

A Sociological Analysis of Elderly Sports Persons in Punjab: A Case Study Approach

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ABSTRACT

Ageing is a natural part in lifecycle of human existence, that every human being has to go through. The present study is on elderly sports persons in Punjab and it is approached through the lens of social gerontology, putting across the narratives about their athletic identity and ageing. With the help of case study approach, the continuity of maintaining similar identity, social roles and wellbeing in later life of the elderly sports persons was highlighted. The objective of the study is to explore the social circumstances faced by the elderly sports persons in Punjab after their retirement and highlight the role of family and community in their social adjustment in life. It is an attempt to understand the challenges faced by the elderly sports persons in transition to retired phase of life. Employing the social gerontology framework, the purpose of this research is to have a better insight into sociological dimensions of life of retired elderly sportspersons in Punjab. The research emphasizes sports persons aged over sixty years from Punjab are still actively engaged in the sports, both formally and informally. The present research is based on seven elderly sportspersons in Punjab. Generally, sports persons have emotional and deep connection to their sports. They have a lifelong bond with their sport as they have achieved name and fame from their respective sport. The study finds that after retirement, engaging themselves in sports helped in easy transition and social adjustment of elderly sports persons in later phase of their life. It provides them a sense of purpose and satisfaction in their life. It gives them a feeling of belongingness and helps them staying away from challenges in life after retirement.

Keywords: Elderly Sportspersons, Social Relationships, Family Support, Social Conditions, Social Adjustment.

Introduction

Ageing is a natural and inevitable aspect of human existence that is generally said to come with decline in physical capacity, social withdrawal, and fewer interactions in community life. But this notion is gradually changing with time, particularly in the case of elderly people who have lived active and disciplined lives like sportspersons. In India, where conventional beliefs regarding ageing continue to prevail, the life experience of elderly sportspersons presents an insightful representation. This research is particularly concerned with exploring the lives of such elderly sports persons in Punjab.

Sportspersons often spend their middle and early years of life in intense physical training and competition. As people grow elderly, many aspects of their lives change, including social relationships, roles, responsibilities, and identity. They may lose friends or family members, which can lead to feeling of loneliness. But they might also form new friendships in their community. Their roles often shift as they

retire or move from being active to passive members of the society. With less work or family responsibilities, they can have additional free time, but this can arise the feeling of being less needed. These transitions shape their self-concept, as they may no longer think of themselves at an authoritative position in family setup. Finding new purpose, maintaining social connections, and remaining physically and socially active can make elderly people feel important and contented at the later stage of life. They usually earn popularity and recognition in their home environment and also globally. This suddenly change when they retire either because of age, injury, or their personal decision. The transition from active sportspersons to retired sportspersons can be accompanied by a variety of emotional, social, and economic challenges. In Punjab, a number of sportspersons have brought glory to the state and country by competing at national and international level sports. The elderly sportspersons in Punjab are highly respected for their achievements, and presently, they tend to guide and inspire the younger generation.

Punjab is a culturally diverse state in northern India. The agriculture is the primary occupation of Punjab. The people of Punjab are famous for being strong, energetic, and full of life. Punjab is also famous for its rich diet. Punjab also has a rich sports history. A few decades back, sport like hockey, football, basketball, volleyball, and athletics were highly popular in Punjab. A large number of the sportspersons of the state had the pride of representing India in international championships at that time. Punjab was regarded as a powerhouse of hockey. The Indian hockey team winning Olympic medals had a number of players from Punjab.

Football also followed strongly in Punjab, with numerous clubs and young players. A few of them played for the national team of India. Basketball and volleyball were played extensively in college and town sides. Players from Punjab played at the national and international levels and won numerous medals and titles. Even though years have gone by, Punjab's sporting history is still admired. The passion for sports continues to run high in society. Punjab's rich cultural history, hard-working people, and love for sports make Punjab a well-known state of India. In the past, elderly sportspersons were respected, strong, and well-known for their accomplishments. They made their state and country proud with their performance. Their lives frequently change as they age. Many people experience loneliness, financial hardship, and health problems in the later years of their life. As their fame fades, they frequently feel forgotten. These sportspersons should be taken care of, respected, and honored due to their achievements and contribution to history of sports. Their life experience and legacy should be cherished and supported by society.

