

Exploring South Korean Sports Organizations' Future Initiatives
for Early Retirement of Basketball Student Athletes

by
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Abstract

Introduction: Over 90 percent of basketball student athletes in South Korea retire early before they reach the elite level. After their early retirement, they struggle to adapt to their school lives, and to live the rest of their lives as non-student athletes. The purpose of this study was to explore their early retirement and Korean sport organizations' future initiatives for the early retirement through introducing the Developmental Model of Sport Participation ([DMSP] Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2007). **Methods:** Four early-retired student athlete and two employees at sport organizations related to basketball student athletes were recruited to participate in semi-structured interviews. Collected data were analyzed by using Giorgi (1985)'s process. To increase credibility, this study utilized several techniques which were member checking, investigator triangulation, and data source triangulation. **Results:** Participants of early-retired basketball student athletes stated that they felt negative emotions such as sorrow, anger, and regret about their early retirement at the time they left basketball. Korean sport system tended to hinder student athletes from academics. Therefore, they commonly neglected academics and focused only on the sport during student athlete years. As a result, they struggled to catch up in classes at their universities, and to look for jobs after their retirement. To improve the phenomenon, the DMSP could positively influence their retirement, but it would not be compatible with current sport system. **Conclusion:** All participants struggled to adapt to non-student athlete's life in university. They also regretted neglecting academics during their student athlete years. The DMSP could be one example for Korean new sport system, and influence to create new pathway to become elite basketball athletes. It could positively impact to early retirement among Korean student athletes.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Heejun Lim. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Exploring South Korean Sports Organizations’ Future Initiatives for Early Retirement of Basketball Student Athletes”, 00065227, June 20, 2016.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The South Korean government's elite sports policy has aimed to foster great elite athletes and enhance national competitiveness through excellent achievement at international competitions (Yu, 2005). Although the policy has contributed to outstanding results at international competitions, such as the Summer / Winter Olympics and Football World Cup, the policy has created an environment where few student athletes can succeed as elite athletes, and a number of student athletes are required to switch from athletic programs to non-athletic programs in schools (Lee, Huh, & Ryu, 2011). The policy also enabled Korean student athletes to enter prestigious universities or colleges with a low Grade Point Average (GPA), based on their successes in tournaments or competitions (Yu, 2005). This policy which forces them to achieve outstanding results in sports produced a stressful, results-oriented environment in Korea (Yim, Ryu, & Lee, 2010). Both the policy and the social environment prompt many student athletes to specialize in one sport and to regard academics as unnecessary for their athletic careers (Song, Eom, & Shin, 2010). This negatively affects school life and non-athletic careers after they retire early (Lim & Lee, 2002).

This is a widespread problem, given that over 90% of the Korean student athletes retire early during their high school or university years (Lee, Huh, & Ryu, 2011). In the case of Korean basketball, for instance, 2,351 basketball student athletes (1,567 males and 784 females) from elementary school to university competed at the elite level (Korea Olympic Committee, 2016). However, Korean professional basketball teams has drafted a small number of collegiate basketball athletes (e.g., 172 players competed in the Korea Basketball League (KBL) in the 2015 – 2016 season) (Korean Basketball League, 2015). Although each team has a chance to select a maximum of four domestic players per year, they declined to do so. For example, none

of the teams had selected any collegiate players in the last (fourth) round of the draft for last three years. A few teams have not even selected any players in second, third, and fourth rounds. Only a small number of collegiate players were drafted by each team per year (Korean Basketball League, 2015 October 26), because each team preferentially chooses great or star players at the first or second round, and relinquishes their right to draft players due to a lack of budgets or enough players in their teams. Specifically, the Korean professional basketball teams drafted 22 players in 2013, 21 players in 2014, and 22 players in 2015, respectively; that averaged out to 21.6 players per year during the three-year period (Korean Basketball League, 2013; 2014; 2015).

Due to the competitiveness to enter universities (as student athletes) and professional basketball teams, the Korean basketball system forces student athletes to specialize in one sport and focus only on the sport, beginning at a young age (Song et al., 2010). They focus only on sport-related practices, skills, and competitions in order to achieve successful results in their athletic career (Lim & Lee, 2002). For example, most Korean student athletes are initiated into a sport between grades 3 and 7 (Han, Chung, & Seo, 2010). The Developmental Model of Sport Participation ([DMSP] Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2007) refers to this process as early specialization; it entails a large amount of training and practice and a much smaller amount of enjoyment or fun (deliberate practice). There is some controversy as to how valuable early specialization is. One study has argued that it is an appropriate pathway to becoming an elite athlete. It is impossible, the authors suggest, that student athletes who engage in one sport after puberty can surpass student athletes who were specialized from a very young age (Wall & Côté, 2007). However, another study has found that early specialization is unnecessary to become an

elite athlete, and that it involves several negative implications both physically and socio-psychologically for students and elite athletes (Côté et al., 2007).

In particular, engaging in one sport and a large amount of training from a very young age tends to limit long-term participation in elite sports for student and elite athletes (Butcher, Lindner, & Johns, 2002). Research has suggested that a lack of fun or enjoyment in training (practice) is a major reason that student athletes retire early or switch their athletic careers to non-athletic careers (Wall & Côté, 2007). To avoid the negative implications of early specialization, Côté et al. (2007) provided another pathway to become elite athletes through the DMSP. The model suggested that children should be involved and participate in a variety of sports or physical activities rather than focusing on one sport at a young age. Moreover, participating in a variety of sports should be enjoyable, and should not require a large amount of sport-specific skills training. This other pathway does allow for specialization, but delays it until the athlete is older (15-18 years old). These suggestions provide another means for student athletes to become elite athletes while avoiding the physically and socio-psychologically negative implications of early specialization. To date, however, this approach has not been widely adopted in Korea. As a consequence, Korean student athletes spend most of their time on training and practicing to develop their sports ability or competence (Sung et al., 2014).

Another key consequence of these pressures is that Korean student athletes often, whether willingly or unwillingly, retire at a young age. One study argues that the reasons for Korean student athletes' early retirement stem from a loss of interest, violence from coaches and peers, over-training, the stresses of training and competition, and both athletic and non-athletic career aspirations (Han, 2005). Another study critically reviewed the early retirement of Korean student athletes and also concluded that they retire early due to hard training, injuries, future

career aspirations, a lack of enjoyment/ fun / interest, stresses of training and / or competition, issues with peers and coaches, and a lack of study time (Lim, Lee, Washington, and Yi, 2016). The reasons for early retirement among Korean student athletes stem directly from the negative implications of early specialization (Lim et al., 2016).

In Addition, Korean student athletes consider sports as their job or everything in their life. They decide to become elite athletes when they initiative sports as student athletes at a young age. Students who participate in recreational sports cannot be registered in Korea. Therefore, if they could not achieve reaching an elite level, they feel that they are failure or unsuccessful themselves (Yim et al., 2010). Korean student athletes and regular students' life patterns are totally different. Because student athletes enable to enter universities with a low GPA, it may be challenging to compete with regular students (who commonly focus on academics) to enter universities or to find jobs after their retirement. Switching from athletic program to non-athletic program is regarded as retirement in Korean context. A number of student athletes retired and switch their career during student years. Therefore, one of previous studies about early retirement among Korean student athletes utilized the term 'early retirement' due to the Korea's unique elite sport system, (Lim et al., 2016)

As a result, the Korean elite sports system tends to hinder athletes from learning basic academics in schools because it produces a stressful, results-oriented environment (Yim et al., 2010). One study recently argued that the government policy for Korean student athletes that focuses only on achievement in their athletic careers also influences Korean student athletes' physical and / or psychological health, and quality of life (Yim et al., 2010). In addition, after their early retirement, they may often struggle to engage in their school life and to adapt to a non-athletic career (Lim & Lee, 2002). They may also experience a sense of alienation among

peers (regular students) and / or struggle to participate and succeed in academics (Choi, Lim, & Kwon, 2008). In severe cases, the phenomenon may result in physical and/or psychological health problems that affect student athletes over their non-athletic careers, or even their entire life (Yim et al., 2010).

In light of these challenges, Korea Olympic Committee (KOC) and Korean Council of Sports for All are currently being merged under the National Sports Promotion Act, which is intended to connect elite and recreational sports, and to improve the entire Korean sports system (Jung, 2015). The Korean Basketball Association (KBA) is one of the organizations under the KOC that participated in the initiative to improve the sports environment for student athletes. There are a number of connections between the DMSP and both (1) the early retirement of Korean athletes, and (2) the merging of these organizations. First, one study found that the reasons for Korean student athletes' early retirement correspond closely with the negative implications of early specialization presented from the DMSP (Lim et al., 2016). Second, the organizations' efforts to improve the Korean sports system seek to combine both recreational and elite sports in the system. Their endeavor coincides exactly with the DMSP (Lim et al., 2016). One study suggested that applying the Development Model of Sport Participation to Korean sports system could be an initiative for Korea's new sports system (Lim et al., 2016). However, the study also found that neither Korean research nor the two organizations have addressed any athlete developmental model for Korean student and elite athletes (Lim et al., 2016).

Therefore, the present study explores the organizations' consolidation and their future initiatives for Korean basketball student athletes' retirement. The purpose of this study is to determine 1) *how* and *why* the KOC and KBA could impact the negative effects of basketball student athletes' early retirement, and 2) the feasibility of applying the Developmental Model of

Sport Participation to the Korean student / elite sports system. Therefore, this study focuses on 1) student athletes who retired during university years and experienced as student athletes at least five years of experience as student athletes, and 2) employees / staff related to basketball student athletes at sports organizations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study explores the Korean Olympic Committee and Korean Basketball Association's future initiatives for early retirement of basketball student athletes. To put this phenomenon in context, the following sections describe Korean youth and collegiate basketball, the KOC, and KBA. They also review Korean basketball student athletes' early retirement.

