CHAPTER ONE

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In the last few decades, sports have gained tremendous popularity all over the globe. The popularity of sports is increasing at a rapid pace and this trend is likely to continue in future also.

Popularity of sports is evident from the increasing importance which the sports have gained at different levels. Instead of being confined to a specific season, period or level, sports meets are now being conducted in an organised fashion throughout the year irrespective of seasons, periods, and levels. The winter and summer sports, sports for the physically handicapped and mentally retarded, for the kids and veterans, apart from the physically normal youth, sports for specific groups that include service persons, workers, legislators, government employees, college students, rural youth, etc., and sports at the regional and continental levels besides the inter-continental level, all goes to testify to the fact that sports have gained a pervasive popularity and influence in different segments and levels of society. Apart from the formal organisations, informal organisations like clubs, associations, etc. also add sports to their regular agenda.
When one looks at the history of modern Olympic Games, one can see that the number of sports for which competitions are held has increased steadily. The total number of participating countries and sportsmen have also increased. In addition to the list of Olympic sports, indigenous sports have also gained popularity in each country.

The television and press media that contribute to a greater coverage of sports have become carriers of sports news to millions and millions of people around the world. In every news telecast and issue of newspapers, sports figure unfailingly and receive a special coverage. Further, television channels meant exclusively for sports, go on air carrying latest news in sports to millions of people. One among such channels is Star-Sports that operates round the clock. In addition, several magazines exclusively for sports are available. The kind of voluminous coverage given to sports by the electronic and print media does not go into drain without the audience interest. The public interest in watching a sports event appears to be no less than the media coverage given to sports. A study by Lite (1983) documents that over 50 per cent of Americans express a strong interest in watching a sports event. It adds that almost three out of every four viewers, that is, 73 per cent viewers, watch sports on television at least once a week, while 60 per
cent talk about sports with their friends at least once a week and 58 per cent read the sports pages of the newspapers in addition.

**NATURE OF SPORTS**

There is a general feeling among the people that sport is only a leisure time activity. Indeed, the origin of the word *sport* itself seems to be in support of this feeling. The word *sport* derives from the middle English verb *disport*, which means "to divert" *(Webster's New College Dictionary)* and this root word stemmed from the Latin *desport* which, it is interesting to note, means "to carry down", "to carry off" *(The Macmillan Dictionary of Sports and Games)*. In the 14th century, the sport was meant "to enjoy oneself to frolic" and in the 15th century, it denoted "a pleasant pastime or diversion". Thus, etymologically and historically, sport is associated with the bank of 'turning aside', 'distraction', 'amusement and pleasure-giving activity'. Although etymology does help one to grasp the historical content of the concept or term of sport, it does not provide a correct perspective on the nature of sports.

Sport is a physical activity involving the use of physical skills, and prowess or vigorous physical exertion. Coakley (1986) defines sport as
"an institutionalized competitive activity that involves vigorous physical exertion on the use of relatively complex physical skills by individuals whose participation in initiative is a combination of the intrinsic satisfaction associated with the activity itself and the external rewards earned through participation." From this definition, it is clear that sport is not merely an amusing frolic activity, but a physical activity involving both skill and exertion due to competitiveness, whereas a physical activity involves only physical exertion.

Sport constitutes the golden principle of health and fitness. Williams (1964) notes that "all life functions depend upon physical fitness, and greater the physical fitness, the greater is the potential life efficiency". In order to be physically fit, physical activity like food is a daily requirement. Sports activity improves body posture and strengthens musculature. It causes better digestion, efficient elimination of toxins and other waste products, greater vascularization, stabilized respiration, and greater output of energy. Bortz (1982) observes that "there is no drug in current or perspective use that holds as much for sustained health as a life time program of physical exercise".

The human body consists of billions of tiny cells of different types such as muscular cells, skeletal cells, cardiac cells, smooth muscle cells,
nerve cells, etc. The cells are not only building blocks of the body but they are also "store-house of energy". These cells perform all vital life functions like digestion, elimination of waste products, etc. Regular physical activity stimulates them to perform their respective "duties" at optimal levels, thereby enhancing the individual's capacity to work more efficiently for a longer time.

If one has to retain a good performance level to meet the physical and mental demands as required for an independent living in the chronological 80s and 90s, one has to maintain adequate levels of muscular strength, endurance, flexibility, heart-lung efficiency, balance, bone integrity, and nervous system function. Sports activity facilitates all these requirements for the good performance level.

