nhi khanna hai. Unhone apna sara time muje de diya hai. Unhke life meh sirf muje India player dekhna he hai”.

Many participants also mentioned that it was because of their family support that helped them to deal with their failures and worst time in life. One of the participants narrated the worst time in her sports career and told it was her family support and love for the sport which helped her to deal with it. She said

“1982 Asian games they had put a ban on players who are below the 5’5, they only wanted tall players they were ready to work hard with tall players than to work with speed players..... I am not even 5..... it did hurt me, I used to feel oh god I can’t do anything for the country anymore and though I knew that I still fit into the team.... that time, actually my family was there they supported me, they used to say that at least you had achieved this and it’s really difficult to achieve this also”.

Whereas the other participant narrated that she belonged to a very backward place from Haryana where girls are not allowed to go out of their houses and are forced into marriage very early. Still her parents decided to go against the society and supported her decision. She said

“mere mummy papa dono he unpar dh hai, fir bhi unhone muje goan se bhara sher meh hostel meh admission dil vaya. Mere goan meh lardkiyo ko itna muka nhi milta. Uder toh paradhi bhi nhi karne dete lardhkiyo ko. Bus 10th ke baad shadhi kar dete hai zabardasti. Sports toh bohout he kam logo karte hai... Toh sabse barda haath mummy papa ka tha. Jab sab ne maana Kara sports ke liye, unhone fir bhi muje karne Diya, unhone bola ke nhi humari lardki ko hum karne denge joh voh chayegi.

Other than this the participants have also highlighted the role played by others also such as their friends, fans, neighbours, coaches etc. for instance one participant said

“Touchwood by god’s grace I had very good teachers and friends. My notes , my friends were really good I had friends with whom I have studies from KG to M.Com and they used to be of great help. They helped me throughout”

whereas one participant said

“pura goan apko madd karta hai, apko dekhne ate hai. Unka pyar dekh kar apka man karta hai aur karne ka”

All the above quotation demonstrates importance of parents support and involvement and also the role of others like friends and fans. The constant support provided athlete opportunities that encouraged their engagement, motivation and effort.

Being an athlete

The next theme identified reflects on the distance travelled by the athlete since their initial introduction to sports and identified that to be a high performer, it demands time, dedication and sacrifice in pursuit of excellence. Within this theme various sub-themes were identified that aligned with being an athlete including: training, managing injuries, psychological strain, sacrifice and winning mentality.

Participants in their interview highlighted their experiences of training and competition. They recognised that success in sport is reliant upon well-planned training that prepares them for competition. A good training session provides them with an opportunity to refine their skills. It was demonstrated in all the interviews that it takes significant investment and commitment to be an elite athlete. An elite athlete trains multiple times in a day. They also train more than other athletes. For instance one of the participants said;

“ I used to have individual practices everyday 45 minutes beside the team practices. It’s for minimum 10-8 years I did that. I mean individual practice. I used to be the only person on the

court in gymkhana court who would be reaching, because people used to be sleeping on court”.

A similar account was provided by another athlete, he said; *“meh subha utt kar sabse 30minute zayada practice karat, fir sab ke saath karat”.*

These statements reveal that athletes were self-motivated to practice more. They not only trained with other but were also willing to put extra effort. One of the participants recognized that to be on top you have to train extra hard than others. She mentioned:

“and once I was that league of winning the national medals and I was best swimmer in 1992 till 1995 I had three best swimmer and two second best swimmer and all new meet records you know that itself create pressure on you as a swimmer because you know you are going to meeting your competitors at nationals too. You as a kid is working extra ordinarily hard because you know others also working and can become better than you and you cannot blame others. Sports teaches to be honest you know if you haven't worked hard so, you are not going to stand in that league”.

It was also evident in all the participants' interviews that training required significant dedication and commitment. Interview with one of the international wrestler coach from Iran who is currently training the Chinese team highlighted that a Chinese athlete trains three times a day. Their training camps are away from the main city so that they can be dedicated to only their training. He was also able to highlight the difference between training session of China and Sweden as he was training the Sweden team before. Having exposure of different countries he highlighted that Chinese practices 1800 hours in a year where as athletes in Sweden trains only 600-800 hours in a year. He also explained that the reason that China is able to get so many medals in Olympics and other international tournament is because of their dedication and commitment towards the sports. However on the other hand he also mentioned that such hard practice often result in burnout and dissatisfaction among the players.

Another sub-theme identified was managing the injury. Central to their training session was multiple injuries. Participants identified that training sessions and demanding competitive environment make injuries at some stage inevitable. Experiencing pain and managing injury were described as synonymous with being a performance athlete. Although not all participants experienced chronic injuries but mentioned suffering from several injuries throughout their career. Participants believed that injuries and pain are inevitable and an athlete learns to live with that. A participant mentioned;

“ har roz apko nayi jagya chot hoti hai. Kitna dard hota hai fir bhi app har roz practice karte ho. Specially ek wrestler ke life meh. Jab humare khan thot te hai toh itna zabardast pain hota hai ke raat ko neend bhi nhi aati”.

Although athletes identified injuries as “part and parcel” of being an athlete. They showed intense fear of suffering a chronic injury. One of them said;

“mere khyal se ek player ke life meh sabse barda down ek he ho sakta hai jab usse koi bardi injury hui hai, bardi injury. Kyunki baki sab cheeseo se koi bhi player lard sakta hai specially wrestler, kyunki muje aisa lagta hai key joh bhi player hai chayie voh wrestler hai voh Normal logo se zayda shenshkati rakta hai zayda matlab kisi bhi cheese meh zayda pressure jhel sakta hai, kisi se bhi zayda lard sakta hai, lekin jab koi injury ho jati hai toh voh bevas ho jata hai”.

These participants believed that injuries cannot stop them. They have worked throughout and an injury cannot stop them from their goal. One of the participants said

“muje match se phele chot lagi thi fir bhi meh agle din khelene gaya. Ek injury apka pura session karab kar sakti hai. App pure saal mehent karte ho fir injury ho jaye toh sab barbad ho jata hai”

Few participants who did suffer from chronic injury described it to be the worst time of their life. Injury kept them away from their sport. Also after the injury athletes developed a fear to go out and perform the way they were capable of.

“injury ke baad bohout dar tha key meh vapass aa bh paungi.... meine sab kuch apni wrestling par laga rakha tha.....jab app apna sab kuch ek cheese par laga do aur fir ek injury apka pura career karab kar de toh app depression meh chale jate ho”.

Injury can pose serious obstacle to an athlete goal. The stress that injury can cause is evident. However the players ignored the minor injuries and considered them to be part of a sportsperson life. This provides a clear insight into the commitment and dedication that athletes make in order to maintain their elite status and at the same time it also provides a disturbing picture of the athlete who is so heavily invested in their sport that they are willing to risk serious injury to secure or maintain their status.

Talking about the injuries the participant also talked about mental injuries besides physical injuries. Sports person undergo many mental strain which arise from the immense pressures of competing, failure, stress and anxiety before matches. Besides this the participant also described the fear or ultimately the grief of parting with the sport due to injury or because of retirement. After retiring, athletes may experience a sense of loss. They may lose touch with their identity and purpose. One participant talked about the mental strain she experienced after her injury, she said

“uss time laga sab khatam hogaya hai. Surgery ke baad bhi dimag meh sirf yahi chalta tha key kya meh mat par fir se jaa paungi? Ager nhi theek hui meh fir kya karungi, meine sab kuch laga rakha tha wrestling meh... bohout tension hoti thi, dimag ek dum karab ho gaya tha”

On the other hand one participant described her mental state before her matches;

“i go completely blank before all my matches. It's not a good feeling. My head my body everything hurts. I often get fever and i feel really pukish”

Sports person not only faced these mental strains only when they are playing but also after they retire from their sport. Some of the participants who were interviewed had retired from their sport and explained the immense grief associated with it.

“bohout yaad aati hai, man toh humesha karta hai kash voh zindagi vapas aajaye”

Another sub-theme identified under the theme of being an athlete was sacrifices. The participants acknowledged that to be successful in sport takes commitment and sacrifice. Participants claimed that sport can take them away from normal every-day routine, that life is different for an elite performer. They had highlighted the things they have missed because of sports. Family time, friend's birthday, enjoying University experiences, festivals were all acknowledged as being difficult to balance with the life of an athlete. Some of the quotations are given below;

“as a child I used to feel that my other friends are enjoying they are going out specially every time I had to turn down all the birthday parties”

“I feel I never knew what was Diwali what is dushera, always playing”

“college life I really missed. I never attended college very unfortunate. I have just ...maybe in three year if my college life I would have seen college in a year three times. I really don't know what's college life but I really miss my college life”.

“meh shadhi ke baad seedha camp meh agayi. Meh khayi ghumne bhi nhi gayi”.