Youth and Collegiate Basketball in South Korea

In 2015, 2,351 basketball student athletes (1,567 males and 784 females) competed at an elite level in South Korea: 704 (398 males and 306 females) in elementary schools, 701 (474 males and 227 females) in junior high schools, 537 (382 males and 155 females) in high schools, and 409 (313 males and 96 females) in universities or colleges (Korea Olympic Committee, 2016). These basketball student athletes from elementary schools to universities were registered with both the KBA and the KOC as student athletes. In addition, 59 elementary school, 56 junior high school, 51 high school, and 30 university or college basketball teams joined the KOC and KBA as elite basketball teams in 2015 (Korea Olympic Committee, 2016). Korean sport organizations distinguish elite basketball from recreational basketball, having regarded them for several decades as different kinds of sports (recreational sports are managed by the Korean Council of Sports for All). Korean elite basketball still has its own tournament and leagues in which only registered student athletes can participate and compete.

Korean student athlete development is distinguished by unique aspects derived from the sports culture surrounding Korean elite athletes (Lim & Lee, 2002). Korean student athletes are trained differently than those involved in club sports in Europe or school sports in the United States and Japan. For example, Japanese student athletes are trained within the school sports system. Junior high and high school student athletes in Japan account for 74% and 49%

respectively. In addition, 7,400,000 students, or 58.8% of high school students in the United States, competed in sports as student athletes in the 2007 - 2008 season. They play sports and study simultaneously, which means that there are no differences between student athletes and regular students in the two different countries (Han, Chung, & Seo, 2010).

However, the Korean sport system is unique compared to those in these two countries. National policy on elite student athletes allows them to enter schools irrespective of their academic grades and continue to develop their athletic careers. As a consequence, student athletes in Korea consider themselves to be athletes, not students (Song, Eom, & Shin, 2010). Almost all Korean student athletes aim at being professional or elite athletes after they graduate from university or college (Yoon & Lee, 2002). Therefore, schools are regarded as places where they can continue their athletic careers, and they feel that sport is only thing that they need to focus during school years (Yu, 2005); sports, moreover, are often their only means to enter universities or colleges, and to fulfill their dreams (Song, Eom, & Shin, 2010).

The athletes themselves are not alone in these views. One study found that a number of coaches also focus only on athletic results. They tend to direct student athletes to undertake intense training because coaches' salary and promotion are decided depending on their results at tournaments or leagues (Kim & Choi, 2007). In addition, because student athletes participate in several tournaments rather than one league per year, they might not get adequate result. These circumstances often prompt them to focus only on practice or training, and therefore to lose fun, enjoyment, and motivation, experience stresses and injuries, feel pressure to succeed, and lack free and study time (Lim et al., 2016).

This unique aspect is commonly involved in the Korean basketball domain. According to the KBA web site, from the elementary to the high school years, basketball student athletes

commonly participate in five to seven city or national basketball tournaments per year. These tournaments are held for at least three days and at most a week consecutively during both weekdays and weekends. If they compete in tournaments in other cities on weekdays, they cannot go to school and need to stay for a few days in the city where tournaments are held (Korean Basketball Association, n.d.). Collegiate athletes also compete at tournaments in the same way. One of the leagues, however, holds games at their universities (home and away games) and continues for seven months (Korean Basketball Association, n.d.).

To be an elite athlete in Korea, student athletes need to achieve success in their athletic careers; this allows them to enter prestigious universities, where they often have a better chance to proceed to professional basketball teams. They do not need to meet any Grade Point Average (GPA) requirement to enter the universities (Yu, 2005). Therefore, triumphalism commonly pervades student athletes' sports environments. Focusing only on practice / training basketball skills and competing at tournaments or leagues on weekdays are common in student athletes' sports in Korea (song et al., 2010).

Korean Basketball Organizations

Korea's youth and collegiate basketball system is managed by the Korean Basketball Association (KBA), which is supervised by the Korean Olympic Committee (KOC). This section will describe these organizations and the Korean Basketball League (KBL).

The Korean Olympic Committee (KOC) operates the country's elite student basketball system, which includes all student athletes specializing in basketball (excluding professional basketball players). The KOC represents Korea on the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), the Federation Internationale du Sport Universitaire (FISU), the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) and so on (Korea Olympic

Committee, n.d.). The KOC also promotes amateur sports. According to the KOC's official website, the major purposes of the KOC are to 1) popularize sports and physical activities, 2) promote sports and physical activities in schools and recreational sports, and 3) enhance national prestige through training elite athletes and succeeding at international competitions. Overall, the KOC ultimately aims at encouraging an international relationship through sports (Korea Olympic Committee, n.d.).

The Korean Basketball Association (KBA), which is governed by the KOC, supervises and operates Korean student athlete basketball tournaments and leagues ranging from those involving elementary schools to those based in universities (and colleges). The purpose of the KBA is to 1) promote children's / youth basketball, 2) improve the level of quality by developing the skills of student athletes and coaches, 3) strengthen competitiveness at a variety of international basketball competitions, 4) establish a long-term master plan and new basketball paradigm, and 5) enhance national physical fitness by promoting recreational basketball (Korean Basketball Association, n.d.).

As of the 2015 – 2016 season, the *Korean Basketball League (KBL)* included 10 professional basketball teams and 192 players (172 domestic players and 20 foreign [imported] players) who competed during that athletic season (Korean Basketball League, n.d.). This professional basketball organization was founded in 1997. A major purpose of the KBL is to promote sports and contribute to cultural development, providing an opportunity for recreational activities and creating a healthy society through the dissemination of basketball. The KBL also has a variety of business divisions to achieve its goals: 1) organizing the league, 2) building international relationship, 3) researching and studying basketball techniques or skills, 4) training and qualifying athletes, referees, coaches, and staff (operators), 5) running welfare projects for

retired players, 6) publishing books and magazines about basketball, 7) disseminating basketball through media, 8) testing and approving basketball facilities and materials, and 9) supporting the business objectives of the KBA and KBL (Korean Basketball League, n.d.).

Early Specialization and Early Retirement

The Korean basketball system forces student athletes to specialize and train hard from a young age (Song et al., 2010). They are initiated into one type of sport at a young age and focus only on sport-related practices, skills and competitions in order to achieve successful results in their athletic career (Lim & Lee, 2002). Most Korean student athletes are engaged in one specific sport between grades 3 and 7 (Han et al., 2010). One study examined the number of training / practice days for Korean student athletes. It found that 42.3% (elementary school), 55.2% (junior high), and 79.5% (high school) of Korean student athletes train for sports seven days per week (Sung et al., 2014). They spend an average of four hours 44 minutes per day (29 hours 36 minutes per week) during the semester, and seven hours seven minutes per day (42 hours 52 minutes per week) during the summer /winter break (Sung et al., 2014). As a result, the development pattern of Korean student athletes seems very similar to the early specialization pathway described in the DMSP (see below; Lim et al., 2016). In addition, the major reasons for Korean student athletes' early retirement are closely associated with the negative implications of early specialization (Lim et al., 2016)

Implications of Korean Student Athletes' Early Retirement

Early retirement of Korean student athletes is a widespread problem, given that over 90% of Korean student athletes retire early and switch from an athletic program to a non-athletic program during their high school or university years (Lee et al., 2011). They can enter prestigious universities with a low GPA, based solely on excellent results in athletic competitions

(Yu, 2005). It also tends to hinder them from learning basic academics in schools due to a stressful results-oriented environment in student athlete's context (Yim et al., 2010). According to Han et al. (2010), 48.8% and 44.4% of student athletes retire early from sports in grades 6 and 12 respectively; 15 to 30% of them retire early between grade 7 and 11. Once the student athletes enter university or college, 40% of them cease playing sports. One study recently argued that the government policy for Korean student athletes focuses only on achievements in their athletic careers, and also influences Korean student athletes' physical and / or psychological health, and quality of life (Yim et al., 2010). These experiences cause over-training, injuries, a loss of fun/enjoyment, stress resulting from practices and competitions, pressure to succeed, and a lack of free and study time (Yu, 2005). As a consequence, many Korean student athletes retire early from their athletic careers due to a loss of fun/enjoyment, physical violence, high-pressure practice, stresses of practice and competition, and problems with both athletic and non-athletic careers (Han, Chung, & Seo, 2010).

Suggested Development Plans for Early-Retired Student Athletes

Korean studies of student athletes' early retirement have suggested a variety of development plans; these fall into three categories. Authors recommend that schools (teachers) should either 1) teach student athletes academically, 2) manage and support them after they retire early, or 3) develop and improve their draft systems (Lim et al., 2016). However, the development plans are limited in addressing the negative implications of early specialization, which include a large amount of practices, injuries, a loss of fun / enjoyment / motivation, and a lack of free / study time (Lim et al., 2016). Plans must take into account the fact that the early retirement of Korean student athletes might derive from early specialization, which may lead to a large amount of deliberate practice, a loss of fun/enjoyment, and physically / socio-psychologically

negative implications (Wiersma, 2000). Therefore, instituting the DMSP and postponing specialization may positively influence Korean student athletes' decisions to avoid early retirement (Lim et al., 2016).

The Developmental Model of Sport Participation

Côté et al. (2007) expanded on their earlier studies to propose a clearer and more detailed version of the DMSP (Figure 1). The DMSP provides a conceptual framework for sport participation patterns among children and adolescents. The model is based on extensive research and interviews with athletes, and provides an overview of various patterns of development for children and adolescents in sports. The model indicates three types of sport participation patterns among young people. These pathways are defined in part by the concepts of deliberate play, deliberate practice and sampling. *Deliberate play* refers to loosely structured activities that provide a significant amount of enjoyment and promote participation in sports or physical activities. During deliberate play, children / adolescents generally modify the rule and / or equipment and operate the activity (such as street hockey and pick-up basketball) themselves (Strachan, MacDonald, Fraser-Thomas, & Côté, 2008).