The retired elderly sportsperson's life after the withdrawal from professional sports life is marked by changes in their life patterns. The individual stories, social standing, physical and psychological well-being, and the way they manage their identities in the later years of their lives are remarkable. The people who were previously public figures and are currently living a less publicized life.

The retired sportspersons is a role model of active ageing. Through their sporting life, they learn discipline, resilience, and the value of sports culture guide the human life even in the post-retirement stage. Others being disengaged or overlooked, some could still remain active in the sport as coaches, mentors, or leaders in their communities. This research points to the life of ageing sportspersons. It will help provide a more general understanding of ageing in India through the documentation of such varied experiences.

Ageing

Ageing is a multidimensional process. It consists of biological, psychological, and social changes that happen throughout human lifecycle. Getting old is mostly associated with biological changes that take place. It encompasses the slow deterioration of physiological capabilities like muscular power, bone mass,

cardiovascular performance, and mental quickness. Social gerontology, a sub field of gerontology, however, emphasizes that ageing is not necessarily a deterioration process. But it is also associated with social, economic and psychological changes that take place as one age. It is associated with change in social identity, social relationships, social roles, social responsibilities, and change in social status of the elderly people in the retirement phase of their life. These changes are influenced by cultural patterns, economic status, and social roles in the life of human beings as they age.

Sports

Sports, both recreational and competitive, are organized body activities controlled by rules. It consists of fitness, performance, entertainment, and social connection. Sports also encompass psychological values, social identity, and community connection beyond mere physical activity. Traditionally, sports have been thought of as a domain for young people, strength, and competition, tending to exclude aged people. Elderly persons, particularly women, due to their physical capacity, encounter physical and stereotypical obstacles to do physical activity. Concepts of declining physical capacity and notions of societal roles of retirement, tend to discourage the elderly from doing physical activities. But in current scenario, more and more elderly people of Punjab engage themselves in physical fitness. Contemporarily, sociology of sports acknowledges its broader potential for all ages, both male and female, and abilities. The functionalist perspective sees sport as a tool for the enhancement of social values, health, and cooperation. Their engagement is proof of sociological shift: from thinking of ageing as withdrawal and discontinuation to seeing it as a period of continued productivity, and continuation of their previous identity.

Ageing and Sports: An Understanding

Over the past few decades, there has been an increase in academic interest in the relationship between sport and ageing, particularly in the disciplines of sociology, sports, and gerontology. Regular participation in sports or organized physical activity has been shown to significantly improve the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of elderly people. The outcomes include lowered risks of chronic illnesses, better mobility, increased self-esteem, and reduced depression and loneliness among elderly people. The participation in sport at old age bring down ageing stereotypes of elderly bodies as weak, or inactive. From the point of view of Row and Kahn's (1997) 'successful ageing' models, ongoing participation in sport represents flexibility, and self-determination. Further, sports provide elderly people with a platform to preserve identity continuity, and intergenerational communication. However, involvement in sporting activity is still stratified by socio-economic conditions, poor infrastructure, and cultural values that could discourage young as well as elderly people, particularly women, from participating in physical activity and sports. The discipline calls for more inclusive policy and age-targeted sport programs to provide access to and promote active ageing through sport.

Ageing in India is influenced by traditional cultural assumptions and changing family structures. This is due to the increasing migration from villages and agricultural setup to cities and industries. Social norms, spiritual beliefs, and neighborhood ties regulate the individual lives and family responsibilities from the beginning of life. This plays an important role in experiencing and perceiving old age.

Historically, ageing was likened with greater social standing, wisdom, and authority. The old were perceived as keepers of cultural and religious wisdom. They play fundamental roles in joint family structures. Conventional support systems like joint families are on the decline, particularly because of massive youth migration to cities and emigration to western nations. This mostly result in many of the

elderly feeling lonely. On this framework, physical activity and sports have become not just methods of keeping oneself physically fit, but also a means of ensuring social integration, emotional well-being, and a sense of belonging among the aged.

Research Objectives

- To explore the social circumstances faced by retired elderly sports persons in Punjab.
- To highlight the role of family in the social adjustment of elderly sports persons in Punjab.

Methodology

This research study is based upon a qualitative case study approach to explore the sociological factors influencing elderly sports persons in Punjab who have participated at the international level sports. The case study method as a primary source is particularly used to examine the real-life contexts that provide an in-depth understanding of elderly sports persons' experiences, circumstances, and challenges of life. Data was collected from seven elderly sports persons in Punjab, comprising of six male and one female sportsperson, through interviews and observation methods.

