



CAREER SECURITY OF INDIAN SPORTSPERSON

Cholina Shah

DG Khetan International School

Abstract

The Indian sports industry is gradually growing with many new schemes, competitions and are also encouraging sports other than just the mainstream ones but, there is still a lack of career security for the sportspersons. After retiring from playing sports, they face a lot of challenges in terms of finance, mental health and lack of education. Their career is vulnerable, and with less longevity compared to other professions. In India, the career security of sportspersons is overlooked which is why the young aspiring people tend to choose other careers over a sports career. In this study, we take a deep dive at what are the challenges that sportspersons face and how we can help them. The Delphi analysis was used to understand the personal experiences and choices of experts to get a closer look at various aspects of career security.

Keywords:Career security, finance, mental health, education, vulnerable, longevity and Delphi analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The national sports budget for 2022 is increased by ₹ 305.58 crores [1]. It is a 30% increase from the financial year 2021 to 2022. This increase in the budget allocation was for the flagship scheme -Khelo India. This scheme is an encouragement for sportspersons to perform well however, even if the players perform well internationally, the aftermath of this victory is not a glorious picture. The former cricketer Janardhan Navale was India's first test wicketkeeper has a tragic story [2]. There are two explanations for his last days, One claims that he spent his last days as a beggar on the Mumbai-Pune highway, while the other says that he was a watchman at a sugar factory in Pune. Such a tragic story makes people doubt choosing a sports career as it seems to have less financial security. The sportspeople don't have financial support from the government so they feel insecure about their career. The sports budget this year was increased but there was no increase in the provision for aspiring sportsmen. Why is it that despite having an increase in the budget, sportsmen feel that their career is at risk after retiring? Such a grim scenario in the sports field can be discouraging for the future players and I, who have been a national-level skater for 4 years, am also no different. People who work in the sports field face quite a lot of challenges and do not feel secure about their future. It is a major downside of being an Indian sportsperson. A career in the sports industry comes with a lot of vulnerabilities. A sportsperson is more prone to vulnerability than a normal person seeking a job..There are many times different reasons why a sports person's career becomes vulnerable. Most sportspeople have a limited span of a career. This is due to fitness issues. If a sportsperson gets severely injured or



takes a long break, their career becomes unstable. Furthermore, if their playable age is gone, they are usually prone to retire from sports early, but their future career opportunities are limited. Additionally, players are also vulnerable to sudden policy changes which can bring their careers to a halt. For example, DipaKarmakar, a bronze medalist in the 2014 commonwealth games in gymnastics, was identified as suspended by the International Gymnastics Federation on the grounds of lacking a mandatory license[3]. It is believed that after retiring, the sports industry doesn't look lucrative. Thus, discouraging future sportspersons to pursue this path actively. In this study, we are trying to understand the current state of the Indian sportspersons who retired and the struggles they face while and after retiring. Thus, discouraging future sportspersons to pursue this path actively

Theory

INDIAN NATIONAL BUDGET ALLOCATED TO SPORTS –Although the authorities have increased the sports budget under Khelo India, it is not sufficient to provide career security. The authorities have neither considered the career security of sportspersons nor have they allocated any funds in the Indian National Budget for the same [1]. Moreover, the government hasn't considered providing a structured ecosystem for the sports professionals to obtain a sustainable income option after retirement from the sports. Under the Khelo India scheme, the awards money was increased for the winning sportsmen. However, the monetary benefits received through awards and accolades are not sufficient drivers to keep the financial interests of the sports person in the long run. A major drawback of this budget is that there is no provision for sports preparation i.e. proper training and equipment for sportspersons. If they lack proper training and equipment, they are more vulnerable to injuries which can affect the longevity of their career. Rehabilitation for such sportspeople who retire due to physical injuries is not available. Thus, despite the budget increase, career security remains a prime concern whether it be a winning sportsperson or an injured sportsperson.

MENTAL HEALTH - Retiring from sports is like coming back after participating in a war. Sportspersons break their whole disciplined routine after retiring. They feel unconnected suddenly as they were so busy with sports before, that they don't know what to focus on now. They don't have any social connections with the people outside and don't know how to reconnect with them as they are very concentrated on sports. Sportspersons are known for their game. Their identity is based on their sports but after retirement, they lose their social identity. They lose what they were defined by. This is how their mental health takes a toll. With no social bonds, they don't know whom to trust. They lose their prime youth to sports. They do not have enough practice to get into a different profession as they have discharged their duties as a sportsperson.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS - Since they spend more time perfecting the skills they require in the game, they don't find time to learn other skills. Whether it be a renowned mainstream sport like cricket or any other sport, both have expressed concerns about lacking soft skills. Kapil Dev, the former captain of the Indian cricket team is an inspiration in every Indian's eyes but he struggled to get through the social barrier as he did not know English well[4]. In a recent interview, Kapil Dev revealed that he used to find a place to hide whenever Srinivas Venkataraghavan was around. In one of his interviews, Kapil Dev says, "I was very scared of Venkataraghavan. Firstly he only used to speak in English and secondly, we all know his anger.