By contrast, *deliberate practice* has specific rules and boundaries. It also often includes adults' supervision of the activities, which do not provide inherent enjoyment or fun (Strachan et al., 2008). The original theoretical framework for deliberate practice was derived from Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer's study (1993), which focused on expert violinists and pianists. They argued that deliberate practice is the most effective way to improve performance. Such practice is challenging, effortful, and inherently unenjoyable; it includes repetition and feedback, but excludes immediate rewards (Ericsson, 2003, 2007, 2008). The theoretical framework was designed to improve individual performance and assist them in attaining expertise. One study

argued that experts also viewed deliberate practice as more relevant to improving performance, more effortful, and less enjoyable (Coughlan, Williams, McRobert, & Ford, 2014).

A third type of activity, *sampling* (among six- to 12-year-olds), occurs when children and adolescents participate in a variety of different sports as opposed to participating in only one sport (Strachan et al., 2008). The primary goals of the sampling stage are the enjoyment and health of the athletes. These years provide positive physical and psychological benefits through

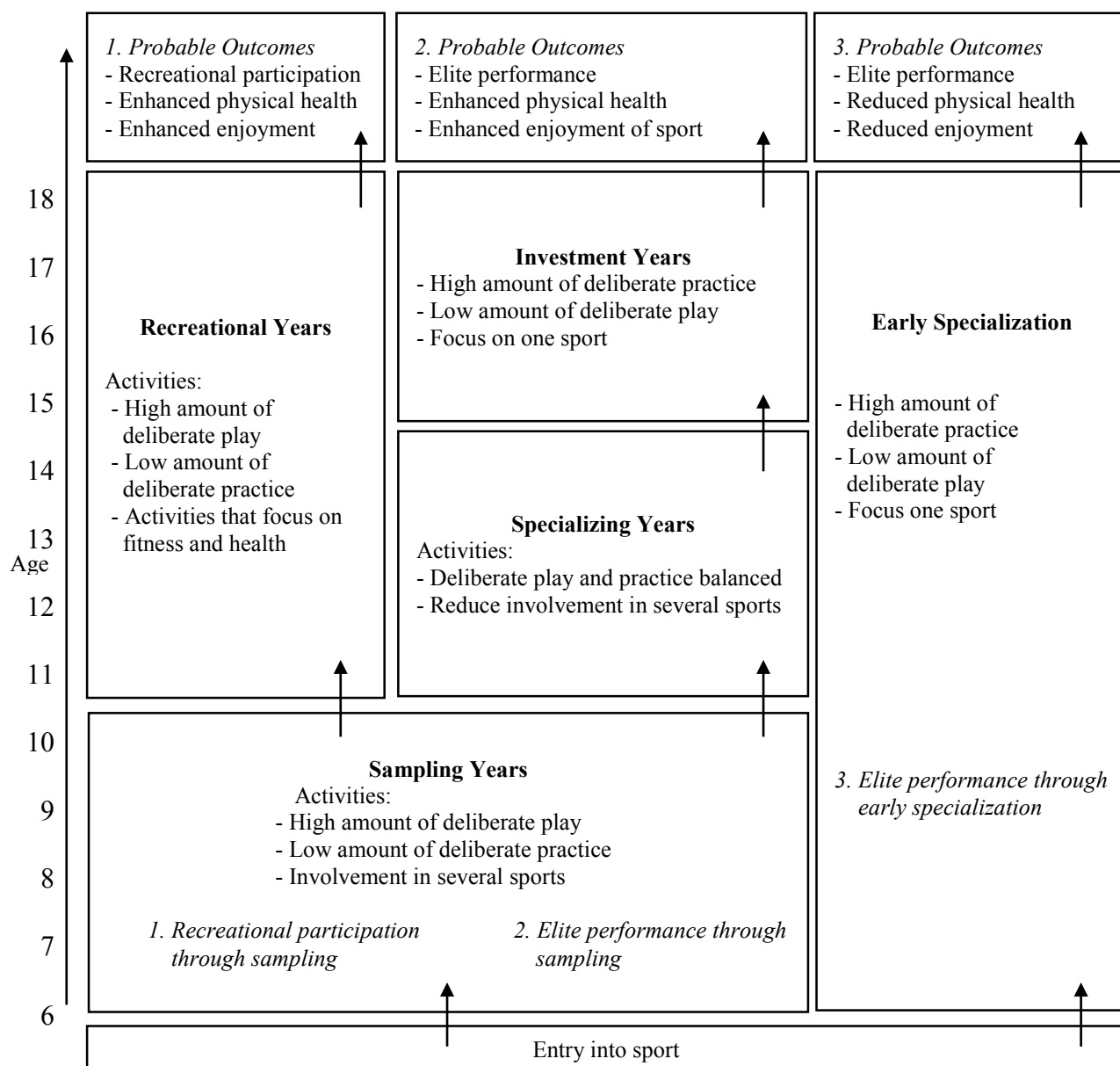


Figure 1. The Developmental Model of Sport Participation

participation in a variety of sports, a large amount of deliberate play, and less deliberate practice (Côté et al., 2007). In addition, this stage automatically provides an opportunity for fun/enjoyment through a variety of sport/activities, positive motivation, and the acquisition of the physical literacy that is fundamental to all kinds of sports (Côté et al., 2007).

Based broadly on these activity types, the DMSP (Côté et al., 2007) identifies three possible pathways for young athletes: one involving recreational participation and two involving elite performance. Elite athletes in Korea normally follow *the third pathway (3. probable outcome in the figure 1)*, which involves early specialization, and has the following probable outcomes: elite performance, decreased physical health and enjoyment. It encompasses a large amount of deliberate practice, a small amount of deliberate play, and a focus on one sport. One study argued that this pathway is crucial for students to become elite athletes. It is impossible, the authors suggested, that student athletes who initiate one sport after puberty can surpass student athletes who are specialized from a very young age (Wall & Côté, 2007).

However, other research has found that early specialization is unnecessary to become an elite athlete, and involves several negative implications both physically and socio-psychologically for students and elite athletes (Côté et al., 2007). This suggests that *the second pathway (2. probable outcome in the figure 1)*, which involves sampling, specializing, and investment years, may also lead to elite performance, but with enhanced physical health and enjoyment of the sports. After the sampling years, students choose either to specialize or to play sports recreationally. The specializing years, around 11 to 12 years old, aim to balance deliberate play and practice, and to reduce involvement in several sports. This stage is a part of the transition to becoming an elite athlete, but still includes adequate amounts of deliberate play and practice. Following the specializing years, students enter the investment years – that is, the years

in which they [explain] – around the age of 14. The components of the investment years match exactly those of the early specialization years, encompassing a high amount of deliberate practice, a low amount of deliberate practice, and a focus on one sport. However, a number of studies have proven that early specialization is not necessary to become elite athletes in some sport domains, and student athletes can become elite athletes through the second pathway (Côté et al., 2007).

Finally, students who follow *the first pathway (1. probable outcome in the figure 1)* can continue to play sports recreationally after the sampling years. In addition, students in any period of the other paths, such as the early specialization and investment years, can move to this pathway due to injuries or other reasons, and may continue to play sports recreationally. However, students who play in the recreational years cannot become elite athletes in the early specialization, specialization, and investment years.

The Korean Government's Development Plans

In light of these challenges, the Korean government is trying to develop policies for student athletes, such as forcing them to practice after school, to participate in competitions (e.g., leagues or tournaments) during weekends, and to participate in all of their academic courses (Jung, 2015). However, these are recommendations, not policies or laws. They are also inconsistent with the environment that prevails in the Korean basketball system. For instance, basketball coaches primarily want their student athletes to achieve outstanding results in their athletic careers, not an excellent GPA at school. This is not surprising, given that the accomplishments of student athletes may influence the salaries their coaches are paid, and may even determine whether they keep their positions (Lim et al., 2016).

In addition, two different sports organizations, the KOC, which administers sports for

student and elite athletes, and the Korean Council of Sports for All, are currently being merged under the terms of the National Sports Promotion Act, which seeks to improve the existing sports system (Jung, 2015). As a result, the Korean government is currently endeavoring to change the existing system into an advanced elite sports system focused on encouraging sports that all Korean citizens can easily enjoy (Jung, 2015). The new system may increase all Korean children's and adolescents' participation in sports, such as club sports and sports leagues in and/or out of school. Consequently, it may positively influence a number of student and elite athletes (Jung, 2015). In light of the Korean government's endeavor, one study suggested that the government should support student athletes before they retire by establishing a developmental model of sport participation that is applicable to the Korean elite sport environment (Lim et al., 2016).

Summary and Research Questions

Early specialization often entails negative implications. A systematic review of the literature found that the major reason for Korean student athletes' early retirement was the negative implications derived from early specialization (Lim et al., 2016). The review suggested that the sport system for Korean student athletes also needs to institute a pathway which can postpone specialization in one sport. In addition, two Korean organizations are currently combining to improve the entire sport system. The DMSP may be used to support a new sports system that may be practical to develop in light of the consolidation of the two organizations (Lim et al., 2016). Therefore, this study's questions are as follows:

1. Why has the existing sports system endured for several decades?
 - a. Were there any opportunities to change it?
 - b. Were there any barriers to changing it?

2. How and why should the organizations (related to student athlete basketball) change the sports system?
 - a. How and why could the new sports system reduce the negative implications of early retirement by Korean student athletes?
3. Would the DMSP be applicable to the new Korean sports system?
 - a. If it would not, what would the barriers be to instituting the DMSP?
 - b. If it would, how and why would the DMSP affect Korean student athletes' early retirement?

Chapter 3: Methods

This study views student athletes' early retirement through an interpretive paradigm. Interpretive research essentially regards all knowledge as subjective; thus, the research also encompasses aspects of subjective and interactive processes (Manning, 1997). As interpretive enquiry, it primarily aims at understanding participants' subjective and lived experiences, and interpreting the meaning of those experiences to participants (Markula & Silk, 2011). Accordingly, it is based in the principles of phenomenology, one of the theoretical methods used to understand individuals' meanings of their lived experiences (Grossoehme, 2012).