Literature Review

Review of literature is a summary of the already existing literature on the related topic of research. It allows to understand what is already studied, what are the key findings of existing studies, the gaps and how the present research is related to the concern.

The elderly sports persons are a crucial part of society. Doing physical activity and their engagement in sports plays an important factor in maintaining their well-being, physical fitness, and social identity even in their elderly age. The retirement led to better psychological engagement in many activities and they become physically engaged in many activities after their retirement from their job and their game. Kashif et al. (2022) conducted a study in South Punjab on retired sportspersons, highlighted the strong correlation between sports participation and improved quality of life.

The elderly sportspersons miss the sense of community that they had before retirement. They also face decline in connections that they had during their active careers, like fans, friends, etc. All these changes lead to a feeling of loneliness and isolation. Reconnecting retired sports persons with society can build a strong and emotional environment. It can also foster a sense of belongingness and also can provide opportunities for them. This support can be beneficial for ensuring their smooth transition into a fulfilling post-retirement life. Wagstaff et al. (2018) highlighted that elderly sports persons feel a void in their lives after their retirement from sports. The continuous engagement in sports or related activities can also help in overcoming the feelings of isolation among them.

The former sports persons who remain engaged in the community and sports organizations always gain significant social and emotional privileges. Their active participation in physical activities, sports, fosters a sense of community among elderly sports persons. They share their experiences, strengthen their bonds, and share common interests. This engagement ensures a sense of belongingness and allows them to feel connected and valued in a supportive network. Smith et al. (2018) highlighted the experiences of elderly citizens who actively participated in elderly sports clubs, underscores that sports clubs serve as platforms for social interaction and mutual support. They also help in achieving a positive identity in transforming their lives.

Sports play an important role in reducing social isolation that is generally prevalent among elderly people. Their active participation in sports can build meaningful relations also a sense of belongingness. It can also strengthen their social relationships in society. Sports serve as an important tool for promoting social integration. Stevens and Brown (2017) highlighted the theme of social engagement among elder sports persons. They highlighted that their participation in sports leaves a significant positive impact on society. They are engaged in physical activities which aids in enhanced social interaction and connection. They are involved in local sports events, veteran tournaments, and many community-based programs. They keep themselves socially engaged and contribute to the development of sports in society, with or without external funding. Putnam, R. D. (2000) highlighted that elderly sports persons involved in sports often benefit from enhanced social interaction. They also benefit from peer bonding resulting in reduced isolation. They contribute to sports that provided them the better life they are living presently.

Theoretical Framework

Sociology offers many conceptual and methodological approaches to examine the contribution of elderly sports persons. Studying **elderly sportspersons** through different sociological and gerontological perspectives allows researchers to understand how ageing interacts with physical activity, identity, social roles, and broader societal structures.

- **Functionalist Perspective**

The Functionalism perspective examines that every social role has a function in society and also it contributes to societal stability. Elderly sports persons contribute to social cohesion by transmitting many values like discipline, dedication, teamwork, and resilience. Elderly sports persons, though no longer participating in competitive arenas they fulfil critical roles. They advocate for infrastructural development, and they also participate in organizing sports events. In this way, they are maintaining the continuity of sports culture. They are also transmitting knowledge to young sports persons. Through their valuable coaching and training.

- **Symbolic Interactionism**

The symbolic interactionism perspective emphasizes the meanings and identities constructed through social interaction, and it also focuses on the importance of symbols, language, and daily interactions in shaping social roles. Elderly sports persons construct new identities post-retirement, and they often become symbols of perseverance and wisdom. They reconstitute their identities not merely as former sports persons but as mentors, guardians of the sports. This symbolic status within society gives them moral authority, and it also shapes their narratives and national pride.

- **Activity Theory**

Activity theory emphasizes that continuous activity leads to successful ageing. The elderly sports persons stay connected in the community where they live. Their roles are enhanced in old age. Elderly sports persons also remain engaged in social activities, sports activities. They contribute actively to mentoring young players. They play a great role in continuity. It also leads to satisfaction and psychological well-being. They follow regular fitness routines and activities.

