



# PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF RETIREMENT ON ELITE SPORTS PERSONS.

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## Abstract

The present study was designed to gain a better understanding of the way in which the quality of the sport-career termination is quantitatively affected by athletic and non-athletic factors. A further objective of this study was to contribute and broaden the knowledge base on the athletic career termination process and endeavor to add new information to the existing body of knowledge on the career-ending process in sports. The present study is a sport-specific view of track and field athletes. Keeping the above points in view the present study was carried out in Bangalore with the objective to find out the effect of retirement on elite sports persons and their adjustment using appropriate measures. A total of 60 male retired sports persons with the age range of 50 to 65 years were taken for the study. Among them, 30 Elite sportspersons are from rural areas, and 30 Elite sportspersons from urban areas who were into competitive sports were taken randomly from the Bangalore district. The obtained results were analyzed using suitable statistical measures and the results were discussed in this paper.

**KEYWORDS:** Sports Career Termination, Elite Sports, Athletic Career Termination, and Non-Athletic Career Termination.

## Introduction

Sports career termination is a transition that requires former athletes' adjustment in occupational, financial, psychological, and social spheres of life. Typically

high-level athletes retire from sports due to factors such as de-selection, new interests, psychological fatigue, difficulties with the coaching staff, declining results, injuries/health problems, a sense of accomplishment, new professional priorities, and interrelationships within their family.

These varied reasons reflect different types of sports career (SC) termination, such as drop-out (premature SC termination before athletes feel they have reached their full potential), burnout (feelings of emotional exhaustion leading to the inability to continue in sport), or attrition (a slower process of physical and psychological exhaustion). Although SC termination offers a challenge for the re-evaluation of one's future and the opportunity to set new goals, a number of studies show that retiring athletes encounter problems and conflicts, sometimes in a traumatic way. SC termination can be experienced as a positive or negative crisis transition.

However, there are only a few professional structures to help athletes work through and cope with their existing dilemmas posed by career termination. Sport psychologists can help athletes integrate the preparation of their post-athletic career into the planning processes during the SC and provide consultation during and after termination. Successful SC termination demands certain processes, such as seeking personal autonomy during the athletic career and actively preparing and thinking about disinvestment, separation, and reinvestment.

The necessity for a quick adaptation to the status of a former athlete and the formation of a new social status can be based on a new professional career. Thus, reconstruction of the self and reformation of self-esteem can be realized through other activities unconnected with the sport.

These changes can be used as tools for coping with identity problems and contributing to the former athlete's satisfaction and personal growth. A large number of retired athletes believe that the ability to identify transferable skills (being competitive, setting new goals, etc.) enabled them to gain more confidence in their abilities to find success in other careers.

Other important aspects of athletes' retirement are exercise addiction, physical transformations, and bodily preoccupation. The change from intensive physical activity to less or no activity at all may preoccupy athletes because of the physical and psychological transformations, they experience such as gaining weight, the loss of muscular mass, or increased anxiety. The excellent physical condition becomes a nostalgic memory affecting the athlete's identity. Questions such as "Who am I?" and "What am I doing now?" often arise during this period of identity wavering. Former athletes who continue to be physically active feel more comfortable than those who become sedentary.

### **Problem:**

To study the Psychological effect of retirement on elite sports persons.

### **Objectives:**

1. To assess the sports career termination among elite sports persons.
2. To compare the effect of sports career termination among rural sports persons and urban sports persons.

### **Hypothesis:**

H1 Sports career termination has a greater effect on Urban sports persons than on rural sports persons.

### **Research Design:**

Between-group research design is used. Operational Definitions

**Sports:** It is all forms of usually competitive physical activity or games which through casual or organized participation, aim to use, maintain or improve physical ability and skill while providing enjoyment to participants and in some cases, entertainment for spectators. **Elite sportspersons:** A person who is currently or has previously competed as a varsity player a professional player or a national or international level player. Elite sportspersons are at increased risk of injury.