Sampling

This study used purposive sampling (Patton, 2002), which is the most common sampling technique in qualitative research, and involved gathering participants according to preselected criteria (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). It also utilized snowball sampling, which allowed more participants to be recruited (Markula & Silk, 2011). The author began an interview with a participant well-suited for this study, and asked the person to suggest other potential participants.

Participants

This study targeted Korean basketball student athletes, especially former collegiate basketball student athletes who retired early, and employees or staff associated with basketball student athletes.

The participants were:

1) *Early-retired Student Athletes*

- a) who retired during their university years and had at least five years of experience as basketball student athletes; or

b) who graduated from university and retired because they were not drafted into any professional basketball team.

2) *Employees / Staff* (at associations or organizations related to Korean basketball student athletes)

a) who currently work (or have worked) at organizations related to student basketball; or

b) who have worked (or worked in the past) for over three years at the organization.

Sampling Procedure

I used to play basketball as a student athlete for almost eight years at the elite level until I was in my first year at Yonsei University, which is home to one of the top teams in Korea. Thus, I am acquainted with my former peers, and one of them coaches the Yonsei University's basketball team as an assistant coach. I was therefore confident when designing this study that I would be able to identify early-retired student athletes who satisfy the participants' criteria with the assistance of the coach, and gradually recruit more potential participants using a snowball sampling strategy. Another way to recruit early-retired student athletes was with the help of former colleagues who went to the same university, and who currently study in its graduate school; they teach undergraduate classes in the Faculty of Physical Education. I knew that I could identify participants with their help, and ask those students to suggest others who meet the criteria.

After my career transition from athlete to non-athlete, I got acquainted with ordinary students (not student athletes), one of whom now works at the Korea Sport Promotion Foundation, which is managed by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism; one of its projects is to support retired student and elite athletes. Therefore, I was quite confident that he would agree to be one of the participants. In addition, both of my parents used to play basketball

on professional teams in Korea. My mother's former coach is now the president of the KBA. Therefore, I was confident that he would agree to be a participant.

Informed Consent

Formal informed consent is essential in qualitative research excluding participant observation (Mack et al., 2005). Therefore, I collected written informed consent forms from participants following the ethical principles of human dignity, beneficence, and justice (Steinke, 2004). Before conducting the interviews, I provided them with an informed consent form (Appendix A-1 and 2: English and Korean versions) that included adequate information about this study. Participants decided freely whether to participate in the study. Specifically, the consent form included information about my identity, the research topic, the purpose of the study, and participant criteria. Participants could refuse and withdraw from this research, at any time, without any disadvantage. They also had a choice not to answer any questions if they felt uncomfortable with them. The interviews used in this study did not carry any risks or cause physical harm. The informed consent form ensured the anonymity of most participants, and noted that the interview data was used only for this study. I was the only one who could possess the data, which was not copied and / or shared due to confidentiality. Lastly, the informed consent form included my contact information, so that participants could reach me to ask any questions they had about this study.

Interview Guide

A well-prepared guide for semi-structured interviews is essential, and it must be adjustable depending on each interview situation and participants' experiences (Markula & Silk, 2011). The interview guide used in this study was comprised of a collection of appropriate and

relevant questions. This study followed the interview guide approach adapted from Maykut & Morehouse's model (2000) (Markula and Silk, 2010) to interview selected participants.

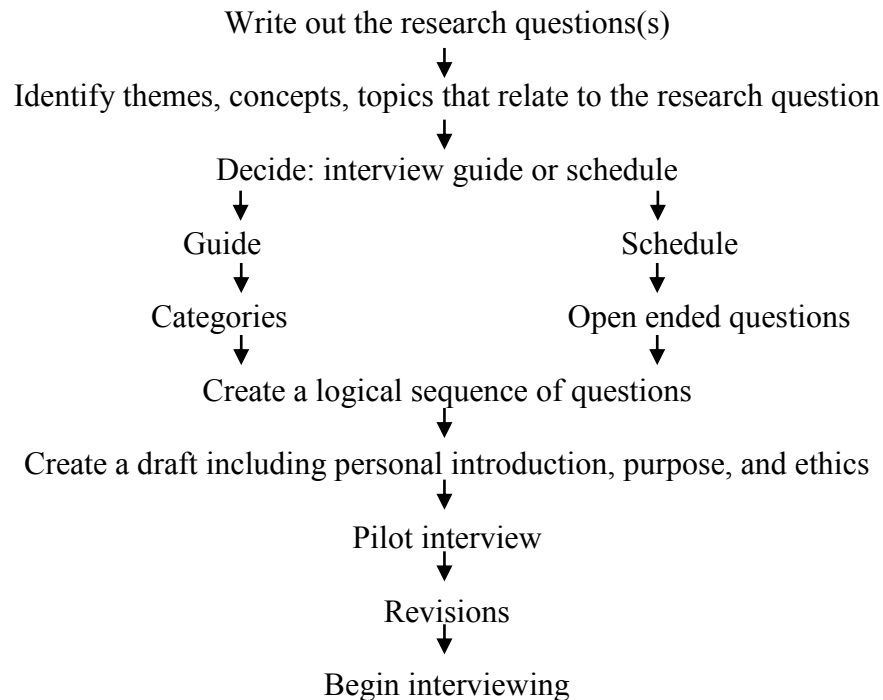


Figure 2. Interview Guide Approach (Adapted from Maykut & Morehouse, 2000)

Interview

Semi-structured interviews, which are the most common type of qualitative interview methods, were formally conducted as means of data collection. The interview technique was appropriate for this study, which is qualitative because it explores participants' perceptions and opinions (Barriball & While, 1994), and elicits participants' perspectives on the research topic (Mack et al, 2005). The face-to-face interviews were conducted formally at public places, such as libraries or cafes. The questions in the interviews (Appendix B and C) were asked in Korean (B-2 and C-2). An English version of the questions was also created for English-speaking

committee members (Appendix B-1 and C-1). During the interview sessions, open-ended questions were used to gather participants' in-depth knowledge.

Data

All of the interviews were recorded using an electronic voice recorder, and transcribed (as soon as possible) into text documents, which were printed as hard copies and analyzed. All data that participants supplied during the research were held in confidence, and unless they specifically indicated their consent, their name was not included in any report or publication of the research. The data were safely stored in a locked facility (a researcher's office). Only I and my supervisor had access to the data. The data were destroyed after the study using a paper shredder, and removed from the voice recorder and computer. Confidentiality was provided to the fullest extent possible by law (Mack et al, 2005).

Data Analysis

This study used the following process (Giorgi, 1985, as cited in Markula and Silk, 2010) to analyze the interview:

- The collection of concrete, naïve description of the phenomenon (through interviewing);
- The adoption of the phenomenological attitude;
- An impressionistic reading for each description;
- The in-depth reading to identify 'meaning units' to capture specific aspects of the whole;
- The identification of explicit psychological significance of each meaning unit;
- The production a general description of the structures of the experience.

Trustworthiness

This study utilized *member checking* to increase credibility (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The transcripts and identified themes were confirmed as accurate and representative by participants. This study also used *investigator triangulation* (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999). As noted above, the data were transcribed into both Korean and English after member checking. Thus, several researchers (including a supervisor) were able to analyze and interpret the data. This technique provided both confirmation of findings and different perspectives (Denzin, 1978). Another way to increase trustworthiness was that this study used *data source triangulation* (Denzin 1978; Patton, 1999). The data were collected from different types of people to obtain multiple perspectives on the same phenomenon.

In addition, interviewer had similar experiences with the participants of early-retired student athletes. To minimize interviewer's bias toward participants' perspectives, interviewer introduced himself as an early-retired basketball student, but did not share his experiences and feeling about his personal perspective. Also, the interviewer focused only on participants' feeling, thoughts, and experiences about their early retirement and the DMSP. In addition, the investigator introduced the model with an objective explanation of two different pathways to become elite athletes. During the explanation, he did not mention which one is correct or incorrect, and that both pathways could be coexisted in one system.

Chapter 4: Results

A total of six participants – four early-retired student athletes and two employees at sport organizations (Korean Basketball Association: KBA and Korea Sport Promotion Foundation: KSPF) – participated in individual interviews for this study. The interviews were conducted for approximately 30-60 minutes in public places (e.g. cafes, or libraries).

Early-Retired Student Athletes

Four early-retired student athletes had an average of eight and a half-year of experience as basketball student athletes. They used to belong to the same university team, but their ages were all different. The participants now attend a university in South Korea as regular students.

1. Reasons that Participants Retired Early

Participants either willingly or unwillingly retired during university years. They provided a variety of reasons that they retired early. These ranged from physical to social and psychological prompts.

Participant 1 (*player 1: P1*) felt anxiety about his future athletic career, and experienced an injury,

“I would say... I was uncertain of my future because my athletic career was not good enough for me to be a good elite athlete (a professional basketball player) compared to other student athletes, and my height was short for playing basketball. In addition, I suffered an injury to one of my ankles in the last game of grade 12 (right before I entered university). I ceased playing basketball because it was a nasty injury, and I had surgery on it.”

Participants 2 (*player 2: P2*) and 4 (*player 4: P4*) likewise experienced injuries:

“I was just tall but physically not good enough (to play basketball as a student athlete). My height had increased so fast, I had problems with joints such as knees and ankles. After the first season in the university, my coach suggested that I stop playing and look for another career. I also thought that I was going to quit willingly playing basketball.”

“I had an injury on my elbow and got surgery. When I did a lay-up shot, I fell down onto the floor and broke my elbow. When I entered university, I still had the injury, and there were lots of great players on my team. So I didn’t have many opportunities to play, participate, and compete in tournaments or leagues, and my coach didn’t give me chances (to play). Thus, I tried to find another way.”