- **Continuity Theory**

Continuity Theory, as formulated by Robert Atchley, assumes that elderly people age optimally when they uphold standard patterns of activity, values, and social roles established during previous phases of life. It highlights two types of continuity: internal continuity (identity, beliefs) and external continuity (social

roles, activities). According to the continuity theory, ageing is an adaptive process in which people continue having the habitual behavior and coping strategies to accommodate change.

According to the continuity theory, the ongoing participation in sport, be it as a competitor, a coach, or a mentor assists the elderly persons in maintaining their sense of self, health, and social integration. This also stands more favorable in context of elderly sports persons. The theory also exhibits cultural continuity, especially through such traditional sports as kabaddi and wrestling. To study the place of sport in the life of elderly people is to learn the value about the capability of physical activity as a process for inducing not only physical health but also psychological resilience and social integration.

The elderly sports persons in Punjab present a rich, under-explored example of active ageing. It defies dominant talks of dependency and decline. They are prime examples of active ageing that challenge popular perceptions of decline and dependency. Punjab's ageing athletes bear tales of strength, hardship, and pride. They once excelled on grounds and running tracks, earning glory for their state and nation. Today, despite ageing bodies and simple lifestyles, many rise early to walk, stretch, or mentor young sportspeople. Many remain to coach, inspire, or just lead by being an example in their communities. Their very existence is evidence that ageing can be active, honorable, and meaningful. They are not merely ageing sportspersons, they are mentors, role models, and living legacies. They defy the idea that old age is a period to retire and be forgotten. On the contrary, they demonstrate to us that ageing can be a strong and motivating phase of life with proper social support and appreciation. The case studies

Case Studies

Case study is one of the most generally used and accepted qualitative research techniques used in the social sciences. A case study allows the researcher to envision how a person's background, decisions, and surroundings have influenced his or her life. The purpose of this study is to achieve a holistic understanding of the life experiences of the elderly sportspersons. It closely observes their life as athletes has impacted their lives, both during active life as an athlete and in the retirement phase of life. It entails their physical well-being, emotional well-being, social relationships, and sense of identity. From their testimonies, we can understand how being a sportsperson contributed their everyday life, their future, and how they cope with ageing. Such a study provides a voice to the elderly sportspersons and enables society to understand them in a better way.

Case - 1

Nripjit Singh Bedi, also called 'Nippy', is India's most renowned and successful retired volleyball player. During his sports career, he was celebrated for his lightening pace and unparalleled agility. His name still echoes with respect in sports circles. He dedicated himself whole-heartedly to the sport. During his sports career, he was known for his discipline and determination. With his dedication and hard work, he became a national pride. Despite facing hardships in life, he never lost focus or commitment in sports. He mastered his stroke with hard work and dedication. He never failed to thrill his fans. His versatility in playing positions made him an effective team player during his prime days.

Even after retirement, he remains interested in sport and service. Now, he is engaged with community development, set up a gym close to his residence, developed parks, and formed a community badminton club to remain socially and physically active. He mentors free for poor youth. His mentorship is not limited to technical skills, but also includes moral values and psychological guidance. The shift from being an renowned sportsperson to being a mentor to many, symbolizes the continuity theory of ageing. The roles and values accumulated in sporting life are continued through activity in later life. In the post-retirement

phase, family and society played a crucial role in providing support and keeping him active during his old age. His grandchildren and children not only admire his achievements but also actively support him in maintaining the sporting facilities he has created. They provide emotional support. The local people admire him greatly, and sometimes seek his counsel on planning and youth issues. His neighbors and his former students visit him which provides him motivation and never-ending spirit that keeps him active. He stays in contact with his sports mates and students telephonically.

Presently, he lives a purposeful and disciplined life. He still maintains his fitness and dedicatedly trains young children in the society. Although he is old, he is active in body as well as mind. This is a testimony to the lifelong habits developed through sports. He engages in social activities from time to time, gives speeches on sports ethics, and joins district-level sports forums. He continues to be an inspiration not only for young volleyball players but for everyone who wishes to live an honest, dedicated, and continuous life.

Case - 2

Sajjan Singh Cheema, is a former celebrated basketball player. He has been awarded with the Arjuna award. He is praised for his off-the-court contributions just as much as his on-court achievements. Cheema was a successful sportsperson and transitioned to a much-respected coach and sports administrator. Sajjan Singh Cheema fulfills important leadership and mentoring functions as part of his role in the social activities. Using his insight and leadership, he inspires the next generation for sports. He is also a politician. His community-focused activism around social welfare has made him a devoted and trustworthy political leader.