Many of the athletes identified that often their sports required them to stay away from the families in sports camp in order to train full time. One of the participants mentioned:

“meh jab 16 saal ka tha tabhi se hostel meh aur camp meh reh raha hoon.”

Although these participants valued these opportunities and loved being at sports camp but at some time missed being home. As one participant said;

“muje camp ke life bohout pasand thi. Bus camp he family thi uder bohout maza atta tha. Par kabhi kabhi pareeshan ho jate hai tab maan karta hai sab kuch chord kar ghar chali jaun”.

Most of the participants recognised that great deal of their time was spent away from home. They moved away from their home at an early age at training academies. However there was an age difference. Most of the young participant loved being at camps but athletes who had retired as a player and are currently working as coaches showed distressed in staying away from family and demanded for more time for family. One of an athlete said

“Par jab apki kud key family hoti hai, tab apke upar zeemevari hoti hai, tab apko ghar jana hota hai, par app nhi jaa sakta”.

These quotations reflect sports can take few things away. To be an elite athlete require dedication and commitment which results in making sacrifices. Sport is a full-time occupation and as a result enjoyment is not always the focus of athletic endeavour and to fulfil performance targets, sacrifices have to be made.

Another sub-theme identified was reward and recognition. Most of the participant spoke about the incidence in which they were rewarded and recognized for their talent. Being recognised and rewarded acted as an important extrinsic motivator and produced long term commitment. These rewards were in form cash, medals, appreciation, recognition by higher authorities etc. For many participants being rewarded was one of the best moments in their journey as one participant highlighted;

“Olympics ke baad muje Arjun Award mila tha.. voh meri life ka sabse acha pal tha.....muje yaad hai mere brother, mother aye the rashtrapati bhavan muje dekhne, uske baad mera goan meh bhi saman hua tha”

Whereas for few participants reward in form of cash helped them to improve their financial condition. As one of them said;

“youth olymics meh mera medal aya. 2010 meh youth olympics games hue the first time aur ussme meine India ko represent Kara aur vaha se muje anne ke baad joh cash prize tha usse hume kafi facilities joh nhi mil rahi thi voh humne miln a shuru ho gayi. 12 lakh mile the muje aur voh kafi acha amount tha, aur used humne ghardi leli aur bohout si cheese thi joh meri zaroort ke thi voh papa ne muje le kar di. Kyunki sardi garmi meh bike bar he jaate the aur hisar meh kafi thand hoti hai aur garmi bhi bohout hoti hai. Aur khai hum danagl meh haan hai state champion meh jana hai toh bus meh travel karna partha tha. Life meh struggle toh bohout Kara hai”.

In fact one participant believed that one of the major reasons for him joining sports was observing his elder brother being rewarded. He mentioned:

“...fir 1987 meh bhayia Canada gaye the world cadet championship thi silver medal unhone jeeta tha, toh goan meh na puri tarah sidhipur aur lavasa dono ekhute goan hai toh unmehe dono me milkar barda sa bohout he barda swagat samharo rakha tha. Unhe pure Goan meh gumaya tha tractor trolley meh . 50-60 aur tractor cardiya saara public ekate hui thi fit school meh le jakar unka function kiya. Voh barde gaur se dekha meine tha toh meh bohout chota. Toh muje bhi laga ke aise aise mere saath bi hona chayie aur meine pitaji ko bola pitaji muje bhi jana hai”.

Finally it included another sub theme of winning mentality. In their interviews almost every participant mentioned that they enjoyed the challenges and preferred to compete against elder and advanced players throughout all stages of their early sporting development. They were highly competitive, committed to winning and had overwhelming desire from a young age to become successful in all walks of life. one of the participant said;

“ meh humesha sab se acha karne ka socha, sabse zayda.. extra practice karta.... aura cha karna hai aur acha karan hai, humesha apne se ache ke saath practice karne ke socta”.

These participants loved challenges and believed that they can achieve more, one participant mentioned:

“ I found them. I remember, it was snowing that day and they told me that they would they would help me if I will swim the freezing lake. I say freezing because there was a thin layer of snow on top of the lake. But I really wanted to know what they knew, so disregarding that the outside temperature was 2 degrees Celsius, I swam in the lake. It nearly knocked the breath out of me, but it was exhilarating. And I would remember this instance every time the water felt too cold and I didn't feel like swimming during the English Channel training. From there, I went to train in the ocean. I started by swimming for 15 min. Then 30 min, 3 hours, 5 hours and then finally 7 hours”

Life Skills

The next theme identified was life skills which players have learned through sports participation. Life skills are defined as ranges of transferable skills needed for everyday life, by everybody, that help people thrive above and beyond the normal requirements of everyday existence. Throughout the interviews participants have identified various skills which can be classified as interpersonal skills and personal like skills.

Interpersonal skills:

Within interpersonal like skills participants talked about various themes like social skills, team work, pro-social behaviour, respect, etc. Social skills included ability to interact with other, make friends and to get along with others. One participant reported;

“when I came to Sweden 86 is many years ago 32 years ago. I didn't have any friends I just come here I cannot speak Swedish I mean there 19 years I couldn't understand anything so for first time it was important for me to find wrestling club because wrestling can have all my friends I don't know but interesting same sports everyone come and see wrestler ohhh how are you? Which category? How many years . Start very fast and the same time I have 20 friends now sports help you and get along no alone, everything was new food people everything. Same time I could feel I know these people many years and this helps you when you coming to this you don't know explain this but feel family sports family”.

Moreover the participants highlighted the issue of team work and ability to work with others, as one participant mentioned'

“We had players from Punjab and Delhi and you know North South. Then it used to be always there, we used to be all together. We had a very good team work..... see in a team

game what is that if my team member fail I should be able to cover up their defects the negativeness". Whereas the other participant said "camp meh hum sab ache se rehte the ek family se he ban jati hai. Hum humesha 2-3 ka group banakar practice karte. Aise ek doosre ko competition bhi mil jata tha"

Beside this the athletes also highlighted the theme of helping other and pro-social behaviour. As one participant mentioned;

"jab app sports karte ho aur dekhte ho ke sab apke liye kitna kar rahey hai. Apko kitna support karte hai. App meh bhi yeh bhawana jaga deta hai dosro ke madat karane. Sports apko seekhta hai dossro ke liye kuch karan kyunki jab app khelte ho toh woh apke liye bohout kuch karte hai".

Relating to team work and helping others was the issue of respect. Most of the participant believed that sports teach you to respect your coaches, your team-mates, family and your sports itself. One participant said

"dekho sabse bardi baat toh yahi hai key wrestling hume yeh sikhata hai ek hume apne se bardo ka saman kaise karana hai unko respect kaise deni hai. Sabse bardi baat hai. Fir ek acha insan hona. Sport apko apne se bard eke respect karan sikha he detha hai. Chayie app usse jante ho yah nhi hum uske par zaror chute hai. Toh respect sabse bardi baat hai".

Similarly one participant said;

"you need to respect your coaches, your family that they have given you this opportunity....you also learn to respect your opponent. You know that they have also worked really hard". Whereas the other said "You know sports teaches you so much even if it's a 6 min bout or 40 min match you learn everything about life. The amazing team work the way you get along with people and you gracefully accept your defeat. You learn that yeah other person is better than you. There is no rivalry that somewhere you are jealous or you have evil feeling, you gracefully accept it and you know you have to work hard if you want to be better than them. You know it channelizes in right direction, i thinks that is something very important for the youth, you know these lesson are so important"

Intra-Personal life skills

Intra- Personal life skills included skills like organisation, discipline, managing performance outcomes, identity and deal with emotions.

Organisation skill included ability to manage time and punctuality. For example, one of the athlete talked about the importance of managing time in sports, she said

"begin somewhere 4-4:30 am every morning and we would get about 15-20 min to get ready and start running till talkotara swimming pool which is about 6- 6.5 km from where we used to stay in modern school campus. We used to go running and my father would come in car and he will give me workout for 2-2.5 hours and we swim we come back whatever little bit time we had we changed our clothes and have breakfast. 8 o clock sharp I used to be in school and at 1:45 my school used to get over and hardly we used to get half an hour have my lunch get ready pack your bag and go to swimming pool and evening workout was something between 8-10 km everyday we just to have this hard training and by the time I used to finish my evening workout it was that time that someone should take me out take me home no relaxation there also the only time we got to breathe was that 10 min drive from swimming pool to back home".

Despite their busy schedule the participants also talked about the importance of punctuality. One of them said

“meh subha practice kar ke class jata tha fir bhi meh aaj tak class meh kabhi late nhi hua. Apko samj na pardega ke ager app time ke kader nhi karo gay toh app kuch nhi kar sakte. Ager apki class 8 baje hai ke toh app jaldi utt jayo aur fir pracie karo”.