By contrast, participant 3 (*player 3: P3*) had interpersonal trouble with others and his team.

“I had trouble with my coach and teammates during university years that I can’t tell you about here. I also wanted to do something else and challenged it. I quit willingly, and am preparing to be a fashion model.”

2. What Early Retirement Means to the Participants

Although participants either willingly or unwillingly retired for different reasons, all participants stated that they felt sad once they retired from playing basketball during university years. They also felt a range of emotions from sorrow, to anger and regret about their early retirement at time they left the sport. All participants found early retirement to be a negative experience, and they are still struggling to live the rest of their life as non-student athletes (regular students). One of the participants said that it will be difficult living my “*second life*.” Participants worried the rest of their lives, then they needed to do something else instead of playing basketball.

“Quitting basketball is like a very big decision in my life involving a change to another career”; “It wasn’t easy to decide to quit basketball.” (P3)

“I felt so much a sense of futility. I worried about my future, like what I should do instead of playing basketball. I stopped studying at a very young age. Since I quit, honestly, it has been so hard to catch up as a regular student.” (P2)

All of the participants recognized that their life after early retirement was likely to be difficult.

Participants also felt regret that they could not continue to pursue their dream (become an elite athlete/a professional basketball player).

“Being an elite (professional) basketball player was my dream...But I felt I lost my dream suddenly and it’s like my dream and goal are gone from my life.” (P1)

“I seriously regretted quitting basketball at that time. I sat on a toilet and cried many times. I had played only basketball for a long time, and it was the only way (to success in my life).” (P3)

After their early retirement, their goal or dream completely disappeared from their life.

All participants were concerned about school life after their early retirement. Although some participants took a few classes, others even did not go to any classes during junior high or high school years due to practice / training and tournaments.

“I attended some classes, but didn’t study or learn anything in them because I didn’t need a high GPA for my athletic career (to enter university as a student athlete).” (P1)

“When I was in junior high school, I took only four classes (45-50 minutes per class) a day. After the classes, I had lunch and went to basketball practice.” (P4)

“When I was in high school... I went to classes obligatorily until noon (3 or 4 classes a day) and then went to practice, spending the rest of my day there.” (P2)

The participants noted that teachers did not care that student athletes did not go to classes because they did not need a high academic GPA to enter university as a student athlete. Also, they were discriminated against school that they could not attend all classes, and lose their right to learn during athletic years.

“In my case, when I was taking an exam, a teacher set up a desk and chair for me right in front of the classroom’s door (outside of the classroom). The teacher gave me an answer sheet excluding a questions sheet five minutes before the actual exam (which regular students take). It meant that the teacher wanted me to finish the exam before the actual exam, and I just needed to choose one number randomly to answer all the questions. When I was in junior high and high school, that kind of exam was very common among student athletes.” (P1)

Teachers acknowledge that student athletes do not need a high academic GPA, and they tend to discriminate against the athletes. As a result, student athletes consider an academic GPA to be unnecessary for their athletic career, and concentrate on practice and training. Therefore, they struggle to adapt to school life as regular students, and to catch up in their university classes after retirement.

Athletes’ Views of the Organizations

1. Policies

The participants responded that they didn’t experience any policies on education, and weekend leagues (which are held during weekends) did not exist when they were in junior high or high school. A few of them stated that their universities did not even have any policies or weekend leagues either. However, one of them observed that the KBA implemented a policy

requiring that student athletes take the Korean history qualifying examination when he was in grade 12 (the last year of high school).

“We needed to take the Korean history qualifying examination and had to pass 6th class certification. If we didn’t (get it), we couldn’t get a chance to participate in any basketball tournaments. If we got the certification, we could participate in full games (four quarters). If we didn’t get it, we could only participate in two quarters per game.” (P4)

The policy implemented by the KBA restricted basketball student athletes from participating in tournaments depending on the Korean history examination.

Because all participants retired a few years ago, another policy, related to minimum GPA for student athletes, did not exist when some of them were athletes. They noted that the policy would be unpractical for student athletes, and also had a negative view of it.

“Although the policy also existed when I was in junior high or high school, it wasn’t implemented properly.” (P3)

“I think there is now something like a minimum GPA policy stating that student athletes can’t participate and compete at any leagues or tournaments if they don’t reach the minimum GPA which the organization sets up. However, I don’t think the policy was implemented properly.” (P1)

“I don’t think the policy helps student athletes who retire early during their university years, because the policy is useless. Nobody follows the policy.” (P2)

“A tutoring program is provided by university, not the organizations. The organizations don’t help them (student athletes).” (P3)

One participant responded that his university provided tutoring for managing his GPA. However, the tutoring was not a policy of any sport organization, and was merely provided by the university.

2. *Weekend Leagues*

None of the participants participated in weekend leagues when they were student athletes. However, they stated that the organization began to implement both weekend leagues and tournaments a few years ago in junior high schools, high schools, and universities.

“My younger brother is student athlete playing basketball too. I think he may participate in weekend leagues, and take all regular classes. I think my brother may take more classes than I did. But his GPA is still not good.” (P4)

Although the weekend leagues are now offered, student athletes may still skip their classes and focus only on their athletic career.

3. *Suggestions*

Two participants responded that the organizations could not directly prevent early retirement of student athletes because there are a variety of reasons for their early retirement that the organizations cannot address such as injuries, a problem with teammates, or relationship with coaches. But they noted that schools or coaches could directly help student athletes.

“I don’t think the organization can support us in terms of the negative implications (of early specialization). I could say that they can make policies for it, but it’s hard to change its conventions or the society, and the sport system. I want them to provide us fun, enjoyment or motivation which school or coaches can, not the organizations.” (P3)

They believed that they had lasting injuries due to participating in a large amount of practice/training during their student athlete years. Therefore, they wanted to take a rest during weekends or summer / winter breaks.

“Most student athletes have injuries of physical problem because they train hard from a young age. To avoid injuries, student athletes could take a break during weekends.” (P1)

One of them noted that English is important and necessary to get a job in South Korea when Koreans apply for a job (e.g. a normal office job), and they commonly need to submit a score on an English examination. The participant had not learned English in their school for a long time because they focused only on basketball during their athletic years.

“After I quit basketball, the first thing that came to my mind was the study of English. Every university student (in Korea) commonly learns English these days. I want the organizations to provide language class (for early-retired student athletes), which helps us.” (P3)

Participants also tended to get jobs not related to basketball, and hoped to experience a variety of occupations.

“I wish the organizations could provide us (early-retired student athletes) a program which helps us to experience various types of occupations.” (P3)

“I don’t need to get a job related to basketball simply because I used to be a basketball student athlete. I also want to have experience in other job positions (not related to basketball). I think they could train us to get a job which normal students usually work. I wish they could let us know specifically how to get a job, or what we need to do to get a job.” (P1)

4. Participants’ View on the Developmental Model of Sport Participation and Its Feasibility to the Korean Context

Although most participants felt that the Developmental Model of Sport Participation is a great model, they mentioned that it is difficult in practical terms to apply it to Korea's current sport system, and it could take several decades to change Korea's entire sport system. The participants believed not only that the model would be a positive and possible example, but also that it would not fit with the current system.

"I think the model looks good and it will take a lot of time to apply to Korea's sport system I think it will take 10 or 20 years." (P4)

"I think Korea's current sport system is not good, and it is hard to apply the model to the Korean system." (P2)

"I don't think it fits with the Korea's current sport system" (P3)

Most of student athletes were developed through early specialization, and they have never seen or heard that there is another way (second pathway of DMSP) to become an elite athlete. One of participants mentioned that Korean elite sport context is different from other countries (e.g., the United States, Europe, Germany, or Japan)

"In foreign countries, students have a chance to participate in a variety of sports, and they think differently. They participate in sport and if they have talent for sport, they could be student athletes. But Koreans think participating a variety of sports is a waste of their time"

(P3)

Employees

Two employees have a three and five-year work experience at sport organizations which are Korean Basketball Association (KBA) and Korea Sport Promotion Foundation (KSPF) respectively.

1. Insights into the Organization

1) Korean Basketball Association (KBA)

Although the Korean Basketball Association (KBA) has a program which educates coaches in helping student athletes to avoid doing drugs, doping, and running into ethical problems (social risks), it has not implemented any programs for early retired basketball student athletes. One participant (administrator: A1) stated that

“I acknowledge that we need to take care of early-retired (basketball) student athletes. However, we (KBA) actually do not have educational systems or improvements (for them)... Although we educate coaches through seminars to convey the message to student athletes, we don’t have a program that gathers and educates early-retired student athletes, such as camps, classes, or seminars”

The participant noted that the KBA cannot directly help early-retired basketball athletes.

“There are a variety of cases in which student athletes retire early. They may need to live (deal with) their life themselves or with their parents. Leading early-retired student athletes to another system is a contradiction” (A1)

The participant also mentioned that Korea’s elite sport system was created by the government almost 40 years ago in advance of the 1986 Seoul Asian Games and the 1988 Seoul Olympics. The primary goal was to win gold medals at the Games and Olympics. Therefore, the system forced student athletes to focus only on sports, and to renounce their right to pursue academics. Recently, as the Korean sport organizations were merged, it was recognized that the old sport system needs to be changed for the wellbeing of student and elite athletes, and furthermore for all Korean citizens’ happiness and health. Therefore, the KBA is trying to change the system through a few new policies, such as restricted practice hours and weekend leagues.

“The organization made a policy that student athletes have to train / practice after 4 pm (after school). The policy is getting settled. And elementary, junior high, and high schools gradually switched tournaments and leagues from weekdays to weekends” (A1)

The participant noted that system is gradually being transformed, and for the moment KBA is balancing the old and new systems. It will be completely changed to a new system in a few years.