Cheema has also devoted himself to the promotion of sports in rural Punjab. He established fields and playgrounds in multiple villages, which he funds personally and through personal connections as well as supporters. He has also a vision to improve the education of financially underprivileged children in the region by sponsoring the school fees of several underprivileged children. He also aids young aspiring sportspersons by providing sports kits, shoes, and other necessary equipment, erasing a financial hurdle for many talented youths. Sajjan Singh Cheema has also dedicated himself to the prevention of drug abuse among children by organizing campaigns aimed at the development of a sport-oriented youth culture.

Sajjan worked for the Punjab Police after retiring from basketball in 1994, eventually becoming the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) in Ludhiana. Despite his work, his family remained a source of support. Throughout his sports career, his family always stood by him and helped him with all the necessities for pursuing sports. Their shared passion for the game encouraged family support. His family supported him in balancing his personal as well as professional life during his career. They also supported him in transitioning from active sports to occupation and then to life after retirement. His daughter, Guneet Kaur, followed his footsteps and played basketball at the national level in the under-17 division. This illustrates how his family supported him and carried on his legacy.

After retirement, Sajjan joined the Aam Aadmi Party with a vision of betterment of society. He aims to address issues like education for the underprivileged, encouragement to sports, and drug prevention. His family continued to encourage him in his pursuits and supported him as he took on new duties. He remained grounded and centered because of their emotional and moral support.

Sajjan Singh Cheema's story is an excellent example of how family and social support can impact a person's life, from volunteering to sports and beyond.

Case - 3

Gurdev Singh Gill is a former Indian national footballer. He was the perennial national team defender during the golden age of Indian football. He is not only remembered for his playing skills on the field but

also for his dedication towards strengthening sports at the grass-root level. He is an Arjuna Award winner. From the Kharar Achcharwal village in Punjab, he has made his hometown a mentorship center for young footballers, creating opportunities where there were none before.

After retiring as a Commandant from the Punjab Police, he dedicated himself wholeheartedly to community sports development, conducting local tournaments, mentoring young players, and offering advice to prospective sportspersons. He worries a lot about the decline in interest in football and candidly acknowledges that cricket has eclipsed other sports. However, he stands firm in his determination to rekindle and promote football, especially in rural Punjab. According to him, participation in sports is a very effective inhibitor of drug addiction, unemployment, and problems that afflict present-day youth.

Gurdev Singh Gill is a retired international player, mentor, and community leader. He promotes unity and pride in his village and in society. He is a model of active ageing, as elderly people are productive and physically active. Gurdev Singh Gill lives a purposeful and organized life today. He begins his day early, keeping himself physically fit, visiting local grounds, and monitoring players' development. He meets local coaches, watches inter-village games, and gives motivational speeches at schools. He is astonishingly active for his age, his mere presence a reflection of strength, resilience, and service. His legacy goes beyond past success. He is still well known for his achievements and success in the fields, people's hearts, and dreams of rural Punjab's future generations.

Family and his social surroundings played an important role in building foundation of his sports career. His elderly brother was the first to identify his love for football and motivated him to pursue sports. His parents, though poor, supported him in sports. His children after his retirement have carried on his legacy by supporting him and being involved in organizing tournaments and youth camps. His wife has been a silent but robust support, assisting in the coordination of community meetings and events.

The village community considers him to be a local hero. His past teammates, local educators, and panchayat members regularly supplement his activities, contributing time, space, or resources for equipment and rewards. His house has become a hub for budding players seeking guidance, advice, and inspiration.

Case - 4

Olympian Rajinder Singh is a retired hockey player. He represented India in the Olympics and made the country proud. After his retirement from playing, he turned into a coach and mentor. His transformation from an active sportsperson to a mentor depicts how sportsmen can evolve to be national icons. He is still an active and social figure. He loves fitness and is physically fit and active even now.

Rajinder Singh has produced over 100 international hockey players. He was the sports secretary of a bank team for many years. He also served as the captain of the Indian Veteran hockey team. Today, he coaches young players and also helps poor and needy children by giving them free training. He emphasizes on discipline, teamwork, and dedication.

He is a role model to the younger generation. He is a community leader who encourages children to stay active. From a symbolic interactionist view, his identity as an Olympian is respected. His interviews and public image shape how people see ageing sportspersons with dignity.