Basically, sports activity involves physical exercise and such exercise produces a number of benefits for the body and mind.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity helps in developing a correct posture and maintaining it. Sitting, standing, sleeping, walking, and running postures are extremely important in life for they allow us to economise on energy and add to aesthetic value. People with postural deviations become a
laughing stock and feel inferior in the presence of others, thus aggravating their miseries.

Secondly, repeated powerful contraction of skeletal muscles involved in the physical activity causes increase in their girth, size and efficiency. When a muscle fibre is stimulated, it produces the maximal tension or none at all, the higher the frequency, the greater the tension and also the greater the rate at which tension can be developed. Endurance of the neuro-muscular system is closely related to the ability of a muscle to maintain tension when it is repeatedly stimulated. Through exercise, muscles develop greater contracting ability, strength, energy, storage capacity, endurance and a beautiful shape.

Thirdly, the powerful exercise causes chemical change in muscle that is an increase in phosphocreatine content, glycogen, non-nitrogenous substances and haemoglobin is seen. The nerve impulse travels more rapidly across the motor-end plate in the muscle fibre due to which reaction time improves.

Fourthly, through muscular exercise, cardiac muscle becomes stronger so as to contract more powerfully to flush out more blood to the arteries. The heart which is about the size of a man’s clenched fist is
the finest pump ever known. On an average, an adult’s heart beats 40 million times a year and more than 2.87 billion times in the life time. It pumps 4,300 gallons of blood daily through 60,000 miles of blood vessels. Precisely speaking, a normal heart pumps out 10.2 litres of blood a minute in normal conditions, while a trained "athletic heart" pumps out 22 litres. The athletic heart is so muscular that it can pump the same amount of blood with 50 beats per minute while the average heart pumps with 72-75 beats per minute. Thus, the athletic heart will beat 13 million fewer times per year. It works less, rests more, and consequently takes a much longer time to wear out.

Fifthly, physical exercise enlarges all the coronary arteries which feed the heart. It increases collateral (auxiliary) circulation so that more than one blood vessel will supply a given area of heart. Shepherd observes that "Exercise could open up the blood vessels supplying the heart making them less liable to obstruction, and where a partial blockade has developed, vigorous effort could encourage the development of new alternative pathways for the blood" (as quoted in Kamlesh, 1997). Further, exercise lowers the concentration of cholesterol in the blood vessels and fat in the blood. These factors would greatly reduce the possibility of a heart attack.
Sixth, a sustained physical activity not only lowers the blood pressure, but also it teaches the heart how to extract oxygen from the blood more efficiently. The congestive heart appears large because the muscle is stretched with fluid. The athlete’s heart is large because it is muscular. Pavo Nurmi of Finland who won nine gold medals in long distance running consecutively in the Olympic Games held in the years 1920, 1924, and 1928, had a muscular heart three times the normal size (Kamlesh, 1997).

Seventh, physical activity causes numerical increase in the red blood corpuscles and white blood corpuscles thereby ensuring more efficient transportation of food and oxygen to various parts of the body and potentiating individual’s ability to combat diseases. The greater capillarization, due to exercise, accelerates cell metabolism and smoothens the road for steady growth of the cells.

Eighth, exercise helps to regulate breathing. Accepting that the effect of strenuous exercise on respiratory functions is not very clear, Morehouse and Miller hypothesize that “the trained subject demonstrates (i) a decrease in the minute volume of breathing required for the performance of a given load, indicating an improvement in the efficiency of ventilation, and (ii) an increase in maximal respiratory minute
volume that can be achieved during the strenuous exertion” (as quoted in Kamlesh, 1997).

Normally lungs require 1500 cc of oxygen per minute. During vigorous exercise, this demand is increased up to 4000 cc resulting in a greater vital capacity (Kamlesh, 1997). The chest expands and the rate of breathing slows down. Respiration becomes economical. A trained person may breathe in smaller amount of air, but he absorbs more oxygen from it than an untrained individual. Physical exercise deepens the chest and exposes blood to oxygen over a greater area.

Ninth, an exerciser has much lower rate of lactic acid formation than a non-exerciser. With far greater energy output, the trained athlete becomes capable of postponing fatigue for a longer duration than an untrained individual.