**Retirement:** It is the point where a person stops employment completely.

**Sports retirement:** Moving out of high-performance sports is sports retirement

### **Sampling:**

The data was collected from a sample of 60 elite sports persons who come under the age group of 40 to 59. Among them, 30 sportspersons were from rural backgrounds and the other 30 sportspersons were from urban backgrounds.

**Variables:****Independent variable:** Sports participation**Dependent variable:** Sports career termination.**Measures:**

1. A detailed interview schedule is prepared to collect the demographic details of the subjects.
2. Cecic - Erpic's (2000) Sports Career Termination Questionnaire II (SCTQII).

**Methodology:**

In order to collect data purposive sampling method was used. The sample of the study consisted of 60 elite sportspersons who were retired from competitive sports. Among them, 30 sports persons were from rural areas and 30 were from urban areas. To collect necessary information for this study, an investigator specially designed interview schedule was used along with Sports Career Termination Questionnaire II developed by Cecic - Erpic. The questionnaire

consisted of biographical information, Questions related to life During the Elite – Sports Career, Sports career termination, General Mental and emotional state during Sports Career Termination, and Counselling for Retiring and Retrospect were the sub-scales used in this questionnaire. The tool has both positive and negative items. In order to test the hypotheses, the investigator applied a t-test.

**Analysis of Results and Discussions:**

The present study intends to examine the difficulties faced by sports career termination among rural sports persons and urban sports persons who have participated in competitive sports at the state and national levels.

**Table-I shows the mean, standard, and t- ratio among rural and urban sportspersons**

	N	MEAN	STD DEVIATION	t- ratio
<b>Rural Sports persons</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>60.86</b>	<b>9.073</b>	
<b>Urban Sports Persons</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>72.90</b>	<b>12.72</b>	<b>4.12**</b>

\*\* = $p < 0.01$ ; \* = $p < 0.05$

It is observed from the above table that t- the value of 4.12 was found significant at 0.01 levels. Based on the obtained results it can be observed that the elite sports persons from the rural area have less difficulty in sports career termination when compared with the sports person who is in urban areas.

The probable reasons may be that the sports persons in rural areas get into some or the other work which includes individual's physical, mental social involvement and also involvement in work, certain extent reduces their financial burden. But in urban areas, most of the sports persons will become ideal and the majority won't be actively involved in work-related activity.

**Limitation:**

1. Sample was restricted to only males and was chosen from Karnataka.
2. Since the sample was small the study can't be generalized.
3. The study was restricted only to state and National level players. It could have been including higher level participation also.

**Suggestions:**

1. Successfully passing through the stage of SC termination depends on athletes adopting more elaborate and active ways of coping. Athletes are encouraged to experience areas outside of sport where their partners and friends consider them through other aspects and qualities than those linked to their athletic career.
2. Former athletes should remain physically active to have a healthy lifestyle and provide A positive image of retired athletes.
3. The responsibility of parents and coaches includes assuming and facilitating the passage from dependence to autonomy. Reinvestment might be facilitated through a supportive environment (family, work, social networks) that will allow the former athlete to switch roles, e.g. parenthood, new professional identity.
4. Sports psychologists should be trained to help athletes before, during, and after SC termination. Tools such as personal, in-depth interviews and questionnaires on SC termination are useful in detecting and evaluating the specific needs of retiring athletes in order to create and provide services.
- 5.. A smooth career transition requires the sport psychologist to operate a) individual sessions allowing the analysis of personal issues and conflicts and those dealing with career termination in particular; b) workshops with future and/or present retired athletes in order to develop capacities for sharing questions and difficulties.
6. Sport psychology consultants are needed to help athletes identify their transferable skills and to teach athletes how to use these skills in non-sport domains.
7. Coaches, managers, and sports organizations should be supportive of a post-athletic career. The following types of services are useful in preparing for a positive transition to life after SC: information on job and educational opportunities, partnerships with sponsors, providing professional training services, athletes (active and retired) participating in decision-making committees.

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