Discipline was another important skill in which participant talked commitment, determination, perseverance, persistence and dedication. Most of the participants have highlighted the importance of discipline. They believed that discipline is one quality which every sports person has. One participant said; *“dekho apka discipline hona sabse important hai”*. Whereas another participant talked about being determined and committed, the athlete said;

“you don't give up on anything, we don't give up. Sports person till the last minute we fight till the last whistle I mean till the end of the game. Like in life all we are ready to face everything in life. It teaches us a lot. At least for me I had to come from bombay to delhi settle down here it was a different temperature different culture different everything was different and I could fit myself in delhi too. This love for sports have taken me head in my life and I still love the game. Also I can tell you from my life experiences no matter how unwell we are we still get up in morning and go for practices there are no excuses”.

The sports person also made important sacrifices in their life and gave their full attention to sports. One athlete said

“as a child I used to feel that my other friends are enjoying they are going out specially every time I had to turn down all the birthday parties and my friend used to always teel me why don't you come why don't you comebut yes somewhere slowly slowly when I was entering my teen life to be an achiever you have to sacrifice and I understood that really early that you have to work really hard”.

The other skill identified was managing performance outcome within which the participants talked about ability to push your limits, learn from mistakes, resilient, deal with failure, deal with injuries, deal with pressure, deal with stress and emotions. One participant said; *“dekho failure har khilardi ke life meh atti hai par ek acha khilardi apne failure se seektha hai aur agli par aura cha karta hai”*.

In addition to this the participant highlighted never give up attitude. Most of the participants believed no matter how hard the conditions were they always tried their best. Many of the participants in their interviews highlighted that they practised and in fact played some of their important tournament in injuries and pain. Beside this they also mentioned that stress and anxiety is something which every participant experience, however there is individual differences in how they deal with it. One participant mentioned that her head hurts and she feels very sick right before her match.

While talking about pushing the limits the participant said;

“I just want to swim more and more explore more waters i would love to share my experience with next generation of swimmers and i hope it will help other swimmers too achieve and go beyond physical limits as humans”.

Additionally participants talked about ability to deal with their stress, ability learn from their mistakes, deal with injuries, pressure and bounce back from adversity.

Motivation skills were reported as important life skills that people need in sport and other life domains. Specifically athletes talked about self-motivation as important drive to succeed in sports. For example, when talking about self-motivation an athlete said:

“You are self disciplined you are self motivated there is something called self motivation. Right! You have to keep motivating yourself..i ask you if you have to go and train for something which is so uncertain a channel like English channel. You go to dover harbour its 17-16 degrees, damn cold water. You have to push yourself nobody is asking to do it. Its the passion and the will that you wanna get into those waters and conquer those waters. What is it that pushing you? Its your drive its your will power. Otherwise who wants to get into 16degrees cold water”.

One of the other needs voiced by the participants was identity development. One athlete said; *“Sports has taught me many things. It has given me an identity. It has taught me so much about myself – how dedicated I can be, how motivated I can, how much can I push myself... it all comes from my sport. My sport has taught me a way of life”.*

Narratives

Participant 1

The first participant who was interviewed was a 57 year old wrestler working in Railways. He was born in Delhi in a farmer family and started playing at the age of 13. From a young age he believed he would be a successful athlete and played different sport at school level. At the age of 16 he was a national champion and at the age of 21 years he had his first exposure to the international tournament, Asian Champion held in India. He won Bronze medal which boosted his morale and motivated him to work hard.

He began sharing his experience, how his family supported him throughout his journey. He gave special credit to his elder brother who was also into sports and the one who guided him throughout. At the age of 16 after becoming the national champion, participant moved out from his house and started to live in hostel so that he can concentrate on his sports. He took admission in Sports College in Hisar, Haryana and described that college life as the best time of his life. He described a sportsperson life to be very difficult and disciplined. There is no success without hard-work. After years of training he finally got an opportunity to represent India in Olympic Games held at Los Angeles, USA. Although he was unsuccessful in Olympic Games but he continued to train.

Throughout his journey he identified many ups and downs. After his job he felt his performance declined and he decided to retire from the sports. But the passion for sport still kept him in contact. He went on to pursue a course of Coaching and joined again as a Chief Coach of Indian team. The turning point came in his life when he was awarded with the president award of DhyandChand in 2008 for his achievement and contribution to the field.

He described sports as his life. He went on saying that without sports he cannot imagine his life. He is proud of his achievements as an athlete and believes that many of his experiences have shaped him as a person. For instance he believed that sports gave him identity, purpose. Although now he is not very actively involved in sports but wishes to open his stadium and train talented athletes who cannot afford coaching after his retirement.

Participant 2

The second participant interviewed was 58 years old female Basket Ball player. She was captain of Indian team and represented at various International events such as Asian Championship 1982, Tokyo.

She was born in Malayali family but brought up in Maharashtra. As belonging from South Indian family she mentioned there was always pressure to excel in studies but she opted for

different field that is sports. Her mother was her guiding and support system. She told that her mother was an amazing athlete in her youth but due to family pressure she couldn't continue and got married early. But she wanted her daughter to live her dreams.

She began playing at the age of 6. She mentioned going to Gymkhana near her house just to support her favourite players and see them playing. Observing player as a kid she started to develop interest and love for the sport and by the age of 9 she started her competitive career. After then there was no looking back.

She described her daily routine as juggling between studies and sports but she managed both. She believed that to be number one you have to put extra hard work and therefore practice double than any other player. Not just she practiced extra hours but also trained with boys to improve her skills. She narrated that as a sports person you have to make many sacrifices from her own experience she mentioned that she never celebrated any festival, she didn't know what was Diwali what is dushera. Besides this she also told about her education, for her it was equally important. She has done Masters in commerce, although she couldn't attend regular classes because of her sports and miss her college life. Describing her education she emphasised the role played by her friends. She really believed that she was lucky to have such great friends who helped her to manage everything and mentioned without their support she couldn't have managed. While studying she got job in western railways through sports quota.

As the captain of the Indian Basketball team she believed there was extra pressure on her. She considered herself as a good captain because not only he kept her team together but also identified herself as a good role model. She believed what is most important in a team game is to fill the gaps of team members weaknesses with other players strength and also to avoid blame game and considering each and considering every member as equally responsible.

The worst phase came in her career in 1984 when Russian coaches who came to India to train Basketball player banned players below the height of 5'5 and she was herself below 5. She started to question why is she even practicing what is she practicing for? Will she even get a chance to represent India again? But she still continued to play, in fact she told that after her first delivery she started playing immediately after 30 days. The love for the sports never let her quite despite although the difficulty. She continued to play till the age of 40 and currently training Lady Shri Ram College, Basketball team everyday. She described the role of coach as very challenging. A coach needs to know not only players strength and weaknesses but also understand their psychology.

Participant 3

Third participant is 24 year old female wrestler belonging. She was introduced to this sports world by her father. Her father was also into sports but due to severe injury he couldn't continue his career but his passion for sports was transferred to his kids. For the participant wrestling was not her first love, she started her career as a judoka but joined wrestling in 2009, and since then, there has been no looking back for her. Recently, she defeated the reigning World and Olympic Champion in the Pro Wrestling League (PWL), and she is now looking forward to more such victories in the tournament.

Hailing from a small village called Gudana in Hisar district of Haryana, the 24-year-old has had a topsy-turvy ride in life. On the advice of wrestling coach, she joined wrestling. Her coach had told her that her body structure and interest was more suited to wrestling than judo. Before 2009, Pooja had already bagged three international medals in judo.

The biggest turning point came in her life when she secured second place in Youth Olympics in 2010. She narrated the whole story about being honoured and rewarded not only by the Government when she came back to country with her medal but also her family member. She described these moments as the best time of her life and feels that she always get the celebrity treatment from her family whenever she goes back from camps.

During a training camp in Lucknow in 2015 in November, participant suffered an Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) tear during a practice session and had to go into immediate surgery if she wanted to wrestle further. She described this phase as really difficult. She believed that she was yet to make name for herself. Athletes are recognised only if they win tournaments and medals. Plus she feared if she could ever comeback. However, her parents kept her motivated and positive through the trying period as she had to undergo a lengthy rehabilitation period to return the mat.

Soon, she started her regular training but was not happy with her progress. After four months of training she discovered her leg extension still wasn't up to the mark. After inspection, results revealed that participant had four to five blood clots in her knee, which was restricting her movement, Another surgery was required. Announcement of her second surgery made her week mentally and was sure that her career has come to an end.

However she never gave up and practiced really hard. She believed it was only because of support of her family and believe in herself that she once again started her journey as a wrestler. She in fact made her comeback last year through Pro Wrestling League and defeated the world champion. Currently she is working for Tokyo Olympics in 2020 and believes that she can definitely win a medal for the country.

Participant 4

Fourth participant interviewed was a 23 year old cricketer who recently played Ranji Trophy. Born in a sports family in Delhi, he always knew that he will also make his career in sports. He started playing when he was just 2 years old.