Rajinder Singh's family has always stood by him. During his career, his parents supported his training and travels. His wife took care of the family when he was busy with matches. His children help him now with academy work and social media. They are proud of his achievements. The community at large holds him in high esteem. Ex-players, teachers, and neighboring locals frequently invite him to ceremonies. Many people seek his advice. Local leaders sponsor his academy, and villagers assist in upkeeping the ground.

Even now, he leads an extremely active and healthy life. He wakes up early and walks daily. He never misses his coaching or ground sessions. He keeps himself informed about the latest in sports and health. He talks to young players about the need for hard work. He also requests the government to provide greater support to hockey, and at the same time, he continues to work for the improvement of the sport himself. Rajinder Singh lives with a purpose to serve back to the sport by mentoring. He demonstrates that age is no hindrance. His life is a message of commitment, service, and hope for every young sportsperson.

Case – 5

Raghubir Singh Bal is a former famous hammer throw athlete. He is well known for his strength, discipline, and sportsmanship. He is a fitness lover. He goes for a walk daily, does regular exercise, and always takes care of his health and routine. He tells others to stay fit and active. He believes health is the biggest wealth.

He has played an active role in public service. He takes part in youth programs, especially those related to sports promotion. He sets a good example of intergenerational leadership, showing how elderly sportspersons guide the younger generation. From a functionalist perspective, he serves a stabilizing role in society. He supports community values, healthy living, and discipline. He also helps in training programs for young sportspersons. His advice is simple but strong “never give up, and always stay focused.”

From a symbolic interactionism view, his public speeches and presence at sports events reinforce his identity as a respected sports leader. He attends all local matches and tournaments. He motivates young players and awards prizes. He is convinced that sports can transform lives. His family has always been behind him. Throughout his career, his father assisted him to travel to competitions. His wife motivated him during challenging periods. His children look up to his dedication and support his passion for contributing to sports even after retirement. Society respects and assists him. People refer to him as "Coach Sahib." Schools, local authorities, and parents request his presence at social gatherings and seek his counsel.

Raghubir Singh Bal is leading a happy and satisfied life. He is physically and socially active and likes to spend time with people. He is often invited by schools and also frequently visits grounds to inspire the young generation. He contributes in organizing small tournaments in the village to foster younger generations interest in physical activities and fitness and keep the youths active in sports. He enjoys meeting others, listening to their stories, and discussing the value of fitness and ethics.

He is not only a retired player; he is a mentor and guide to the people. He is living life in a meaningful way, with respect and joy.

Case - 6

Saroj Bala, Asian Games Medalist, is a former hockey player from Punjab, India. She is known for her achievements on the field and also for creating a socio-cultural breakthrough. She stood among one of those sportswomen who has redefined the gender roles in Indian sports. In a time when women had limited access for everything, she bravely and boldly broke all barriers and pursued sports. Her career challenged stereotypes and proved that women could lead, compete, and also inspire. Her visibility and strength challenge the traditional mindset. She is an inspiration to most young girls and women.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, her powerful public persona is symbolic of women empowerment. She is admired in her community and frequently invited to give talks to schools and events about her experience. From a functional aspect, she serves to encourage young players to look beyond playing as a dream. She inspires them to become leaders, trainers, and coaches. She has had a large support

system in her life, her family. Her father supported her when hardly any girls played sports. Her mother managed the home so she could attend training and camps. After marriage, her husband continued to support her. Her mother-in-law also played an important role in supporting her sports as well as occupational career and also helped her in easy and smooth transition in retirement phase of life. Her children are proud of her and help with her public engagements. They also help her run coaching programs in the village. Society now respects her deeply. Many young girls look up to her as an example of strength. Schools and colleges in the region often invite her as a chief guest. Local leaders take her advice on sports events and training plans. Today, Saroj Bala is living a very active and meaningful life. She wakes up early and goes for a walk every day. She runs a small hockey training center for village girls. She teaches not just the game, but also life skills, confidence, and discipline. She attends local tournaments and gives motivational speeches. She also works with NGOs that promote women's rights and education through sports.

Saroj Bala is not just a former player. She is a symbol of power, change, and leadership. Her life is an inspiration. She shows that with courage and support; women can achieve anything and at any age.