Even when he was an umpire, he used to give not out in a way as if he was scolding the bowler. When I went to England in '79, he was captain, I used to find a place where he couldn't see me." Even though sportspersons do a commendable job, they are overlooked as they lack social skills. For their career to be secured they need to know social skills. Some soft skills which could help the sportspersons are - communication skills, ethics, organizational skills and networking skills. Sportspersons can use these skills to interact with the media or the public [5]. This will benefit them as they would become more approachable and would also attract sponsors' attention. Furthermore, having a degree in the sports field would open up career options even after retirement. Thus allowing the sportsperson to pursue their passion in a sustainable environment, mastering soft skills or having a proper education instead would give them more security as they would be better able to navigate their professional and social circles.

After analyzing these studies, it is vital to understand the sportspersons' personal experiences in terms of the educational, mental health and financial challenges they faced. It is important to analyze what happens to their life after retiring from playing sports as it will help make better educational and financial policy decisions to provide them with a sense of career security after retirement. This study aims to get an inside view of whether the career of an Indian sportsperson is secured and how we can help them.

Experimental

In this study, the Delphi analysis was used to try to understand and bridge the gap. The Delphi analysis is a research method which analyzes the opinion of a group of experts through interviews. Interviews of 5 experts were taken who have been in the non-cricketing sports field for a long time and now are professional coaches and trainers. Interviews of experts from sports other than cricket were taken to get a diverse opinion about aspects of career security in a non-commercial sport. A mix of those experts who have retired from playing sports and are only focusing on coaching as well as those who are still playing in championships while coaching simultaneously was taken to understand the long-term choices of players and how they can or cannot result in a secured career. All the experts have 5 to 20 years of experience and have played and trained at the national level. All experts have pursued higher education - from undergraduate to master's degree. Their income lies in between 20k to 30k. This survey is trying to analyze the challenges these experts have faced in terms of finance, mental health and education. After being in the sports industry for a long time, what were their aspirations and whether their career would be more secure if they had learned some other skills? The intention of asking these kinds of questions was to reveal the reality of career security by analyzing their personal experiences on the common factors of financial, mental and educational challenges they faced.

RESULT

FINANCE - About 60% of the experts were able to manage finances but still faced challenges like more working shifts, no fixed income, the fee structure of training institutions and other financial problems. Also, when asked about financial expectations from the government, most experts expect a better sports infrastructure in general. In addition, they did not receive any pensions from the government after retiring from playing sports.



MENTAL HEALTH - While all of the experts are happy with what they do currently, however when asked if they could have learned any other skill, 60% of the experts agree that they could have spared time to learn other skills to be more secure. When asked about the factors which made them quit sports their answers revealed that work pressure, higher education, job, income and overall skill development were some of the factors that lead them to this decision.

EDUCATION - 80% of the experts think that they could have spared time for education and sports. 40% of the experts said that there was a roadblock from universities and colleges to getting admission. When asked if they would want to pursue their education and have a better career instead of a sports career, all of them denied it and said that they would stick to sports. They are all passionate about sports but when asked if they feel secure enough about their career, 60% of them were feeling unsure.

DISCUSSION

In After exploring the personal experiences of the experts, here is what was found. In terms of financial factors, the main aspect was that the experts who were interviewed did not receive any pension or any kind of fund after and during retirement. No financial support by the government is given to the retiring sportsmen, which makes it unstable for the sportspersons to manage their finances in the long run. Furthermore, even after playing at the national level, the majority of the sportspersons could manage their finances with their career but faced problems like no fixed income. The analysis exposes that there is no secure amount of income as the fee structure of sports institutes is unorganised which makes their income unstable and their careers insecure. In terms of mental health, every expert agrees that they are currently happy with their work but most experts regret not saving time to learn any skill that would be useful to them. Some factors due to which they quit sports were how they received a lot of pressure from the work which made it stressful and rigid to work. In respect of education, Most of the experts think that taking more time out for education would help them now and that they could have better opportunities for a secured career with more education. They also retired from sports to pursue higher education to make their future more secure. Chasing a better and more secure job also made them retire from sports. The sports career wasn't lucrative enough as they had to work harder to earn an amount of money which they could have easily earned if they had chosen to pursue a desk job These instabilities and vulnerabilities were the reasons why the experts retired from sports. One of the major vulnerabilities was regarding the longevity of their sports career, one major injury would ruin their entire sports career. The sportspersons would need more stable education and framework practice to get a different secured job if they retire early. They all wanted to have their career only in sports when asked about what else they could have been. There is no hindrance in terms of passion for sports but later then they faced challenges in terms of career security. All these factors indicate that more steps need to be taken to make their careers stable after retirement.



CONCLUSION

In From this study, it can be concluded that the government should focus on the career security of the sportspersons and the sportspersons could always learn other skills to ameliorate their career and get better options after retiring from their career. It was found that after an early retirement from sports, the sportspersons have difficulties getting a new job. Moreover, they have problems socializing with people as their identity was based on their sports career which is now over. The study shows that more should be done to help the sportspersons so that they feel more secure to choose this career path and make their journey easier. The examples and analysis explain how the Indian sportsperson's career is not secured enough, making the next aspiring sportsmen think twice about choosing this career path. Awareness about the career security of sportsmen must be spread amongst the community to make people realize how unstable a career in the sports industry has become. To help them, the government must allocate funds to retired sportspersons. We need to bust the myths about this industry. A sports career doesn't seem quite sustainable and lucrative, but being mentally prepared for challenges in the financial, mental health and educational factors could support the sportsperson and make them alert about what to work on for having better longevity and security in their career.

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