He emphasised the role played by his family throughout, especially his mother. She was the first one to take him to the field. Initially it all started as a leisure activity but soon he started to develop interest and by the age of 12 he decided to make his career in cricket only. He described himself as a very skilled player from the beginning but at the same time explained being very fat and unfit as a kid. In 2009 he represented Indian Team at Common Wealth cricket series, where he performed well and won the first prize. This was the time when his father stepped in and started to train him. He narrated that during school when the usual practice used to start at 6:30 he started early practices with his father at 5:30. He started to perform much better. Appreciation by his coaches and people around him made him more confident.

There have been many ups and downs in his journey. He described his journey till now as very challenging. He narrated cricket as a sport as very difficult not in terms of skills and physical strength but require a lot of mental strength. Being the most popular sport in India and its close association with glamour world has made it into a business. Witnessing politics, facing rejections many a time for no reason made him doubt his choice. But he feels it's too late for him to back out and not only had he invested a lot of time and energy but also his family. A range of negative experiences created a distance with his sport. Although he still felt going on ground batting gives him a high.

However despite many negative events he expressed his love for the sport and is continuing to play with aim to represent India once again. He explained how his sport changed him as a person. He believed it was because of sports he stayed away from the bad company in his school and college life. When youngsters were into drugs and alcohol he chose to stay on ground and practice. Sport gave him a purpose. It made him more discipline and respect people. Moreover he believed that sport teaches you a life challenge and prepare for you uncertainty in lives.

Participant 5

Participant 5 is a 22 year old wrestler from Haryana and was introduced to her sport at secondary school at the age of 13. Although she started playing Kabaddi in her school, but switched to wrestling because of her elder cousin who was already into wrestling.

The participant narrated that she belonged to a very poor farmer family. Not only his family had difficulty in supporting her sport career but also had to face pressure from the society as people in her village was against the notion of women making career in sports. Despite all these difficulties she was very sure of making her career in sports. As she turned 15 her family decided to send her to hostel in a much better place than where they were living so that she could train.

The participant gradually started to become better. After two years of hard practicing she became National Champion and soon after won silver medal in Asian Championship Thailand and many other International tournaments.

In 2011 she injured her shoulder and for one year stayed away from her sport. She described it to be the worst nightmare. There was a continuous self created pressure on her. Being the eldest among her two other siblings, she felt there was a lot of pressure on her. She not only had to support her family financially but also prove all those people wrong who were against her wrestling. She started to have many negative thoughts. She described her physical pain as bearable but the fear that she won't be able to go back on mat again was immense. But soon she recovered after taking one year of complete care and rehabilitation.

The participant also got married in March 2017. She thanked wrestling because of which she met her husband. Although she showed frustration that because of sports she don't get enough time for her personal and social life. She in fact told that sometimes she feels like quitting wrestling but she fails to do so because wrestling is like a drug to her and its difficult to get rid of that addiction. Moreover she believes whatever she is today is because of wrestling and it would be unfair to leave it in between.

Participant 6

Participant 6 is a 42 year old wrestler from Delhi currently coaching Indian wrestling team. The participant told that his grandfather was very fond of wrestling and wanted his sons to pursue wrestling. His uncle (chacha) was the one who started to wrestle but played only local matches (Dangal). It was his brother who decided to take wrestling forward and started to train under professional coaches. Participant remembers that as a kid he used to visit his brother with ghee and milk. He was very fascinated with their life and requested his father if he could also join it. As he turned 11 he also started to train professionally.

The participant also narrated an incidence from his childhood which encouraged him to wrestle. He saw his brother being honoured by people from their village after he won silver

medal in Cadet Championship, Canada. As a kid he also wished to be honoured and his dream came true in 1994 when he also won silver medal in wrestling championship held in USA.

The participant also described his life in training centres which he absolutely loved, although he had to struggle in his school because often he found himself sleepy in classes after practices. But knowing the importance of education he decided to train little less than others till the time he was in school.

Talking about his training and national camp life, he described it to be very hard but something he enjoyed. He in fact preferred to stay in sports camp rather than going back home. Although after he got married things changed. He wished he could stay home with his kids and his wife but as a coach of Indian Team he was expected to stay with the team. Comparing the life of a coach and an athlete, he believed a coach life to be very challenging. A good coach needs to plan training routine according to needs of each and every athlete. A coach has pressure not of only one athlete but many.

Finally the participant described that till date he practices every morning and cannot sleep without practicing. Besides this he strongly believed that sport is important for everyone. Sports play important role in shaping one's personality and teaches you many important lessons.

Participant 7

The next participant interviewed was a 23 year old swimmer from Gujarat currently working as a HR Assistant Manager. She started swimming at the age of 3, she had won many laurels for India, including representing India in the 13th Fina World Championships. Her most recent achievement was swimming the English Channel – i.e. from England to France.

Participant mentioned that she was introduced to sports as a child because she was a very chubby kid. It was an initiative by her mother to avoid sedentary. She was enrolled into swimming and skating but was advised to quit skating because of some internal politics and started to focus solely on swimming.

While narrating her journey she thanked many people and believed she is definitely not the self created athlete. Not only had she thanked her parents and coaches for their enormous contribution but her grandparents who she identified as voice of reason.

She described herself as a quick learner and by the age of 8 she was state championship and by the age of 16 she had represented India 7 times, won 3 International medals, became National Champion 6 times, had 8 existing national records and 125 National medals. She believed that there was a lot of pressure on her to perform well in swimming. Besides this she discovered that she was suffering from Bulimia Disorder. For the longest time and in fact till now she feels guilty of indulging in eating something she liked. She mentioned a personal tragedy that occurred in 2009, after which she also started to show the symptoms of Insomnia, depression, Separation Anxiety and inability to deal with grief. Because of all the events happening in her life she decided to take a break from swimming which can possibly keep her away from public eye. But she was very unhappy with her decision as swimming also gave her the purest and truest form of pleasure, as described by her.

Swimming came back in her life in 2013 when she was advised to give sports trail for admission in Delhi University College. She was very happy with her decision but later she found herself under very stress as she was expected to perform not well only in her sports but

also academics. At many a times she felt disconnected with her college. Another turning point came in her life when she decided to go abroad for her higher studies. She focused entirely on her studies but she couldn't keep herself away from swimming. One day she came across a group who swam open waters and decided to start swimming again. In 2017 she became the first Gujarati girl and 14th Indian girl to swim English Channel.

Finally she believed that swimming means the most to her and it always came to her when she needed the most.

Participant 8

Participant 8 interviewed was 37 year old open water swimmer who was currently preparing for her next big swim in South Africa. Some of her big achievement include successful completion of Lake Zurich in 2007 and an attempted of crossing the Great English Channel in 2008. She is also the first Indian woman to accomplish S.C.A.R Swim.

She was introduced to swimming by her father when she was just 6 months old baby. She feel blessed that she found inspiration at home as her father played for India too.

Although her journey was never easy, she told that her father was her coach and he had very high expectation. There was no relaxation for her and didn't even had any social life. And eventually all that hard work paid by the age 9 she represented India in SAIF games. As a child she always felt that she didn't had a normal life but somewhere slowly-slowly when she was entering her teens she realised to be an achiever you have to sacrifice. While she was excelling in her sport she got an opportunity to meet some renowned open water swimmer. Fascinated by their stories she also decided for her big swims. But soon she came in terms with reality. Open swimming is an expensive sport and coming from a middle class family she couldn't afford it. But the participant was highly motivated and determined. She started to work at the age of 14 and collected money for her big swims. Since then she is being working and saving her money for all her swims.

She described swimming as very therapeutic. She described that water is one place which makes her extremely happy and give her strength to deal with anything. More than that she believed that sports prepare you to deal with all the uncertainties in life; it makes you a very good person. It is a context which allows individual to push themselves beyond their limits. It keeps you alive, its keep you healthy, it keeps you connected with yourself.

Participant 9

The next participant interviewed was 45 year old wrestler working in Indian navy and is also a chief coach of Greco roman wrestling men. He described his journey as full of surprises. He told that he was never into sports till he was 15. He always wanted to be an engineer and in fact he had science in his 11th standard but things changed. After he witnessed a local match of wrestling and fascinated by it, he made a decision to start wrestling. He mentioned that his family was very supportive of his decision.

Participant explained that to be a successful sports person you have to be very disciplined and dedicated towards your goal. There is no vacation for a player. He described how athletes spend most of their time in national camps. Telling about his spots camp life, he said it is very hard but at the same time something he enjoyed. All the players live together as a family. Although he mentioned that you do find people over there also who will put you down and distract you from your goal, but you need to discriminate between right and wrong

people and choose your company wisely. He mentioned he is still very close friends with his roommates from his camps.

