CHAPTER - V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Female college athletes’ liking association with others through growth fostering relationships, which serve as a main source of psychological empowerment, identity development, and self-confidence. An important hypothesis of this study stated that an increase in female college athletes’ perceptions of relational health was associated with perceived stress and coping strategies, and satisfaction with the athletic experience. In summary, the results indicated athletes who reported higher levels of relational health with members of the athletic community reported greater satisfaction on the athlete satisfaction scale. The sample consists of 281 athletes. The athletes belong to different colleges of four Universities in the State of Kerala viz. Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala University, Thiruvananthapuram, Calicut University, Thenjipalam and University of Kannur, Mangattuparambu. All the athletes (N = 281) were females.

The researcher administered the questionnaires in a group setting immediately after the athletes has participated in a sport competition and record their responses directly on the answer sheet. The data were analyzed by using SPSS Version 17.0 (SSPS INC., Chicago, IL). Person’s product moment correlation was used to find out the preliminary relation between statistical variables. Regression analysis was used to explain variation in dependant variable based on the variation in independent variables. The data pertaining to the relational health, perceived stress, coping, and athlete satisfaction were tested using the Two-Way ANOVA and LSD post - hoc
analysis was performed when final statistical difference between Groups (Athletics, Basketball and Volleyball) and Levels (State represented, University represented and Inter collegiate participation). The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients obtained for the four dimensions were Relational Health Indices- Teammate and Community Perceived Stress Coping style- Engagement coping and Disengagement coping , and Athlete Satisfaction were 0.86 and 0.95, 0.83 and 0.80, and 0.68 and 0.96..

Consensus with earlier findings, the results of this study highlighted the statistically significant association between the role of positive, connected relationships within the context of a social support system on athlete satisfaction (Allen & Howe, 1998; Barnett, Giacobbi et al., 2004; Jowett, 2003) as well as the connection between social support and perceived stress (Brugha et al., 1990). Moreover, consistent with the results from several other studies, which proposed an association between emotional health and supportive relationships (Belle, 1982; Folkman & Lazarus, 1986; Lazarus, 2000). The results of this study also substantiated the association between female college athletes’ mental wellness, as evidenced in this study by a decrease in perceived stress, and relational health with members in their support network. The results indicated an inverted relationship between perceived stress and relational health with members of the athletic community and teammates. Overall, the results indicated that relational health significantly mediated the relationship between perceived stress and athlete satisfaction (i.e., perceived stress predicted athlete satisfaction because it was associated first with relational health, which predicted athlete satisfaction). Although relational health was not significantly associated with engagement or disengagement coping, engagement coping was
significantly associated with female college athletes’ perceived satisfaction as indicated by the ASQ (Riemer & Chelladurai, 1998).

In conclusion, total relational health as indicated by all items averaged across two subscales with community and teammates mediated the effects of stress on athlete satisfaction, and had a direct effect on the athletic experience among female college athletes. The results of this study were consistent with the premise of several research studies that have highlighted the powerful, far-reaching impact of the coach-athlete relationship (Jenkins, 2005), specifically with regard to the profound influence of the athlete-coach relationship on an athlete’s satisfaction (Barnett et al., 1992; Johnson, 1999). The results of this study further illustrated the importance of growth-fostering relationships and connectedness as a desired characteristic of the athlete-coach relationship, as well as the value of relational health with all members of the athletic community on perceived stress and athlete satisfaction.

The findings shall encourage sport practitioners to seek a greater understanding of female college athletes’ unique experiences in sport and cultivate relational health among all members within the athletic culture.

**Conclusion**

Within the limitations of the present study and on the basis of the findings, the following conclusions may be drawn.

1. Significant relationship was found between relational health indices subscale-teammate and athlete satisfaction among the female college athletes in Kerala. As relational health increased the reports of athletes satisfaction increased.
2. Significant relationship was found between relational health indices sub scale-community and athlete satisfaction among the female college athletes in Kerala.

3. Significant negative relationship was found between Total relational health and perceived stress among the female college athletes in Kerala. As perceived stress increased the Total relational health decreased.

4. No significant relationship was found between relational health and coping style (engagement coping and disengagement coping) among the female college athletes in Kerala. It means the relational health does not predict the coping style.

5. No significant relationship was found between coping style and athlete satisfaction among the female college athletes in Kerala.

6. Engagement coping was found to be a predictor of athlete satisfaction among female college athletes in Kerala.

7. Disengagement coping does not predict the athlete satisfaction among female college athletes in Kerala.

8. Significant negative relationship was found between athlete satisfaction and perceived stress among female college athletes in Kerala.

9. Relational health significantly mediates the relationship between Perceived stress and athlete satisfaction among female college athletes in Kerala.

10. In Relational health indices variable (Teammate), Basketball and Volleyball group differ significantly and athletics group does not differ significantly with Basketball and Volleyball group among female college athletes in Kerala.
11. In Relational health indices variable (Teammate), no significant difference was found between state represented, university represented and intercollegiate participation levels among female college athletes in Kerala.

12. In Relational health indices variable (Community), no significant difference was found between Athletics, Basketball and Volleyball groups among female college athletes in Kerala.