Case - 7

Sukhpal Singh Brar, also known as 'Pali', is a former volleyball player. He is recipient of the prestigious Arjuna Award. He served as an Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Police, reflecting a life committed to both sports and public service. Currently, he holds the position of Secretary of the Punjab Police Volleyball Team. Throughout his life, Pali has embodied strength, leadership, and dedication both on and off the court.

Having retired from administrative work and professional play, he became a vocal critic of the Indian sporting ecosystem, most notably the media's fixation with cricket. He believes other sports such as volleyball are always taken for granted. In his view, government policies and sporting federations do not provide enough support, infrastructure, and media attention to non-cricket sports. He firmly believes that this disparity is one of the reasons why India's players perform poorly and have poor morale.

Pali has a vision to revive the interest in volleyball among young people. He is contributed to organize tournaments at the local level on a regular basis and also guides emerging talent. He serves as a link between generations, bringing together past winners and future champions. He freely acknowledges that while he takes pride in his work, he believes that his efforts were not sufficiently recognized and backed by institutions.

Throughout his career, his family has remained his support system. His wife stood by him during his early professional years when training, traveling, and work responsibilities were stressful. His children now help him manage events, produce social media awareness, and continue his association with youth camps. His family attends many of his sports functions, and their emotional support has kept him going and positive in his advanced years.

He is revered by the people. The younger players, parents, coaches, and even retired sportspeople seek his counsel. He is invited to sports events, panel discussions, and award ceremonies regularly. His words carry weight because of his two-career life as a sportsperson and in the police department, enabling him to speak not merely as a sportsperson but also as a leader.

Sukhpal Singh Brar lives a devoted and socially engaged life today. He maintains a routine of physical activity, morning walks, and regular visits to sports grounds. He continues to challenge policy reforms, mentor youth, and raise his voice regarding the need for equity in Indian sports. He embodies active ageing, led by mentorship, advocacy, and service.

Sukhpal Singh Brar is not just the face of volleyball achievement, but also a voice for reform, justice, and empowerment of Indian youth in sports.

Analysis And Findings

Punjab's elderly sports persons are emotionally and deeply involved with sports. They have a very firm and lifelong bond with sports. Sports is not merely physical exercise to them. It provides them with a purpose, identity, happiness and immense satisfaction. They remain physically and socially active through sports.

They always receive strong support from their families, which helps them lead an independent life with dignity. They are always encouraged by their family members to stay active and involved. They independently take care of their own routine and personal needs. They always make their own choices about health, activities, and social life. They hold high authoritative position and are always seen as responsible and capable within the family. With this support, they always lead a life of independence and self-respect.

Lutfi and Tomoliyus (2019) emphasizes that having close relationships with family members, contribute to emotional stability and well-being. Family support also assists them in coping with the transition to retirement, generating a sense of security. Their everyday physical as well as social engagement has various psychological advantages too. The support from family plays an important role in the life of elderly people. It minimizes stress and anxiety, enhances mood, and leads to emotional stability. According to the activity theory, remaining engaged in meaningful activities such as sports leads to a healthy and happier ageing process. Berkman and Glass (2000) outlined that social networks have an influence on health-related behaviour, and individuals who are more socially integrated live longer and have improved mental well-being.

There is also a general belief that elderly should retire or scale down any form of active living. But sportspersons still lead an active life, overshadowing the stereotypes related to ageing. Sports, for them, is not only for fitness alone but also a medium for social engagement. It helps them staying away from loneliness and gives them a feeling of belongingness. They attend socio-cultural events, get involve in games, and organize sports camps. This creates a sense of belonging and togetherness through these interactions.

Elderly sportspersons, especially in Punjab, present that staying socially and physically active contributes to a healthy and satisfied life. With sports, they acquire vital abilities such as cooperation and coordination. This not only maintain their physical performance but also keep them socially active. Most of them are highly motivated through sports, as it gives them purpose, clear goals, and maintain active mind and body. These activities also contribute significantly to the maintaining and strengthening of social relationships. It also reduces feelings of loneliness, and enhancing emotional well-being.

Most of them still train and mentor young sportspersons in their free time. They sponsor underprivileged youth and players and also mentors the younger generation. Their presence is honored and appreciated in the sporting world. Even with growing age, they still continue to engage in physical exercises. This illustrates the continuity theory, whereby the people attempt to sustain patterns of activity and identity despite growing old. Staying connected to sports is an important aspect of the identity of elderly sportspersons.