Describing his experience of his first Olympic match he said it was something which cannot be explained in words, it was something which still gives him goose bumps. He is very proud of his achievement and whenever he looks back at his journey he feels very proud of himself. Beside this he mentioned a sports person is very intelligent especially wrestlers because they have to make decisions very quickly. They not only have to decide their moves but also quickly judge what their opponent will do. He firmly believed a sports player can do well not only in his game but in any situation or context be it relationship or occupation.

Participant 10

The next participant interviewed was Greek-American who is also Americas First Olympic gold medallist in wrestling. She started to wrestle when she was just 7 year old, after her mother asked her to stand in as a drilling partner for her younger brother who had just joined the sport. The participant had a strong believe in god and in fact considered God as the reason for her victory. She believed that Christ in her is enough. And that god uses wrestling as a tool to shape her character and faith.

The participant's family moved to America in search for better life in 1968. The participant considered herself to be very much American but is very close to Greek culture and mentioned that she often visit Greece to meet her grandparents.

Describing about her wrestling life she mentioned she tried several different sport before wrestling and failed miserably because she realised that she suffered from social anxiety. As a kid she believed she cannot do any sport because coming in front of others made her anxious. But things changed when she was 7. She accompanied her brother for his practice session and because his brother was too young and didn't have any partner to practice she became his dummy partner in drill. Because she was just a dummy and realised that nobody is noticing her she started to enjoy wrestling and found a stage where she was not afraid of anyone. Soon she decided to wrestle but this was not an easy choice because back in 90s girls didn't wrestle and she had to practice with boys who didn't show and mercy towards her. Moreover back than wrestling for women was not part of Olympics and her parents worried this hard work, injuries what is it all for? Lot of people around her questioned her choice but she still continued because of the love for the sport. Things changed in 2004 when wrestling became part of Olympics. This gave her a purpose. The biggest turn came in her life in 2016 when she won gold medal in Olympics in Rio de Janeiro defeating three times Olympic Gold medallist wrestler from Japan. Right now the participant is focusing on the next Olympic Games and hoping to get another medal for the country.

Participant 11

The next participant interviewed was a 43 year old wrestler from Iran who is currently coaching Chinese Olympic wrestling team. He started to wrestle when he was 14. He believed that wrestling was in his family. His father and uncles wrestled before him and eventually even he started to wrestle. He realised in his late teens that he is actually good in wrestling and started to practice seriously. After few years of hard-work and training he finally made it to the Olympics. The participant mentioned that his family was very supportive throughout his journey.

After he decided to retire as a sportsman he still couldn't keep himself away from the sport and started his next journey in life as a wrestling coach. The next big turn came in his life in

2007 when he decided to move to Sweden where he got a job as a coach. Having no knowledge about Sweden's culture and language he believed it was sports which helped him to adjust. He believes a sport in it-self is a culture and no matter where ever you go it will help you to adjust. After serving in Sweden for almost 9 years he shifted to China in 2017 to train Chinese athletes. Having exposure of different countries sporting culture he was able to identify the difference in them. According to him there was a drastic difference between China and Sweden culture. On an average an athlete in Sweden practiced only for 700-800 hours in a year where as on the other hand a Chinese athlete practiced on an average for 1800 hours in a year. He believed that where Sweden was very lenient with their athletes China was very strict with them. Describing a Chinese athlete life he said that they don't have any life beyond sports. There are two sports centres in China both of them 50-60 km away from the main city or town so that athletes can focus only on sports. Athletes are not allowed to meet family and friends, they are not allowed to party or go for any social gatherings, in fact they do not have any rests days. He strongly believes that countries should strike a balance they shouldn't be really hard on athletes like China or too lenient like Sweden.

Other than that the participant mentioned he met his wife because of wrestling. His wife is also a wrestler from Russia whom he met in Sweden and both are living in China together. His wife is still wrestling and he is coaching her along with the Chinese team.

Participant 12

The last participant interviewed was 25 year old wrestler from China. She had won bronze medal in Rio Olympics. She mentioned that she started to wrestle when she was just 15 year old. In her interview she described the sports condition in China. She mentioned that there are two sports centres in China, one in Beijing and one in Zhejiang both of them away from the main city. The practices happen three times a day with very little rest time in between. The participant mentioned that how efficient they become in time management, because they get very little time to eat or bathe.

Beside this the participant had also shed light on her social life. She said because they stay away from the family and are allowed to meet not more than three times in a year, so their centre friends become their family. Participant also had a boy friend who was also wrestling with her in the same centres. The participant misses normal life where she can go to cinema and spend more time with her family but at the time she also understands why it is important to train hard.

Narrating her recent big victory in Olympics she said she was not happy with her performance because she was aiming for a gold medal. Beside this she told that while having a bout with one of the Indian wrestler, she injured her unintentionally. The Indian athlete got seriously injured which made her uncomfortable because she understands that a sports person puts a lot of hard-work and effort to reach till that level.

Right now the athlete is practicing very hard and is aiming for gold medal in Tokyo Olympics.

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION

The present study was set out to explore the stories of elite athletes tell about their journey and the impact sports had on their lives. Researcher also tried to get insights about beyond the obvious benefits of sports as an activity. It is believed that participating in organised sports is considered as an important ground for development of life skills (Larson & Moneta, 2006). For the purpose of the study qualitative research design was adopted, which used semi-structured interview to collect data. Twelve interviews were conducted with elite athletes in order to generate understanding of their experiences. The data was analysed using thematic analysis, resulting in 4 key themes becoming an athlete, social support, being an athlete and life skills. A thematic framework has been produced in order to illustrate the main themes and sub-themes developed through analysis and interpretation.

The first theme identified was becoming an athlete, which primarily talks about critical introduction of sports. The pathway to performance begins with the initial introduction to sports during early years. This introduction leads to specialisation because during this time individual acquire knowledge about the sport and start to learn more about the norms of that environment (Donnelly & Young, 1999), forming the building blocks or introduction to and subsequent involvement in sports (Stevenson, 1999). Stevenson (2002) noted that the early years mark the start of the athletic career and stated how a process of ever-increasing commitment to the sport follows the initial introduction to it.

Most of the participant identified that sport was something which was introduced to them when they were kid, although for some competitive career began late in teens. All the participants had identifiable beginnings that they started in their early years and central to introduction to sports was their family members. They identified at least one family member who was already into sports who encouraged them to join sports. This finding are in line with the work done by Dixon et al. (2008), who found out that significant others, such as family members play an important role in influencing the attitudes and behaviours of individual towards sports participation, especially during early years (Dixon, Warner, & Bruening, 2008). For most of the participants there parents or other family member such as their siblings were their role models. Hearing their stories encouraged and facilitated their participation. Exposure to these role models especially at young age can have positive influence on their behaviour (Payne, Reynolds, Brown, & Fleming, 2003). This could be explained through Bandura's social learning theory (1986), that explains the notion that learners will change behaviour as a result of exposure to others. More specifically, socialisation can be used to explain such findings, which can be situated in social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), is a process of learning and social development which occurs through interaction with others and learning about the social world in which we live (Coakley and Pike 2009). Parents expose kids with salient information that can shape their perceptions of norms of environment, and thus act as important socializing agent. Parents teach kids values and norms associated with participation and competition, who in turn participate in and influence this process through embracing, rejecting it or conforming to such norms (Dixon, Warner, & Bruening, 2008).

An introduction to a sport is not sufficient in itself to produce a long-term commitment to the sport on the part of the athlete: this becomes a more intricate process during the later years of participation. Although significant other play an important role in introducing sports to participants, such introduction did not automatically create an immediate commitment on the part of the athlete to his or her sport. This brings us to another sub-theme of intrinsic motivation, personal satisfaction and potential for success which deepened the commitment of athletes to their respective sport. The narratives supported that athletes gained personal satisfaction intrinsic enjoyment and saw potential for success from taking part in the activity.