13. In Relational health indices variable – Community, no significant difference was found between state represented, university represented and intercollegiate participation levels among female college athletes in Kerala.

14. In Perceived stress no significant difference was found between Athletics, Basketball and Volleyball groups among female college athletes in Kerala.

15. In Perceived stress no significant difference was found between state represented, university represented and intercollegiate participation levels among female college athletes in Kerala.

16. In Coping style (engagement coping), Athletics and Basketball group and Basketball and Volleyball group differ significantly and Athletics group does not differ significantly with Volleyball group among female college athletes in Kerala.

17. In Coping style (engagement coping), no significant difference was found between state represented, university represented and intercollegiate participation levels among female college athletes in Kerala.

18. In Coping style (disengagement coping), Athletics and Volleyball group and Basketball and Volleyball group differ significantly and Athletics group does
not differ significantly with Basketball group among female college athletes in Kerala.

19. In Coping style (disengagement coping), no significant difference was found between state represented, university represented and intercollegiate participation levels among female college athletes in Kerala.

20. In Athlete satisfaction, Athletics and Volleyball group and Basketball and Volleyball group differ significantly and Athletics group does not differ significantly with Basketball group among female college athletes in Kerala.

21. In Athlete satisfaction, state represented and intercollegiate participation levels differ significantly and university represented levels does not differ significantly with state represented and intercollegiate participation levels among female college athletes in Kerala.

**Recommendations**

In the light of the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made.

1. An awareness programme shall be conducted for the athletic community to understand the importance of creating and maintaining growth-fostering relationships as a powerful influence as personal and athlete satisfaction as an indicator of perceived stress and athlete satisfaction.

2. Training should be given to the coaches and administrators to take the specific ways to create and nurture growth – fostering relationships which include active listening and engagement or attunement to the athlete’s concerns, questions or sharing daily experience of female athletes.
3. Coaches and administrators should also understand that relational issues are of primary concern for college students; female college athletes reported that the quality of their relationships with members of the athletic community, teammates and coach significantly imparted their athletic experience.

4. Administrators, Counselors, and sport practitioners communicate the potentiality of the beneficial effects of relational health on perceived stress and athlete satisfaction among female college athletes to all members of the athletic campus community.

5. Outreach services should be educational in nature to transcend the obstacles that inhibit the flow of information from a counselor to athletes, coaches and all members of the athletic community.

6. Effects must be made to educate, and provide psychological support to athletes who use potentially destructive coping strategies.

7. Athletic organization should conduct workshops on team building, and interpersonal skills led by a qualified practitioner in each six months.

8. Research on the strength and coping style of female athletes of national level can enhance sport practitioners’ understanding of the impact of gender, and culture on personal and athletic experience from a holistic perspective.

9. Additional research includes larger and more diverse samples across different universities and a level of athletic ability is warranted.

10. More studies conducted for examining the differences between certain athletic teams such as Basketball players’ Vs Judo / Gymnastics etc.
11. Research study may also be conducted to understand the relevance of relational health as a psychological construct among the male athletes.

12. Including a qualitative component to the research process may enhance the richness of the data in terms of identifying the nature of the stress, stress appraisal, and emotional response with more detail (Strean, 1998).

13. Another direction to take with this research in to specifically focus on relational health with the coach to determine the impact of the quality of this relationship on specific domains of athlete satisfaction, which, may more closely pertain to the athlete’s physical performance and athlete satisfaction with relationships in the athlete setting.

14. Further examination of the coach subscale as mediating variables between perceived stress and specific athletic outcomes such as ability utilization, drop out, length of recovery for an injury or other relevant topics for coaches and athletic administrators is encouraged.

15. Future research should be designed to explore the relationship between mentor, community and teammate relationships and depression and social anxiety.

16. It will be important for future research to focus on colleges and universities from different geographic configurations.

17. It will also be important for future research to include men in the studies that employ the Relational Cultural Model.

18. Future research should use single age than age range to more clearly identify the effect of age on the relationships between relational health and athlete satisfaction.
19. Active mentoring programmes should be encouraged in colleges and universities to help fresh students and transfer students to adjust to the changes and handle the challenges of attending a new academic environment.

20. Studies may also be conducted to examine the development of coping skills among adolescent athletes and the development of mental skills and mental toughness will provide an area of comparison.

21. Future research should also examine the relationship between athlete’s episodic coping and long term outcomes of their coping behaviour.

22. Future research also required to find the effectiveness of the coping responses used or whether the coping responses were considered adaptive or meta adaptive. In this area is warranted as often coping is misinterpreted to mean that the athlete is responding appropriately to stress.

23. Future studies could measure the effectiveness by using longitudinal formats and measuring whether the coping strategy was actually effective in reducing the stress and student performance.

24. Future research is also needed to determine how and under what conditions avoidance coping can help athletes to overcome stress.

25. In order to assure generalizability and to expand understanding of the complexity of relational health and its impact on successful adjustment, it will be important to replicate these findings and to validate the RHI across gender, and other diverse populations (Ling et al, 2002).

26. Future research is also necessary to identify the ways in which peer, mentor, and community relationships can most effectively be fostered in college women.