2) Korea Sport Promotion Foundation (KSPF)

Although the Korea Sport Promotion Foundation provides several programs targeting all early-retired student athletes, retired elite athletes, and sport administrators, it does not have any programs specifically for early-retired student athletes. The organization also does not simply target early-retired student athlete for the program at the first time. It considers persons who may be able to work as experts in elite sport fields. It does not select persons simply because they are early-retired students, retired elite athletes, or sport administrators for the programs. This is because the programs are operated by government funding, and it is feared that such people might take advantage of the funding for personal gain. One participant (administrator: A2) noted that

“It is possible that people who are educated by using funding from the Korean government could develop themselves for personal gain, or switch their sport careers to other fields (not related to sport). Selfish... individualistic... It’s like a loss of manpower and a waste of national treasury funds” (A2)

In summary, the organization primarily considers applicants’ backgrounds and recruits persons who may be able to contribute to Korean elite sport after taking its programs.

The KSPF provides several programs for those types of former student / elite athletes or sport administrators. First, it offers an *English as a Second Language (ESL) program* that includes courses at the beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. The Hankuk University of Foreign Studies provides the first two courses, beginner and intermediate, and the advanced course is offered at the University of Tennessee, in the United States. The organization financially supports students in their studies abroad. In addition, it provides for them to go to actual university classes related to sports at the University of Tennessee. Second, *the organization financially supports two graduate students (per year) who study abroad and major in practical sport administration*. Third, *the international referees' program* educates students as international referees in a variety of sports, and increases their skills. Lastly, *a specialized course for international sporting talented persons* educates persons who have the possibility of being board members, directors or presidents of referees at a variety of international sport organizations (e.g., the International Rugby Board, the Federation Internationale de Football Association, or the International Basketball Federation).

In addition, the Korea Olympic Committee also provides a program that supports non-athletic careers. The program consults early-retired student athletes to help them with their C.V.s once they apply for a job in non-sport fields. However, one participant stated that the program is not operated properly, and that early-retired student athletes should find a job in sport fields.

“Honestly, the interviewees (participants in this study) you interviewed might say that they are curious about working in other fields instead of sports. I think it is more likely that they would be interested or happy to work in the sports field because their backgrounds are here (in sports). They may be interested in other fields, but there is a difference between what they are interested in and what they can do well” (A2)

One participant also mentioned two recent KOC policies, weekend leagues and a minimum GPA policy for student athletes, present schools with moral issues. They, rather than sports organizations, have a responsibility to manage student athletes' education. However, schools tend to evade that responsibility.

“They (the organizations) just make policies and schools have to manage effectively through the policies. But schools in Korea don't care about the policy; they only consider student athletes' (or teams') athletic results. They (schools) just give them good grades to enable them to participate (in basketball leagues), even if they don't go to school” (A2)

The participant recognized that academic education is vital for student athletes, and early-retired student athletes struggle to adapt to school life as regular students. He recommended that schools support and provide academic programs for both student athletes and early-retired student athletes.

“I recommend a studying support program for them. It should happen at the school level. It doesn't matter where funding comes from, whether from the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism; schools have to take charge of the program. I think schools have a responsibility to support early-retired student athletes to catch up in their academics; they could educate them individually or after school. They couldn't teach all the subjects, but could focus mainly important subjects. Or they could teach subjects that early-retired students want” (A2)

However, the participant was concerned that if the two government ministries do not cooperate in their projects, it would be difficult to implement them for student athletes.

“Even if the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism has funding for them (early-retired student athletes), because student athletes belong to the Ministry, they couldn't do

anything without the Ministry of Education's cooperation. Schools don't care about official documents from the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism because schools belong to the Ministry of Education" (A2)

2. Insights into the Developmental Model of Sport Participation and Its Feasibility in the Korean Context

1) Korean Basketball Association (KBA)

One participant agreed with the DMSPP model but disagreed that the Korean sport system should be changed to a club sport system. The participant stated that student athlete basketball should be managed by the Ministry of Education in Korean government because Korean student athlete sports are based on a school sports system. American missionaries introduced and popularized sports in Korea around 1905; thus the Korean sports system has been developed along the lines of an American sports system, which is school-based.

"I don't think the new sport system which (the Korean government is trying to apply), which is similar to the European club sport system, will fit the Korean sport system because the American sport system is based on schools, and American missionaries popularized sports in Korea around 1905" (A1)

2) Korean Sports Promotion Foundation (KSPF)

One participant responded that the second pathway of the model (late specialization) is positive for Korea's new sport system.

"Personally, I think we need to aim for that kind of model; it would be a practicable model for Korea's future sport system. It doesn't matter what the purposes and reason of the organizations' integration are, it's a better environment now for applying the model to Korea's sport system" (A2)

The participant also stated that the Korea Olympic Committee had managed student and elite athlete sports, and the Korea Council of Sport for All had managed recreational sports. The two organizations had recently been integrated, creating an opportunity to change Korea's sport system.

"I think the model is really needed for our sports system, and it's likely to increase the possibility that the integrated organization could systematically apply the model to the (Korea's sports) system because it's now one (sports) organization" (A2)

However, the participant did not feel that leading members of government would recognize or apply the model, because they do not like to implement new things. The participant also disagreed that the second pathway is suitable for all sports in Korea.

"I think it's applicable to the new sport system, but not to all sports. (The organization) should start by applying it to possible sports; there are some sports which are applicable. So (the organization) needs to apply the model gradually to possible sports" (A2)

"I think the second pathway (late specialization) is a possible way to apply to our sport system depending on sports" (A2)

The participant argued that the early specialization pathway, which is a common approach to athlete development in Korea, is also necessary for the system.

"I'm not saying that we need to remove the third pathway (early specialization) in Korea's sport system. Gradually open the second pathway (late specialization), and there are some sports that second pathway doesn't fit; stick with third pathway in those sports"
(P2)

Chapter 5: Discussion

Data based on the six interviews conducted for this study enable us to better understand the context of the Korean sport system, the integration of the sport organizations, and the causes and consequences of student athletes' early retirement. These results address the key research questions listed above. They identify what the early retirement means to student athletes, based on the interviews. Also, they determine how and why the organizations (KOC and KBA) could impact the negative effects of Korean basketball student athletes' early retirement, and the feasibility of the Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP).

1. What Early Retirement Means to Korean Student Athletes

The most common reason for the participants' retirement during their university years was injuries. All participants began to play basketball as student athletes at approximately 11-12 years old, and focused only on basketball, neglecting their academics during their student athlete years. Although this starting age is actually late compared to the age of early specialization set out in the DMSP, most of the students suffered from injuries. Furthermore, all participants responded that they felt sorry, angry, fragile, futile, or regretful about their early retirement, which was a negative experience in their life. It is reasonable to speculate, based on the data, that they were involved in extreme training and practice in a short period of time during their student athlete years, which might have caused their injuries. The fact that they neglected academics during their student athlete years might also have negatively influenced their "second life" as a non-student athlete. Thus, they struggle to catch up in classes, and to find a job after graduating from university.

In South Korea, basketball student athletes tend to live their life according to a totally different pattern than regular students, due to the Korean sport system. The system has been

developed with a focus on discovering and fostering elite athletes and winning gold medals at Olympics or international competitions to enhance national prestige (Yu, 2005). Therefore, whoever wants to be an elite basketball player is supposed to choose to be a student athlete, and to focus only on basketball, neglecting academics from a young age. The system also has created a unique and results-oriented environment in which student athletes compete in a number of tournaments instead of one league per year, because student athletes need a variety of athletic honors and achievements in order to enter university. Their coaches also depend on their students' athletic achievements in order to maintain their own position and salary (Kim & Choi, 2007). If only one league was organized each year instead of a number of tournaments, students could not prove their achievements as convincingly. In addition, one of the policies in the system which has endured for over 40 years is that student athletes can enter university with only athletic careers regardless of their academic Grade Point Average (GPA), and that forces them to neglect their academics. As a result, student athletes are forced to undertake intensive training and practice that may cause a variety of injuries, and neglecting academics may negatively influence their school life as well as the rest of their life after early retirement.

2. How and Why the KOC and KBA could Impact the Negative Effects of Basketball Student Athletes' Early Retirement

Living in Korea as a student athlete is totally different than life as a regular student. Most participants in this study retired early due to injuries. In addition, all student participants responded that their early retirement was an unfavorable experience, regardless of whether they willingly or unwillingly retired from playing basketball. They were also struggling to deal with their university life and other aspects of their life after early retirement. Two possible approaches to avoiding the negative effects of early retirement on Korean basketball student athletes were

determined through the data: 1) offering another pathway to become an elite athlete, 2) providing academic support programs for early-retired student athletes.

1) Offering Another Pathway to Become an Elite Athlete

Student participants focused only on basketball from the beginning of their student athlete years; this involved them in intense training or practice which might have excluded deliberate play. This study found that they began to play basketball as student athletes around 11-12 years old, which is not excessively early according to the terms of the early specialization pathway in DMSP, but that most participants retired early due to injuries. Providing another pathway involving sampling years may be one possible initiative by the KOC and KBA that may avoid the negative effects of early retirement on student athletes. The two sport organizations manage student athletes who participate only at the competitive level. Also, recreational and elite basketball have been disconnected for several decades in Korea. In order to apply this other pathway of the DMSP, it is necessary to promote recreational basketball in Korea, and to create programs and places where the sampling, specialization and investment years respectively could take place. Sampling years may then provide a large amount of deliberate play that may prevent overly intense training, physical overexertion, and injuries (Côté et al., 2007). In addition, students who are involved sampling years may have sufficient time for learning academics, and an opportunity to choose recreational years or specialization years to continue playing basketball as either a regular student or student athlete. This other pathway also could enable them to reach elite performance through sampling years.