Tenth, vigorous physical activity is an effective instrument of weight-reduction. Obesity, a result of sedentary life style and over eating, is the cause of numerous diseases especially those of heart. Mirkin and Hoffman noted that during exercise, the body mobilises fat into blood stream (cited by Kamlesh, 1997). Muscles use proportionately more fat and do not take as much sugar out of the blood
stream. The exercise turns fat into energy and builds muscles. Muscle is much heavier than fat. That is why the body loses inches before it loses pounds.

Finally, strenuous activity improves digestion and hastens evacuation process. Increased mobility in the intestinal tract may be due to the fact that exercise causes the body to release increased amount of magnesium into the intestinal tract. Normally in the case of ordinary persons, the digestion of a meal will take about twelve to twenty four hours. But in the case of sportspersons, especially in the case of marathon runners, a meal will pass through the digestive system in as little as four to six hours (Kamlesh, 1997).

PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

As for the psychological benefits, physical activity acts as a safety valve for the individuals to reduce their stress and tension which they experience in their routine life. The physical activity helps to divert and release their emotions and physical tensions, thereby averting psychosomatic disorders. It is for this reason that Sutherland and Copper (1990) regarded physical activity as a “development of defence mechanism”. By acting as a mental diversion outlet for stress and
tensions, physical activity saves the individual from emotional disturbances, thereby promoting his / her psychological well-being.

The benefits of physical activity also include positive changes in self-perception, improvement in self-confidence and awareness, and positive changes in mood. Even a moderate physical exercise has an impeccable effect on one’s self-esteem, self-image and mood. The competitive nature and involvement of group activity in sports have a boosting effect on the self-perception and spirit of the individuals and heighten their self-esteem and confidence levels and mental readiness to face the challenges in life.

PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

By contributing to the development of physical fitness and vitality and of mental faculty, sports facilitate the personality development in an individual. Personality is not a mere sum total of physical and mental traits but also of behavioural traits. By facilitating character development, sports contribute to the integration of personality. “Character”, says Jones, “is the sum total of attitudes and overt ways of behaving of individuals which are the correlatives of his regulative habits, developing values and volitional drives” (as quoted in Kamlesh,
1997). It is an integral part of culture. When the qualities of culture are acquired and the character is built up, the whole personality becomes cohesive and integrated.

Foundations for good character are laid in childhood. Every child shapes his / her character by learning things to be done. Neumann considers character as an “essentially a matter of action, the habitual performance of certain kinds of deeds rather than others and the only genuine way of learning how to do these deeds is to do them just as the only way to learn tennis is to play it ” (as quoted in Kamlesh, 1997). In his view, the qualities of character are not superimposed, but they result from what children do when they participate in various group formations. Sports arenas and playfields provide opportunities for the children to have group participation and to do a variety of performances to acquire qualities of character. Hussey claims that “Sport is basically a competitive activity. It involves a competition with others. Like any organised institutional activity, sport has a goal - success. The route to achieve this goal is competition” (as quoted in Vir, 1989). So the participants in any sport get embroiled in competition with one another in the sports arena. But for this competition, there will be no life in sport.
Human life itself is a competitive affair. But for the struggle against the hostile environment, man would not have survived on earth, nor would the civilizations have evolved. It is through competition that the individual and group march towards progress. It is the order of the day and it cannot be eliminated. As Russel remarked, "it is difficult to suppress competition completely without destroying individuality" (as quoted in Kamlesh, 1997):

Competition has a vital role to play in sports. After the skill learning stage and even during the play spells, individuals engage in competition by nature or design. Starting with the school intramurals, the sports competition system culminates in the Olympic Games and World Cup tournaments. It is because of this observable aspect that sport gains much awaited social recognition.

Competition keeps the participants in a highly motivated state making them do something more and better that spurs them to reach the goals of success. But the sports competitions are governed by rules and regulations. Only a fair play is expected of the participants, and winning at the competitions is allowed only under the observance of the rules of the game. The competition rules do not allow foul play, fraud, adoption of illicit and unethical means.
Reaching the goal in contravention of the norms of sports competitions is not at all allowed and tolerated. Both at the skill learning stage and during free play spells, the competitors are required to learn the competition rules and regulations and to act according to them in the sports competitions. This pre-act of going only by rules and regulations in sports competitions disciplines the individuals and moulds their character. It is keeping this aspect in view that Williams (1964) describes the gymnasium and playground as "laboratories where the standards such as 'Be honest', 'Be square' and fair play may continually be illustrated in the face of the instinctive impulse to personal and selfish action".