These case studies reflect the lives of the elderly sportspersons in Punjab. Throughout their sports careers, ageing sportspersons were always immensely encouraged by their spouses and families. Especially their

spouses and children encouraged and stood by them to compete, even in the tough times. Family members proudly celebrated their victories and always stood by them in their highs and lows. Their friends and neighbors looked up to them with admiration and respected their discipline and achievements.

During the post-retirement phase, the family support becomes more necessary. Members of the family support them psychologically and socially and also encourage them to maintain physical fitness and social engagement. Their children also join them for social engagement and tasks at times, thereby, they are able to spend more time together. Their achievements are valued at home, society and are even honored on the socio-cultural gatherings. Baker and Horton (2004) emphasizes the importance of social support systems, family, friends, and professional networks in facilitating successful support for retiring sportspersons' well-being and reconnection into society.

They are invited by local school and colleges or other socio-cultural events for motivational purposes. Their accomplishments are still celebrated in society and they are regarded as heroes and role models for the younger generation. They feel very much satisfied that their status as a sportsperson is still valued and respected. Such encouragement provides them with emotional support and confidence to remain active and socially involved. Stevens and Brown's (2017) study highlights the positive impact of engagement in sports on the social well-being of elderly sports persons, highlighting the role sports play in alleviating feelings of isolation, building meaningful relationships, and strengthening community ties, especially among the elderly.

Young sportspersons usually develop close relationships with elderly sports persons and regard them as role models and tries to learn from their experiences. These close relationships make the elderly sportspersons feel needed and useful, which also plays an essential part for their emotional well-being. Being mentors makes them feel pride and satisfaction in life, especially after retirement. Briefly, sports enable elderly people to remain active physically, psychologically satisfied, and socially engaged. It keeps them connected to others and maintains their identity. With better policies, facilities, and ongoing social support, they can have active and meaningful lives through sports.

They are mentoring the young players, organizing local tournaments, and guiding the next generation. They are contributing to the growth of sports at the grass-root level directly through their actions. Their dedication, even after circumstances like financial limitations and aid from sporting organizations, without any form of recognition or funding is remarkable. They have the vision to give back to sports and society. Their passion towards sports is what motivates them to serve to the sport which gave them the life they are leading.

These elderly sportspersons are also cultural bridges. They pass on the values, traditions, and discipline that they acquired from sports to the younger generation. By doing this, they maintain the spirit of the game and also transfer young players with values inside of the game and even values of life. The way they lead their life confronts the common notion that ageing is a period of retirement or a slowdown. Rather, they show that age can be a period of wisdom, strength, and more dedication to serve. They stay active, engaged, and respected.

From their biographies, we learn that sport is not only about competition or medals. It is also an influence for transformation towards fitness. Their lives remind us that their struggle did not cease when they retired from competition, it simply changed direction but with purpose of healthy ageing and living young even in old age.

Conclusion

This research analysis explores the life experience, social circumstances and adjustment of ageing sports persons in Punjab from the sociological point of view. In contrast to the popular notion that retired people become passive or invisible, elderly sportspersons remain very much engaged in the sporting world and even in society. This aids in easy transition and social adjustment into the retirement phase of life. They continue to make their contributions to society. They coach, attend socio-cultural events, pass on their expertise, and influence the young players around them. Their outlook is an example of the concept of active ageing, effective social integration, and community leadership.

These sportspersons are not residing in the past. They are, in fact, leading a satisfied life and are capable of affecting the future. They have stories worth being heard and respected. Appreciating their efforts and taking inspiration from their lives, can contribute to not just the growth of the sports industry but also the betterment of the health of our society.

This research invites researchers, policymakers, and sporting officials to take a closer glance at retired sportspersons. These individuals are not reminders of bygone glories; they are living representatives of change. They still inspire, lead, and act as role models to younger generations. They also bring with them lessons on spirit, discipline, and dignity.

The outcomes of this research indicate that being engaged in sports activity is advantageous in their lives. It keeps them in good condition, healthy, and in contact with others. For them, sports is a way of being a productive person, abandoning loneliness, and have a purpose in life.

Their stories remind us that being old does not imply that one has to get disengaged. Adequate support can make it possible for the elderly to continue to lead, contribute, and inspire others on and off the field.

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