2) Academic Support Programs for Early-retired Students Athletes

Student athletes' early retirement is prevalent in not only the university but also the junior high / high school years. It is also difficult for them to catch up in their classes in junior high /

high school after early retirement. Although the Korea Sports Promotion Foundation (KSPF) currently provides and plans to expand English programs, the programs do not aim specifically at early-retired student athletes, and cannot cover all of the early-retired student athletes in Korea. Academic support programs should be designed for the specific needs of different students. For instance, collegiate early-retired student athletes have already entered through their athletic careers, but junior high and high school early-retired student athletes have to take a College Scholastic Ability Test (e.g., Scholastic Aptitude Test: SAT), competing with regular students, and need excellent GPAs in order to enter university. By contrast, collegiate early-retired athletes may seek to get a job that requires a high score on an English test (e.g., Test of English as a Foreign Language: TOEFL). And junior high and high school early-retired student athletes are required to study all subjects, such as history, mathematics, Korean, science, and English, in order to enter a university as non-student athletes.

These two strategies may provide means of dealing with the current negative effects of retirement on Korean basketball student athletes. However, fundamental issues, such as the limitations of the Korean sport system and its policies, should also be improved. The KOC and KBA should create and develop a better environment that can provide another pathway to reaching elite performance through sampling years, while offering all Korean basketball student athletes the right to learn.

In addition, one of the most important negative effects of their early retirement may be that they do not have any idea for their future because they have focused so intensively on basketball. They also may not have had opportunities to learn about what they like and should do for the rest of their life, and to experience something else other than basketball. Almost all student basketball teams are operated by schools which have a responsibility to educate students

whoever they are, whether student athletes or regular students. However, these schools have ignored the right of student athletes to learn, leading them to focus only on basketball in order to enhance their schools' reputation. As a result, the schools do not fulfill their responsibility and obligation to educate student athletes academically, which may lead them to struggle in school life as well as the rest of their life after early retirement. Not only the Korean sport system and policies force student athletes to focus only on basketball and neglect academics, but also each school agrees with these policies. As a result, when the KOC and KBA create new policies to improve student athletes' early retirement, those policies should be implemented by schools which have a responsibility to educate them.

3. Feasibility of Applying the Developmental Model of Sport Participation to the Korean Sport System

One previous review found that the negative implications of early specialization in athlete development and the reasons for Korean student athletes' early retirement are highly related; it suggested that providing another pathway through sampling, specialization, and investment years instead of early specialization would decrease the negative implication (Lim et al., 2016). Therefore, applying DMSP, which has two different pathways to reach elite performance, would be one of the means of mitigating the negative effects of early retirement.

Most participants positively responded that the DSMP could be an approach to apply to a new Korean system that could improve the negative effects of early retirement. Because the KOC and Korea Council of Sport for All (KCSA) have been merged since 2015 (Jung, 2015), there may be a greater possibility of applying the DMSP. These two organizations were operated separately, and not connected systematically, for several decades. Therefore, the Korean sport system originally had one pathway which included a large amount of deliberate practice (might

exclude deliberate play) for student athletes to reach elite performance. It also had another pathway on which non-student athletes could play physical activities and sports recreationally. Although the integrated organization has also strived to unify elite and recreational sports, it is having difficulty managing the merger. A few participants also negatively answered that the DMSP would not fit with the current Korean sport system, or it would take 10 or 20 years to stabilize the DMSP in the new Korean sport system.

However, School Sport Club Leagues (SSCL), which are school-based recreational sports leagues, have grown rapidly. Although the leagues commenced in earnest in 2012, almost half a million students participated in the leagues in the 2015 season (Jung, 2015). One participant also advocated that student athlete sports should be implemented in schools, because the sports have developed and had roots in schools since they were introduced into Korea by American missionaries. These expanded recreational sports in schools may include the recreational years identified by the DMSP. Students who participate in the SSCL could continue either to participate in recreational sports or reach elite performance after sampling years if specialization and investment years are provided appropriately. Another pathway through sampling could be provided by the KOC and KBA, which are supposed to address how recreational and elite sports are combined. This integration of SSCL and elite sports will probably require cooperation with the Korean Ministry of Education, because the SSCL is managed and operated by that Ministry, not the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, which manages student and elite athlete sports.

The integrated sport organization in Korea is intended to unite recreational and elite sports, and its concept is highly related with the DMSP, which describes both recreational and elite sports in one model. Therefore, the feasibility of applying the DMSP may be possible through the integrated sport organization which can currently manage / operate both sports

simultaneously. However, every student athlete sports have been managed / operated by each sport association under the KOC (e.g., KBA). As a result, the associations have implemented their own policies which are unrelated to each organization. The integrated sport organization may be needed to create an association which can manage / operate synthetically all type of sports (e.g., Canadian Interuniversity Sport: CIS or National Collegiate Athletic Association: NCAA). In addition, the cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Culture, Sports, and tourism would be vital to facilitate recreational and elite sports collectively.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the meaning of Korean basketball student athletes' early retirement, why and how Korean sport organizations related to Korean student athlete basketball can address the negative effects of their retirement, and the feasibility of the DMSP to Korean sport system to reduce the negative effects.

The Korean sport system separated recreational and elite sports for several decades, between 1963 and 2015. The different sports were separately managed and operated by two different sport organizations, and were therefore systematically disconnected from each other. Student athletes who were registered in the Korean Olympic Committee (KOC) were only allowed to compete at elite sport tournaments or leagues, and not allowed to compete at recreational tournaments or leagues. Also, the sports system had a unique policy according to which student athletes could enter university with low academic grades, based on their athletic achievement. The policy led student athletes to concentrate on practicing sports, and to neglect academics. Therefore, a number of Korean student athletes retired early, becoming non-athlete students. And they, as regular students, often struggled to adapt to school life, to catch up in their classes, and to find a job after their early retirement. Through the data, this study found that early retirement in Korea was a serious phenomenon among basketball student athletes. All participants stated that their early retirement was a negative experience, and felt a range of emotions, from sorrow to anger and regret, at time they left the sport. In addition, they struggled to adapt to their university lives as non-athlete students.

In seeking to fully understand the phenomenon, this study may have included several limitations. First, it only used data from interviews of early-retired basketball student athletes and staff / employees at sport organizations in Korea. Therefore, the results of this study were

based on only these two types of participants, and do not reflect the views of others such as student athletes' coaches, parents, teachers (professors), and other persons whose work is related to student athletes (e.g., employees in Korean government bodies). Second, although the study examined basketball student athletes' early retirement, other types of sports in Korea may possess its own environments, such as systems, policies, and support programs for student athletes. Lastly, this study only targeted at basketball student athletes who retired during their university years; it does not capture the perspectives of basketball student athletes who retired during elementary school, junior high school, and high school years. As a result, future research should encompass a range of sports and samples to address the early retirement of Korean student athletes to improve their early retirement. In addition, this study may influence that Korean sports researchers should strive to develop improvement plans for early-retired student athletes that are informed by a variety of fields, such as psychology, coaching, management, and sociology. And they should endeavor to establish a new sport system to improve Korean elite sports, as well as student athletes' physical / psychological well-being.

In examining early retirement among Korean student athletes, one previous study found that the reasons for retirement are associated with the negative implications of early specialization as described in the DMSP, and Korean student athletes are commonly developed through a type of athlete development pathways that is similar to early specialization. The study also suggested applying the DMSP (which includes a possible pathway to become elite athletes instead of the early specialization years) to the Korean sport system in conjunction with the integration of sport organizations in Korea. Therefore, this study used the DMSP as a potential model for Korea's new sport system, and identified feasibility of applying the DMSP within the system. In addition, the study proposed the DMSP as a sports system which not only covers both

recreational and elite sports in one model, but also corresponds with the aim of Korea's integrated sports organization. As a result, based on the data, the DMSP could be one of the integrated Korean sport organization's initiatives to address early retirement among basketball student athletes. Applying the DMSP to the Korean new sport system may positively influence early retirement among basketball student athletes. In particular, it may provide them with a phase (sampling years) in which they may consider becoming elite athletes. Also, it may create an environment which enables them to combine student athlete sports with academics.

In the future, Korean sports research will need to address early retirement among student athletes and to develop new sport system. The system should aim not only to improve elite athletes' performance but also to develop an environment which allows student athletes to adapt to their school lives during both their athletic and non-athletic years. In addition, the new sport system should permit student athletes to focus not only sports but also a minimum amount of academic studies. As this study suggests, both current and early-retired student athletes and persons who are related to them must realize that academics are also important to student athletes for their early retirement and the rest of lives. Accordingly, the new Korean sports organization should strive to produce a positive environment which mitigates the negative implications of their early specialization through the DMSP.

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Appendix A-1 (English)



Informed Consent Form

Date:

Study Name: Exploring South Korean Sports Organizations' Future Initiatives for Early Retirement of Basketball Student Athletes

Researchers: Heejun Lim, MA student / Marvin Washington, PhD

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Tel: [\(+1\)587-588-9309](tel:+15875889309) Email: heejun@ualberta.ca

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this study is to determine 1) how and why the KOC and KBA reduce the negative effects of basketball student athletes' early retirement, 2) the feasibility of applying the Developmental Model of Sport Participation to the Korean sports system.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research: You will be asked for a biographical history (for early-retired student athletes). You will be also asked how and why government could reduce the negative effects of early retirement, and about the application of Developmental Model of Sport Participation to the Korean sports system. The interview will be recorded by an audio-recorder. All collected data will be only used for the master's thesis of main researcher. (It will take around 30 - 60 minutes)

Risks and Discomforts: This interview does not involve any risks or discomfort resulting from your participation in the research.

Benefits of the Research: The benefits of this research are that it helps to gather information about 1) KOC /KBA and early-retired student athletes' perspectives on early retirement, 2) the organizations' future directions or initiatives, 3) baseline data for establishing a new sports system, 4) and future research directions. This study will provide information about student athletes' development and influence Korean basketball student athletes to decrease rates of early retirement.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence the study, the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff, and the nature of your relationship with the University of Alberta, either now or in the future.