This satisfaction allowed them lead to the decision to invest more time in a sport and commit to demand of training which eventually helped them achieve high level of performance. This could be explained using Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002). According Self-determination theory there are three types of behavioural regulation that are associated with varying degrees of self-determined motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1975). Intrinsic motivation, in which behaviour is done for its inherent ability to provide satisfaction. Extrinsic motivation in which individuals engage in activities because they value the associated outcomes. And amotivation which constitutes a psychological state in which people lack either a sense of efficacy or a sense of control with respect to attaining a desired outcome. Self-determination theory proposes that humans have three fundamental needs that must be satisfied in the social context. The first need is of competence, which reflects a basic need to experience oneself as capable to master new challenges and to perfect skills. The need for autonomy is satisfied when people experience their actions as a result of free choice without external interference. And finally relatedness, which refers to our desire to form meaningful bonds with others. Research supports the view that individuals who experience higher levels of satisfaction of the three fundamental needs express more self-determined forms of regulation (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Literature has supported that Self-Determination theory can be used to explain commitment and drop out in sports context (Frederick-Recascino & Ryan, 1995). Studies identified those individuals who continue sports tend to have initially intrinsic motives whereas those who drop out were more like to have had extrinsic reason for participation (Ryska, Hohensee, Cooley, & Jones, 2002). Another study done on female handball players reported that players enjoyment level were associated with feeling of competence, autonomy, relatedness and perceived improvement(Guillet, Sarrazin, Carpenter, Trouilloud, & Cury, 2002). Scanlan et al. (1993) and Carpenter et al. (1993) model of sports commitment can also be used to explain the results. According to their model sports commitment depends on five factors; sport enjoyment, involvement opportunities/benefits, personal investments, social support, involvement and social constraints (Scanlan, Carpenter, Schmidt, Simons, & Keeler, 1993). This studies shows that the pathway to performance commences with initial introduction to sports by significant others. Stevenson (2002) noted that the early years mark the start of the athletic career and stated how a process of ever-increasing commitment to the sport follows the initial introduction to it. The commitments of the athletes further deepens depending upon the support and encouragement by significant others, intrinsic motivation and potential for success.

The second theme identified was the social support. This theme was further divided into two sub-theme; role of family and role of others (friends, coaches, etc.).Social support is defined as social interaction aimed at inducing positive outcome (Bianco & Eklund, 2001). The support can be provided in form of emotional support, informational support, tangible or network support (Cutrona & Russel, 1990). Researchers have indicated that support from coaches, family, friends; staffs have positive effect on athlete's cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspect (Rees, 2007). The athletes have identified a major role played by their families in their journey. They acknowledged that without their constant support and encouragement their journey could have never been complete. Several studies have emphasised on the importance of parental influence on children's involvement and achievement in sport and other domains ((Bloom, 1985) (Brustad, 1988) (Woolger, 1993).Parents not only play important role in introducing sports to children but also determine subsequent engagement in sport (Bloom B. S., 1985) (Wolfenden & Holt, 2005)(Côté, 1999). According to Fredricks and Eccles parents play three different roles in their children's sport; provider, interpreter and role-model. As a provider, they offer kids with

different opportunities to try, they provide them all necessary financial aid which is needed by child to be successful athlete (Cote, Baker, & Abernethy, 2005). As a interpreter they help children to judge their success and failure and knowledge of sports. Children will enjoy and be more successful if parents are positive and encouraging (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). And finally as a role model, in which children watch them and learn ways to react after winning and losing (Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010). Another study conducted on football players reported that there is a positive correlation between parental support and likelihood to progress to professional level (Mills, Butt, Maynard, & Harwood, 2012). McCarthy, Jones and Clark-carter reported that children's tends to enjoy sports more when there is a positive involvement by parents. Furthermore, positive parental involvement can facilitate other important skills such as social skills, self-esteem and motivation. These skills learned from sports can also be transferred and facilitate development in other areas (Jones & Lavalley, 2009). A study by McCarthy, Jones and Clark-Carter (2008) investigated the sources of enjoyment reported by youth sport participants and found that positive parental involvement was one of the most frequently reported results by young males and females. This implies that when children in sport perceive parental involvement as positive, they are more likely to enjoy their sporting experience. Thus parental involvement is evident in the elite sport.

Besides this participants acknowledged the role of their friends and coaches, who provided them constant support throughout their journey. It has been shown that the degree of support from the social network positively relates to indices that measure psychological well being. Interviews from athletes have revealed that social support is related to self confidence (Hays, Maynard, Thomas, & Bawden, 2007), performance improvement (Rees & Freeman, 2010), competitive stressors (Weston, Thelwell, Bond, & Hutching, 2009). This degree of support is also negatively related to various measures of psychological distress (Cohen & Wills, 1985), especially in dealing with negative psychological states due to injury in sport (Carson & Polman, 2012).

The third theme identified was being an athlete. This theme identified reflects upon the distance travelled by the participants from introduction of sports till becoming an elite athlete. All the participants have identified the hard-work, dedication, and sacrifices they have made throughout their journey. This theme is further divided into five sub themes discussed below; training, sacrifice, physical injuries, psychological stain and honour and recognitions.

Training is central to every athlete's experience. Success comes to those who train well, refine their skills and prepare themselves to meet the demands of competitive environment (Durrand-Bush & Salmela, 2002). Athletes are required to push their limits from very young age. It is something which is both physically and psychologically demanding (Gervis & Dunn, 2004). In order to reach the expertise, athletes have to indulge in several hours of deliberate training (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Romer, 1993). This engagement will require effort, persistence and attention (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2008). It was evident in all the interviews that it takes great amount of effort, investment and commitment to be an elite athlete. All the athletes trained for several hours and two of the athletes mentioned that they practiced extra than other athletes. Studies have confirmed that commitment is very important to be successful athlete (Orlick & Partington, 1988). A study conducted on eight Atlanta Olympic U.S team to identify physical, social, environmental, psychological and social factors that affects performance. The study concluded that successful team engaged in extensive mental preparation and were highly focused and committed (Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, & Peterson, 1999). Other studies have also highlighted the factors affects that athletes' performance. Some of the factors identified were extensive, effortful, and high quality training (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Romer, 1993), mental skills (Orlick,

2000), lasting enjoyment and motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993) and innate abilities (Bouchard & Malina, 1984).

Multiple training sessions and competitions make injuries inevitable. All the participants highlighted that experiencing pain and playing with injuries are simply part of being an athlete. Researchers have shown that athletes often normalise pain, illness and injuries in sports context (Theberge, 2008). Sports identity is associated with accepting pain (Malcom, 2006). Goffman suggested that “a body is a piece of consequential equipment, and its owner is always putting it on the line” (Goffman, 1972). Athletes in their journey are at risk of sustaining injuries which can be classified as acute or chronic (Magee, 2002). All the participants had experienced injuries and pain but feared being injured because of the consequences it can have. It can range from hampering the ability to train to as severe as never able to participate again. When an athlete gets injured, it threatens their integrity of self (Sparkes A. C., 2000). Injury can challenge an athlete’s identity through the threat of loss of athletic identity. In addition athletes try to cope with their injuries by bouncing back or playing through pain demonstrating resilience. Malcom noted that athletes reinforce their identity by “shaking off injuries and playing with pain”.

Besides talking about physical injuries the participant highlighted the psychological strain through which the athletes have to undergo. This may arise due to pressures of competing, failure, stress and anxiety before matches. Often participants have reported experiencing intense stress and anxiety before their events. Although optimal level of stress improves ones performance however if it becomes uncontrollable or unmanageable, the person begins to experience a gradual to drastic decrease in performance level (Bali, 2015). One also needs to realise that an athlete constant problematic facet of their occupational lives is facing failure. For the person qua failure himself, his reaction to himself, as a self, is likely to be one of embarrassment: a sense of “un-fulfilled expectations”(Ball, 1976) and a concomitant discomfiture. Since failure involves the demonstration of a moral lack, to be failed is to be deemed not-to-be-normal, to be adjudged as not fitting in (Ball, 1976). Another depiction of the experience of failure is described by Bouton’s two characteristics. First that, the reactions of both failures and their others to the fact of failure. Secondly, “the player experienced uncertainty and concomitant anxiety” surrounding the decision-making process concerning successful and/or failing performances” (Ball, 1976). Studies have indicated that concern about performance failure and negative social evaluation are the most prevalent sources of worry for athletes (Martin & Marsh, 2003). Worries about process (e.g., not playing well, making mistakes) and outcome (e.g., losing, criticism from parents and coaches) contribute to Fear of Failure (Passer, 1983). Another study conducted in which 16 elite athletes were interviewed regarding perceptions and consequences of failure (Conroy, Poczwardowski, & Henschen, 2001). Researchers defined fear of failure “the possibility of nonattainment of an achievement standard can produce fear”. There are three consequences which are associated with the fear of failure. Firstly athletes fear if they fail they have to change belief about one’s self. Secondly, fear of the evaluation from others. And the athlete feels that if a failure occurs the athlete will be worth less in the eyes of others (Birney, Burdick, & Teevan, 1969). Also the participants described the fear or ultimately the grief of parting with the sport due to injury or because of retirement. Physical injuries are reported to have substantial psychological impact (Nicholl, Coleman, & Williams, 1995). Recent researches have revealed that injured athletes as compared to uninjured athletes have lower self esteem, higher level of depression and anxiety (Leddy, Lambert, & Ogles, 1994). Also comparisons of athletes before and after injury have indicated greater mood disturbance, lowered self esteem, and increased depression after injury (Quackenbush & Crossman, 1994). Termination to ones sports career can be result of injury or voluntary retirement and this termination

influences former athletes well being and development (Alfermann & Gross, 1997). It is well reported that retirement can result in substantial life changes and many athletes struggles to adjust. Indeed, retiring athletes are particularly vulnerable to experiencing depression and other psychopathology (Brewer B. , 1993). Researchers have reported that after retirement athletes may experience depression, identity crisis, alcohol/ substance abuse, decreased self-confidence, and eating disorders (Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavalley, 2004). In case of early termination due to injuries athletes feel to be ill-prepared for alternate careers after sports (McGillivray, Fearn, & McIntosh, 2005). Such career uncertainty often further leaves athletes vulnerable to anxiety (Lavalley & Robinson, 2007). Athletes may also struggle with their changing bodies (Lavalley & Robinson, 2007) and depression associated with ongoing chronic pain resulting from injuries sustained during sporting careers (Schwenk, Gorenflo, Dopp, & Hipple, 2007). Accordingly, the retirement from elite sport can constitute a significant risk to athletes 'psychological health and well-being.