Sports competition alone does not have a role in character development. Sport involves co-operation besides competition. Many competitive sports, especially team games, involve a group effort, that is, team work. By participating in a team and working together with the team mates, an individual strives to achieve the success in the game. The success so achieved does not represent a personal achievement, but a group prestige. As the prospects of success are dependent upon the group effort in a competitive sport, every participant must have a co-operative spirit and develop a tendency to play in adjustment with
others, fellow feelings, sympathy, friendliness, earnestness, and confidence. So, one has to imbibe these qualities when one joins a sports team. These qualities build up the character and thereby develop the personality.

The co-operative spirit and the adjustment capacity acquired through team participation in sports serve as the facilitator for living in adjustment and harmony with others in the society at large. The training acquired in the sports arena provides capacity for the individual to live in adjustment with others. Adjustment with others is a sign of the matured personality.

The team participation helps not only to develop the social adjustment capacity but also to cultivate group consciousness. The experience of team participation promotes a sense of belonging to a group with strong identification. The individual cultivates the tendency to work in the interests of the group rather than personal interests which lose their importance. It is this fact that underlies the house system competitions which are in vogue in schools. The sense of belonging to a house not only enhances the spirit of team work but also drives the participants to act with an altruistic sense. It is to be noted here that when the personal interests give way to group interests and when the
personal success is not the goal but only the group prestige, then, the altruistic dimension strengthens the base character and structure of the personality.

NEED OF THE STUDY

However, in spite of sports activity being a factor in the promotion of physical vitality, mental vigour, and growth of personality, the state of affairs of the sports participation by youngsters has been a matter of concern for the sportspersons and sports lovers. Even in advanced countries like the United States, the picture is not encouraging. As observed by the Surgeon General of the US, "Only half of the U.S. young people (aged 12-21 years) regularly participate in vigorous physical activity" (USSDHHS, 1996, as quoted in Williams and Parker, 1999). It is needless to talk of the rest in the light of this observation.

Even though the youngsters studying at the university level have favourable sports climate and ample opportunities to participate in the sports events even at the Olympic level, their level of participation at the Olympic level has been a worrying factor for the sportspersons and sports zealots. Particularly in India, this has been a depressing factor.
While in case of the developed countries, it is the university boys and girls who win most of the medals in the Olympic Games and other international competitions. In India hardly are one or two university athletes fielded in the entire contingent.

For several years, the researcher has been involved in discussion with the university sports officers and coaches regarding the state of the university team standards. On several occasions the sports officers and coaches have commented that the extent of students’ sports participation and their number in the university selection trials have been declining year by year.

Yet, in the manner of unleashing a ray of hope for the sports activity, a certain percentage of university youths take part in the sports activity and save the sports culture from decay. Despite a significant percentage of students staying away from sports participation, this microscopic minority of students give a breather to sports activity and sustain it by way of their participation therein. In the manner of acknowledging the significant contribution made towards the sustenance and preservation of sports activity by such insignificant percentage of the sports participants in university, this study has been undertaken.
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to examine the sports participation of university athletes in terms of the factors associated therewith.

SELECTION OF VARIABLES

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Sports participation, like any other activity, is stimulated by two kinds of factors, one operating within and the other, outside the athletes, that is, internal and external factors. Both these factors, though appearing to belong to different sets, fall in a common category called socialization factors (Huang, 1991). As both factors are associated with the learning of sports roles which is a pre-requisite for sports participation, they are regarded as socialization factors in sports participation.

These two factors were included in the study not merely because they fall in a common category but also because they operate in conjunction with one another in influencing one’s sports participation. As the coverage of one factor in disregard to the other factor will not give a holistic idea about the sports activity of the athletes, this study included both factors as dependent variables.
INTERNAL FACTOR

ATTITUDE

Singer (1984), in his hypothesis on sustaining motivation in sports, has assumed that young people who are primarily internally motivated to learn a sport, continue with it not only for mere achievement pleasure, but also for enjoying an inner satisfaction and a feeling for self-fulfilment. Here it remains implied that under the said conditions of self-fulfilment, the attitude factor is generating an eustress in the accomplished athlete. So, the attitude factor was chosen as an internal factor in the study. It was sought to be examined by two parts, namely,

1) level of attitude, and
2) dimensions of attitude (values achieved through sports participation).