Withdrawal from the Study: You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. If you decide to stop participating, you will still be eligible to receive the promised pay for agreeing to be in the project. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researchers, the University of Alberta, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible. After the interviews are transcribed, the main researcher will do member checking with you. After member checking, you can no longer withdraw their data from the study.

Confidentiality: All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence, and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. You do not even need to write your name on the questionnaire. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility.

Questions About the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Heejun Lim either by telephone at (587) 588-9309, or by e-mail (heejun@ualberta.ca). The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Legal Rights and Signatures: I *(fill in your name here)*, consent to participate in *(insert study name here)* conducted by *(insert investigator name here)*. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature _____

Date _____

Participant

Signature _____

Date _____

Principal Investigator

Appendix A-2 (Korean)



연구참여 (인터뷰) 동의서

날짜:

연구 제목: 운동중단 학생운동선수를 위한 한국 스포츠 단체 (대한체육회/대한농구협회)의 향후 발전 계획에 관한 현상학적 분석: 스포츠 참여 발달 모델 중심으로

연구자: 임희준, MA student / Marvin Washington, PhD

University of Alberta, Faculty of Physical Education & Recreation,

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연구의 목적: 학생운동선수에서 엘리트 선수로의 성공률은 10% 미만인 것으로 알려져 있습니다. 90% 이상의 학생운동선수가 운동을 중단하고, 학생운동선수가 아닌 일반학생으로 적응하는데 매우 어려움을 겪고 있습니다. 따라서, 본 연구는 대한체육회와 생활체육협회의 통합과 맞물려, 대한체육회 또는 대한농구협회가 운동중단 학생운동선수에게 어떠한 대책과 변화를 가져다 줄 것인지에 대해 알아내는 것을 목표로 하고 있습니다.

연구 과정: 본 연구는 총 30 ~ 60 분 정도 소요될 것이며, 인터뷰 형식으로 진행될 것입니다. 인터뷰 대상자는 연구자의 질문 이외에 관련된 대화 모두 허용됩니다. 운동중단학생선수들은 학생운동선수 시절에 관해 이야기를 나눌 것이며, 모든 연구참여자들은 운동중단 학생운동선수의 관련해 대한체육회 / 대한농구협회가 향후 어떠한 대책과 변화를 가져다 줄 것인지에 대해 이야기를 나눌 것입니다. 또한 스포츠 참여 발달 모델이 스포츠 단체 통합과 맞물려 우리나라 스포츠 시스템에의 적용 가능성에 대해 이야기를 나눌 것입니다

예상되어지는 위험성: 본 연구과정에서 참여자에게 미칠 수 있는 신체적, 정신적 위험은 없습니다. 하지만, 본인이 대답하고 싶지 않은 질문이나, 이야기하기 불편한 대화는 언제든지 거부할 수 있으며, 또한, 원하시는 경우 언제든지 연구참여에서 제외될 수 있습니다.

예상되어지는 이점: 본 연구를 통해 예상되어지는 이점은 다음과 같습니다. 1) 스포츠 단체와 운동중단 학생운동선수의 학생운동선수 운동중단에 대한 정보 습득, 2) 스포츠 단체의 학생운동선수 운동중단에 대한 향후 발전 방향 정보 습득, 3) 우리나라 실정에 맞는 스포츠 참여 발달 모델 확립의 기초자료 제공, 4) 후속연구에 중요한 기초자료 제공, 그리고 5) 학생운동선수 운동중단 이후 대책을 위한 기초 자료 습득.

자발적인 연구참여: 본 연구는 참여자의 자발적인 참여로 이루어지며, 참여자는 언제든지 참여를 중단할 수 있습니다. 참여중단 결정은 본 연구에 지장을 주지 않으며, 추후의 본 연구자와 학교의 관계에 전혀 지장이 없음을 알려드립니다.

연구참여 중단: 모든 참여자는 언제든지 사유에 상관 없이 연구참여를 중단할 수 있습니다. 중단할 경우 수집된 모든 자료는 즉각적으로 폐기될 것입니다.

Confidentiality: 본 연구에서 참여자가 제공한 모든 정보는 비공개로 저장되며, 연구자 및 지도교수만이 정보에 접근이 가능합니다. 또한 참여자의 실명은 본 연구에서 거론되지 않을 것입니다.

연구에 관한 질문: 본 연구에 관하여 궁금한 사항이 있을 경우, 연구자 임희준 에게 핸드폰 (587-588-9309) 또는 이메일 (heejun@ualberta.ca) 로 연락해 주시기 바랍니다. 본 연구는 캐나다 University of Alberta 에서 허가를 받았으며, University of Alberta 연구윤리위원회의 가이드라인에 따라 연구윤리 허가를 받았음을 알려드립니다.

법적 권리 및 서명: 본인 (_____), (임 희 준) 연구자가 진행하는 연구에 참여를 동의합니다. 본인은 본 연구의 본질을 이해 하였으며, 참여하기를 원합니다. 또한 본인은 연구참여에 서명함으로써 참여자의 법적 권리를 포기하지 않을 것입니다. 참여자의 서명은 동의를 나타내는 것입니다.

서 명 _____

날 짜 _____

연구 참여자

서 명 _____

날 짜 _____

연구자

Appendix B-1 (English)**Interview Questions**
*(For early-retired student athletes)***Your Biographical History**

1. How long did you play basketball as a student athlete?
2. When did you start playing basketball as a student athlete?
3. Why did you start playing basketball as a student athlete?
4. When did you cease playing basketball?
5. Why did you cease playing basketball?

About the KOC and KBA

6. Do you know any plans implemented by KOC or KBA for early-retired student athletes?
7. Do you think that these organizations properly support early-retired student athletes in adapting to their school lives as regular students and to their non-athletic careers? How and Why?
8. How could these organizations help and support early-retired student athletes?
9. How and why do the organizations reduce the negative implications of basketball student athletes' early retirement?

About the Developmental Model of Sport Participation and its feasibility

10. What do you think about the model?
11. Do you think that the model is feasible to apply to the Korean sports system?
If it is or not, why do you think so?

Appendix B-2 (Korean)
인터뷰 질문지

(운동중단 학생운동선수)

신상이력에 대한 질문

1. 몇년 동안 학생운동선수로 생활 하였나요?
2. 언제 학생운동선수로서 농구를 시작하였나요?
3. 왜 학생운동선수로서 농구를 시작하였나요?
4. 언제 농구를 그만 두었나요?
5. 왜 농구를 그만 두었나요?

대한체육회 및 대한농구협회에 대한 질문

6. 대한체육회 및 대한농구협회에서 시행중인 운동을 중단한 학생운동선수를 상대로 한 어떠한 프로그램이라도 알고 계신가요?
7. 현재 두 단체에서 운동을 중단한 학생운동선수들에게 필요한 도움을 주고 있다고 생각 하시나요? 어떻게? 무엇을? 왜?
8. 운동을 중단한 학생운동선수들을 두 단체에서 어떻게 그리고 무엇을 도와줄 수 있는지 생각해 보셨나요? 어떻게? 무엇을 ?
9. 두 단체가 학생운동선수 운동중단의 부정적인 측면에 무엇을, 어떻게 영향을 줄 수 있다고 생각 하나요?

스포츠 참여 발달 과정 모델과 적용 가능성

10. 스포츠 참여 발달 과정 모델을 어떻게 생각 하나요?
11. 이 모델이 스포츠 단체 통합에 맞물려 우리나라 스포츠 시스템 측면으로 실행 가능하다고 보나요? 만약 맞다면/아니라면, 왜 그렇게 생각 하나요?

Appendix C-1 (English)**Interview Questions**
*(For employees / staffs)***About Your Profile**

1. Where do you work?
2. What is your position at the organization?
3. Could you describe what you do at the organization?
4. How long have you worked at the organization?

About the KOC and KBA

5. Do you know any plans implemented by KOC or KBA for early-retired student athletes?
6. How these organizations could help and support early-retired student athletes?
7. Do you think that the organizations properly support early-retired student athletes in adapting to their school lives as regular students and to their non-athletic careers? How and why?
8. How and why do the organizations reduce the negative implications of basketball student athletes' early retirement?

About the Developmental Model of Sport Participation and its feasibility.

9. What do you think about the model?
10. Do you think that the model is feasible to apply to the Korean sports system?
If it is or not, why do you think so?

Appendix C-2 (Korean)



인터뷰 질문지

(협회 직원 / 관계자)

신상이력에 대한 질문

1. 현재 어느 협회에서 일하고 계신가요?
2. 현재 어떤 직책을 맡고 계신가요?
3. 현재 어떠한 일을 하고 계신지 자세하게 설명해 주실 수 있으신가요?
4. 일 하신지는 얼마나 되셨나요?

대한체육회 및 대한농구협회에 대한 질문

5. 대한체육회 및 대한농구협회에서 시행중인 운동을 중단한 학생운동선수를 상대로 한 어떠한 프로그램이라도 알고 계신가요?
6. 현재 두 단체에서 운동을 중단한 학생운동선수들에게 필요한 도움을 주고 있다고 생각 하시나요? 어떻게? 무엇을? 왜?
7. 운동을 중단한 학생운동선수들을 두 단체에서 어떻게 그리고 무엇을 도와줄 수 있는지 생각해 보셨나요? 어떻게? 무엇을?
8. 두 단체가 학생운동선수 운동중단의 부정적인 측면에 무엇을, 어떻게 영향을 줄 수 있다고 생각 하나요?

스포츠 참여 발달 과정 모델과 적용 가능성

9. 스포츠 참여 발달 과정 모델을 어떻게 생각 하나요?
10. 이 모델이 스포츠 단체 통합에 맞물려 우리나라 스포츠 시스템 측면으로 실행 가능하다고 보나요? 만약 맞다면/아니라면, 왜 그렇게 생각 하나요?