The next sub-theme is sacrifice. To be successful in sports or any field it requires, time, dedication and commitment which often requires individual to make sacrifices in life. Most of the participants identified that they have sacrificed their own social and recreational lives. Most athletes acknowledged that they have missed their college life, friends, birthdays, significant events and family time. National Collegiate Athletic Association (2011) survey reported that on an average athletes train between 25-45 hours per week. This requires athletes to cut down their time spend with friends, sleeping, travelling or engaging in a wide variety of other pursuits. Often serious athletes fanatically pursue their sport to an extent that it disrupts their family and work relationship, their physical health and comfort (Ewald & Jibou, 1985). Athletes generally over-conform in order to continually endorse their identity and garner the respect of other especially their coaches and teammates (Hughes & Coakley, 1991). All the participants narrated that their sports prevented them from leading a normal life but also at the same time kept them away from bad influences at teenage. This have been reported in numerous studies that sports participation can result in reduced illicit drug use and alcohol during teenage (Kwan, Bobko, Faulkner, Donnelly, & Cairney, 2014). Athletes in their career move through processes of conversion, entanglements, commitments and obligations (Stevenson C. L., 2002). At their initial involvement into sports, the athlete becomes 'converted' to the worldview of the sporting subculture and becomes 'entangled' relatively quickly in a subtle but ever-increasing series of 'commitments and obligations'. As athlete moves along the career path, their commitment and obligation deepens and the relationship with others in the sport becomes more entangled. Finally, to the extent that reputations and identities are built and are seen as desirable, the athlete becomes increasingly committed and tied to his/her athletic career and continues along the performance pathway. A significant level of commitment and entanglement with the sport and its demands was evident throughout the participant accounts.

The fifth and sixth sub-theme under the theme of being an athlete was winning mentality and Rewards and Recognitions respectively. In the present study all the participants reported to be highly driven by personal goals and achievement, they had a strong self belief and also sports were central to their lives. In other word winning mentality and self-determined forms of motivation characterised the athletes, which suggest that goal accomplishment enhances perceptions of competence and consequently promotes self-determined forms of motivation (Mallett & Hanrahan, 2004). Athletes reported that they were highly task focused, but at the same time enjoyed winning and achieving excellent performance at competitions. From the beginning of their journey athletes were made their own choices, while considering the advice and support from range of individual such as their parents and coaches throughout their journey. In their journey athletes developed necessary psychological skills and maturity

which helped them to cope with setbacks and focus towards their final goals. These findings support existing literature which emphasises the positive short and long term effects of autonomously regulated participation as defined by Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Further understanding the factors that explains the variability in motivation, Ryan and Deci proposed their Cognitive evaluation theory. Cognitive Evaluation theory evaluates the social and environmental factors that facilitate or undermine intrinsic motivation. According to Cognitive evaluation theory rewards given to an individual in an achievement context can either promote or undermine intrinsic motivation. How the individual perceives the reward determines its influence on intrinsic motivation. If the reward is perceived as providing information about competence, the reward is predicted to enhance intrinsic motivation. If the reward is perceived as controlling an individual's behaviour (i.e., an external locus of causality) the reward is predicted to decrease the individual's perception of self-determination and consequently, undermine his/her intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The last theme identified was life skills which can be defined as ranges of transferable skills needed for everyday life, by everybody, that help people thrive above and beyond the normal requirements of everyday existence. As already reflected in review of literature sports is an important context where athletes learn variety of skills. In the interviews participants described various skills which they have learned through sports which can be clubbed under two categories interpersonal skills and intra-personal skills.

Interpersonal skills included skills like social skills, respect, leadership and pro-social behaviour. Within social skills the participants reported their ability to get along with other, make friends easily and more importantly work with others. Numerous researches have shown that participating in sports improve individual social skills (Lv & Takami, 2016). It is believed that while playing players interact and communicate with others, they use some skills, both verbally and non-verbally, to help them understand, meet potential target, and consequently develop many relative interpersonal behaviours. Sports also allow athletes to understand and control their emotions which enable them to have smooth and comfortable interactions with other athletes (Ishikura, 1999).

Another skill within interpersonal skill identified was leadership. Since sports participation improve many social skills such as ability to interact and communicate with others athletes are able to demonstrate many leadership quality. According to a public health researcher, Keith Zulling playing sports help athletes to develop skills like communication and team building, which enable them to function effectively as a leader. (Duggan, 2017). Playing team sports such as football, basketball as well as individual sports like running, boxing and swimming, helps participants learn to treat other competitors with respect, identify strengths and weaknesses, develop winning strategies and manage time effectively. Beside these sports helps athletes to become more confident and efficient in decision making necessary to succeed in leadership roles of all types. It is believed that sport is highly competitive which pushes athlete to achieve more than their rivals. This is true especially in team sports where competitive atmosphere pushes people towards "taking one for the team". It is within the cohesion of a team that a captain will stand out and acquire the position of leader. (Hopkin, 2013). A study analysed semi-structured interviews of former university athlete and concluded that athletes experiences developed interpersonal characteristics, verbal interactions, and task behaviors all elements of leadership (Dupuis, Bloom, & Loughhead, 2006). Athletic participation might contribute to later success in leadership through reinforcement of critical behaviour (Iso-Aloha & Hatfield, 1986). Similarly another study compared athletes with non-athletes and found that athletes were better able to get along with

all kinds of people (social integration), a critical skill for leaders of diverse groups (DeMoulin, 2002), they demonstrated high-commitment, athletes had a higher perception of themselves as socially skilled, outgoing, confident, and good leaders (Aries, McCarthy, Salovey, & Banaji, 2004). Thus it can be concluded that athletic participation appears to increase the potential ability to lead (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1992).

Besides this participants have also highlighted that sports teaches them to respect their team mates, coaches, family and their sports. This was also reported in a study by Evan & Roberts (2007), who concluded that sports promote social success by fostering skills like positive peer relationship, respecting other and pro-social behaviour. It is believed that sport provides a forum for developing pro-social behaviour because participation has the potential to shape individual actions (Golstein & McGinnis, 1997). Cooper (1982) argued that sports contributes to the development of pro-social behaviour because team affiliations might discourage egoism and provides opportunities for demonstrating altruistic behaviour. According to Kleiber and Roberts (1981),... “organized sports provide a forum for the teaching of responsibility, cooperation, subordination of self to the greater good, and the shaping of motivation and achievement behaviours”. Furthermore, sports helps a person learn to work with other people aiming to achieve similar goals (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997) and cooperate with others by confronting issues of fairness surfacing as part of team participation (Kolberg, 1981).

Another set of skills were identified which were clubbed under intra-personal skills which include organisation (time management, punctuality), discipline, commitment, determination, perseverance, persistence, psychological resilience, dealing with stress, anxiety, success, failure and emotions. Numerous researchers have shown that participating in sports results in athletes developing skills such as time management, organization, and multi-tasking which can be further transferred into other domains (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002).

Coping with success and failure is another skill which athletes identified that sports have taught them. One needs to acknowledge that an athlete's constant problematic facet of their occupational lives is facing failure and athlete must develop effective coping responses to failure, which is a major source of stress and anxiety for athletes (Conroy, Willow, & Metzler, 2002). Athletes who fail to possess such skills tend to experience poor performance, negative affect and may eventually drop out (Madden, 1995). Athlete uses various strategies to cope with the failure such as pushing out negative thoughts of failure, positive self talk, positive reinterpretation etc. In a study conducted on elite athletes researchers found out that in case of failure athletes used problem focused coping strategy which includes increased effort, planning, active coping and suppression of competing activities (Crocker & Graham, 1995). Other than Crocker and Grahams identified self-blames as another coping strategy. This strategy is not to be considered as dysfunctional but that it showed a responsibility at the athlete considering the performance and outcome. In the present study also it was observed although there was no self blaming but athletes were aware of the result and the performance, to analyse it and take responsibility of the outcome. Thus athletes must learn to persist in the face of losses, and to analyze constructively and compensate for competitive weaknesses. To thrive within sports, athletes must cultivate perseverance and resilience.