LEVEL OF ATTITUDE

Sport, being a body-cum-mind building activity, depends primarily on the level of attitude of the participants towards it. Depending on the level of the attitude, the extent of sports participation is formed. Considering this aspect, the level of attitude of the
respondents has been taken as a factor in sports participation and sought to be measured.

**DIMENSIONS OF ATTITUDE**

Attitude towards sports is determined by the kinds and quantum of benefits perceived from it. Courage, sportsmanship, leadership, co-operation, self-control, and sociability are important among them according to the jury of opinion. Hence while studying the level of attitude, these dimensions of attitude were also included in the study and sought to be measured.

**EXTERNAL FACTORS**

As the external factors, the following nine factors, identified by Yamaguchi (1984), were taken. They were:

1) Sports aptitude (perceived sport ability relative to others).

2) Early family social status (father's education, mother's education and prestige of father's occupation).

3) Parents (involvement and interest in sports and encouragement for primary and secondary involvement by father and mother).
4) Peers (involvement and interest in sports and encouragement for primary and secondary involvement by peers).

5) College/University - interpersonal aspects* (encouragement for primary and secondary involvement in sports by physical education directors, coaches, and other teachers).

6) College/University - structural aspects* (sports facilities, coaching and intra- and inter-collegiate competitions for youth favourite sports).

7) Community - interpersonal aspects (encouragement given by neighbours and coaches in the community for sports participation).

8) Community - structural aspects (sports club, sports association and non-sports association).

9) Primary sports involvement (frequency of formal competition, practice and training and informal participation in favourite sports).

The panel members (jury of opinion) who had active participation in sports and rich experience in teaching and coaching suggested two

* Yasuo Yamaguchi used the term 'School'. Considering the nature and subjects of this study, the term 'College/University' is used in its place here.
more factors, namely, prestige for sportspersons in the society (respect enjoyed by sportspersons for their achievement) and employment opportunities (job prospects available to outstanding sportspersons) in addition to the nine factors identified by Yamaguchi as the factors influencing the individuals to participate in sports. These two factors were also included in the set of external factors.

**INDEPENDENT VARIABLES**

Any factor influencing the behaviour or activity of a person is subject to the influence of the background characteristics of the person. In the case of sports activity also, the socialization factors, that is, attitude (internal factor) and external social factors are subject to the influence of the background characteristics of the athletes. Depending upon the variation in the background characteristics, the operation of the internal and external factors in relation to sports activity may vary. Hence, the investigator sought to measure the influence of the background characteristics of the athletes on the formation of attitude towards sports and the influence of the social factors in sports participation and for this purpose, the following socio-demographic characteristics of the athletes were taken as independent variables.
1) Gender,

2) Area of normal residence,

3) Social category,

4) Family income, and

5) Educational status of the family.

HYPOTHESES

Based on the identification of dependent and independent variables, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1) That the attitude of athletes towards sports is independent of their socio-demographic characteristics (gender, area of normal residence, social category, income group, and educational status of the family).

2) That the socio-demographic characteristics of the athletes do not influence their perception about the outcomes of sports participation (courage, sportsmanship, leadership, co-operation, self-control, and sociability).

3) That the sports participation influencing factors (sports aptitude, early family social status, parents,
peers, college/university - interpersonal aspects, college/university - structural aspects, community - interpersonal aspects, community - structural aspects, primary sports involvement, prestige for sportspersons in the society, and employment opportunities) are unrelated to the socio-demographic characteristics of the athletes.

DELIMITATIONS

1) This study was delimited to the investigation of sports participation of the university athletes in terms of the factors associated therewith.

2) This study was delimited to the internal and external factors.

3) As for the internal factors, the study was delimited to attitude; and the attitude was delimited to level and dimensions.

4) As for the external factors, the study was delimited to social factors identified by Yamaguchi (sports
aptitude, early family social status, parents, peers, college/university - interpersonal aspects, college/university - structural aspects, community - interpersonal aspects, community - structural aspects, and primary sports involvement), and by the jury of opinion (prestige for sportspersons in the society, and employment opportunities).

5) As for the socio-demographic characteristics of the athletes, the study was delimited to gender, area of normal residence, social category, income group and educational status of the family.

CONCEPTUAL AND FUNCTIONAL DEFINITIONS

Association - Connection with or influence on sports participation.

Factors - Facts or circumstances, etc. that help to produce or influence the result of sports participation.

Sports participation - Taking part in a sports activity upon formal induction.

University athlete - One who participates in an officially sponsored inter-university sports tournament.