OVERVIEW, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Excellence is the ray of sun falling on a peak, surrounded by dark clouds (Mohan, 2015). As in the sea, the tops of the waves seem to lie in one plane, although there are many guls and chasms that lie in between one high crest or the top of the one wave and another, the phenomenon of excellence also appears in human history, as a constant, persistent and consistent rising above previous standards in spite of adversities and limitations, in fact using them as stepping stones to rise higher and higher.

It is best defined as a colossal concept which is dynamic, vibrant and exemplifies reaching the zenith of our potential through harmonious symphony/collaboration of passion, commitment, perseverance and consistency of effort. Its multifaceted nature is expressed in a variety of fields.

An incredible commitment is required to persist through the ups and downs associated with becoming the best achiever and maintaining the best performance. It includes committing to, and being engaged in, an ongoing high quality preparation (mental, physical and technical) and the determination to give the best for the entire performance. In short, it means setting clear personal goals and relentlessly pursuing them (Orlick, 2005).

Being a highly individualistic concept, it is often defined by the individual himself and hence, making its pursuit, a journey of commitment, practice and experience (Mohan, 2011a, 2014a; Merenda & Mohan, 1966). As an area, it has been fruitful in generating quality research. It has captured the interest of researchers and has been the thrust area of scientific research since recent past.

Being a dynamic and pervasive concept, excellence exhibits itself in many domains. However, given the highly competitive, results-driven nature of the immense fields of academics and sports, the analysis of the enthralling phenomena of excellence in these two seemingly related fields is a pertinent topic for research.

Academic excellence occupies paramount importance as it is a holistic phenomenon that embraces the multiple dimensions of personal development and the
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manifold goals of higher education. It plays a vital role in the development of human capital and is linked with an individual’s well-being and opportunities for better living (Battle & Lewis, 2002). In this era of globalization and technological revolution, the study of academic excellence ensures the acquisition of knowledge and skills that enable individuals to increase their productivity and improve their quality of life (Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafiq & Berhanu, 2011). This, in turn, will enhance the productivity leading towards new sources of earning which will ultimately ameliorate the economic growth of the country (Saxton, 2000). Thus, making this area of research immensely important.

Excellence in sports has been promoted, propagated and rewarded since time immemorial. It has occupied the core themes of human ‘sporting spirit’, integrity and strength of character. Sport serves society by providing vivid examples of excellence (Will, 2015). Thus, making it an integral part of furthering an understanding and research in terms of human potential and capabilities. Its positive values of hard work, fair play, excellence and team spirit foster a communion that transcends borders, cultures and ethnicity -- values to unite us in troubled times. Thereby, making it an interesting field to venture into in terms of research.

With the Olympic motto, ‘Citius — Altius — Fortius,’ which means "faster — higher — stronger" for its credo, sports is the most publically demonstrated exhibit of consistently evaluated achievements. It is also a state of mind and a behavior that results from a healthy combination of a strong body, mind and will (Soltis, 2012). It is not only about winning, but also participating, making progress against personal goals, striving to be and to do our best in our daily lives and benefiting from the healthy combination of a strong body, mind and will. Participation leading to Excellence in virtually all domains is guided by mental factors (Mohan et al., 2014b).

Excellence in sports helps to exhibit the working of human nature through its sincerity and ingenuity. Sport is and should remain an important part of education, as it also functions as a support for the young people in their personal development. Sport is also a vital part of the nation’s social fabric and thus occupies a pertinent position in terms of research.
Although both the fields have been studied earlier too, but more often singularly or even as mutually exclusive of each other, perhaps owing to the notion that they are diverse. In some instances the points of divergence between the two fields are considered, and the areas of congruence and the potential for a mutually-advantageous interaction ignored or perhaps overlooked. The need was felt to consider both the fields together and thus to get to understand both their common areas and their differences. Different areas have been taken mutually exclusive of the other areas. The requisite and due emphasis has been laid on the correlates of excellence in a variety of fields.

The individual, interactive and/or mutually enhancing roles played by the various factors towards achieving excellence are admittedly very significant. A deeper and detailed analysis of the various factors seems imperatively essential alongwith a critical review of certain ‘myths’.

That there is a dire need to study excellence in academics and sports was felt for the following reasons:

1. It was observed and felt that excellence expresses itself in many ways, more so in the highly competitive fields of academics and sports. Presently, it was chosen to study the phenomena of excellence in the two related fields of academic performance and sports.

2. The oft-held myth being that both excellence in academics and excellence in sports are two diverse phenomena in different fields, the need was felt to study both their commonalities and their differences, while laying due emphasis on the common areas so that the person achieving excellence in academics does not get alienated from sports and vice versa, thereby incurring loss of potential for a mutually-advantageous interaction.

3. An imperative need was felt to make the primary/ major purpose of this research the study of the correlates which can be helpful in building the pillars for the achievement of excellence in both disciplines, and also for the purpose of model building which would play an important role in and for imparting training in these seemingly diverse fields.
OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

In pursuit of the study of excellence among the two fields of academics and sports, the present study was planned.

1. To study the Grit, Perfectionism, Self-Efficacy, Flow and Emotional Intelligence of the students with academic excellence.

2. To study the Grit, Perfectionism, Self-Efficacy, Flow and Emotional Intelligence of the students with sports excellence.

3. To study if there exists any gender difference with regard to excellence and its correlates, both in the field of academics and sports.