Thus it can be concluded that elite athletes are characterized with ability to utilize and optimise a range of psychological qualities to withstand the pressures that they experience (Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffett, 2002). An athlete faces numerous stressors throughout their journey (McKay, Niven, Lavalley, & White, 2008), and utilize psychological characteristics to deal with these setbacks and transition encountered in their pathway. Psychological

resilience is one such characteristic which helps athletes to deal with failures, obstacles and setbacks. In one study on resilience conducted on college and professional athletes found out that resilient qualities includes; commitment, determination, positivity, competitiveness, persistent, passion for sports and strong social support (Galli & Vealey, 2008). Another such recent study interviewed 12 Olympian champions to explore the relationship between resilience and optimal performance (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012). The researcher found out that Olympic medallist encountered various stressors in their everyday life ranging from ongoing daily demands (e.g balancing work and training) to major life events (e.g death of close family member) but these champions protected themselves from the potential negative effect of stressors by influencing their challenge appraisal and meta-cognitions. These constructive cognitive reactions promoted facilitative responses that appeared to be firmly embedded in taking personal responsibility for one's thoughts, feelings, and actions. In turn, positive responses led to the realization of optimal sport performance.

Conclusion

Central themes from the narratives as well as the thematic analysis helped in understanding the journey of an elite athlete. Beside this the study helped us to identify the life skills which athletes have learned through sports. This study identified key factors influencing the journey from beginner to elite athletes. Although all athletes have different stories to tell but the study helped to identify four factors which were present in all participants narratives; 1) Becoming an athlete 2) Social support 3) Being an athlete and 4) life skills. Also, the present study opens new avenues for research where one can study whether the life skills learned through sports can be applied to other field or aspect of life?

CHAPTER VI LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

There were number of limitation identified within this study. One such limitation was acknowledged within the qualitative research design. Narrative inquiry is based on recalling and reflecting on the participants experiences. Dealing with such data there can be a possibility of distortion of data or memory attrition (Fasting, Brackenridge, & Walseth, 2007). Many participants of the study recollected events that took place as many as fifteen years back; whereas others referred to events that occurred one day before the interview date. Although the aim of the study was not validate or invalidate the participants experience but time can have possibly impacted upon their recollection. Qualitative researches are rooted in participants memory and perception if events and hence making it difficult to find truth in tales (Jones, Brown, & Holloway, 2012). However it is important to highlight here is that the purpose of the study is not to search for absolute truth, but to illuminate experience. The truth refers to that which the participants in the study perceive and construct.

Another limitation acknowledged was of small sample, thus making it difficult to generalise the result on wider population. Again the problem aligns with the qualitative nature of the research design.

Finally, there was no equal representation of individual and team sport. Majority of participants were from individual sport. Both the sports are believed to contribute for development of different skills and athletes can have completely different experience. Besides this majority of participants interviewed were wrestlers resulting in some sort of biasness in the results.

CHAPTER VII PERSONAL REFLECTION

Having introduced already my personal reason for choosing the research topic, it is important for me to discuss my experience of conducting the research now. The journey of writing the dissertation has been challenging, yet rewarding and has increased my passion for sports. In this process i have recognised number of personal development, including increased confidence as a qualitative researcher, better understanding of the narrative research approach and skills required to carry out interviews.

I feel fortunate enough to interview some of the most elite athletes from all over the world which had lasting impact on me. As participants recalled their individual pathways through sports, narrating some of their personal stories and demonstrating the significant lasting impact that sports had on them. I feel lucky to have been entrusted with the athletes narratives and I experience an overwhelming sense of responsibility for the data collected. When participants share personal and sensitive data, participants are entrusting the researcher with their stories, and thus it becomes responsibility of the researcher to accurately represent them within analysis and write up.

Completing this process has made me consider the importance of maintaining a balance between the qualitative data collected and being the researcher in search of stories and thus keeping his own personal biases and opinion at side. this can be challenging while conducting the interviews but helps one to become a better qualitative researcher in future. A good qualitative researcher always respects the participant and their stories and always commits to treat them with dignity.

I started this journey with a lot of stress and anxiety, as it appeared to be a mammoth task in front of me. However I am now very happy and excited about the completion of the project and believe that there is a lot to be done in exploring the stories of elite athletes. As also highlighted in Chapter one sports is an important context for learning many important skills. Sports is something which from which everyone can benefit and not just the professional athletes.

This dissertation also allowed me to actually experience the cultural difference that exists between east and west. Since, I got an opportunity to interview elite athletes not only from India but also from other parts of world like America, China and Iran. There was a cultural difference in how they narrated their stories, how they described success, failure etc. It was observed that most on Indians glorified their victories and wanted to contribute more to society. They described their journey as a collective effort of family and friends and each of them wanted to make their nation proud, whereas athlete from America showed more individualistic perspective. Athlete from America talked more about herself and wanted to become better in sports for self satisfaction. This is in line with Markus and Kitayama (1991) model of self construal according to which; people in different cultures have strikingly different construal's of the self. Many Asian cultures have distinct conceptions of individuality that insist on the fundamental relatedness of individuals to each other. The emphasis is on attending to others, fitting in and harmonious interdependence with them. American culture neither assumes nor values such an overt connectedness among individuals. In contrast, individuals seek to maintain their independence from others by attending to the self and by discovering and expressing their unique inner attributes (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Finally I believe that myself being an athlete, the endurance and dedication that I learned as a player have helped me to persist with the research task, maintained my focused even when at time I thought I couldn't complete it and kept me going during difficult times.

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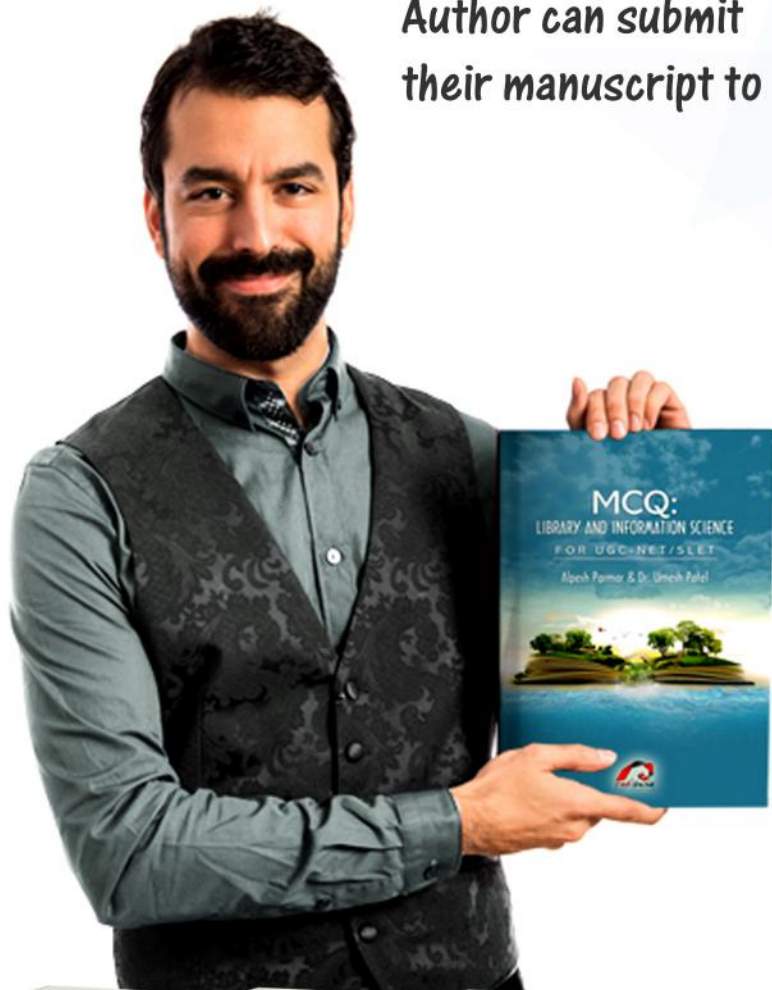
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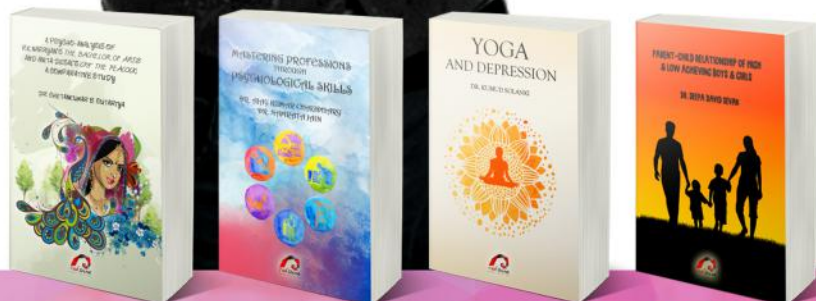
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