

**School of Human Kinetics  
Faculty of Health Sciences  
University of Ottawa**

*EXECUTIVE MASTERS IN SPORTS ORGANISATION MANAGEMENT*



**MEMOS XXV  
2022-2023**

**“Retention of HP Women Athletes in Israel”  
“Bonnie Manor-Gotfrid”**

**Tutored by Professor: Ann Pegoraro  
University of Guelph**



## **Table of content**

Table of content .....	2
List of tables .....	3
List of Figures .....	4
Abstract-English .....	5
Abstract-French.....	6
Introduction .....	7
Review of existing knowledge .....	9
Sport Participation: Women and Girls .....	9
Benefits to Sport Participation.....	9
The High- Performance Context.....	10
Methodology.....	11
Data Collection.....	11
Data Analysis.....	12
Results.....	13
Survey Results and Analysis .....	13
Factors that Influence Athletes to Leave HP Sport.....	16
Results – Thematic Analysis .....	18
Salary, career opportunities (not in sport) and Academic studies.....	21
Coach-Athlete relationship .....	22
Relationships and starting a family .....	22
Family & role model in sport environment.....	23
Recommendations-work plan 2023-2024.....	24
Salary, career opportunities (not in sport) and Academic studies.....	25
Family support & role model-in sport environment .....	26
Relationships and starting a family .....	27
Coach/staff-Athlete relationship.....	27
Appendix 1 .....	28
20.3.23- interview with coach.....	28
Bibliography .....	30

## **List of tables**

Table 1: Sport participation.....	13
Table 2: Total "YES" answers (from each sub-group).....	16
Table 3: Example for element analysis .....	18
Table 6: Element summery by Individual and Group sport.....	18
Table 4: Top elements summery .....	19
Table 5: Top elements summery .....	19

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1: Age Distribution of Respondents .....	14
Figure: 2 Age Distribution of Respondents-Group sport.....	14
Figure 3:Age Distribution of Respondents-Individual sport .....	14
Figure 3:Age Distribution of Respondents-Individual sport .....	15
Figure 4: Years Participating in sport.....	15
Figure 5: Years Participating in sport.....	16
Figure 6: Elements influencing active athlete to consider lower professional level.....	17
Figure 7: Elements influencing Retired athlete on the decision to retire.....	17

## **Abstract-English**

This academic work investigates the barriers that lead to the dropout of women high-performance athletes in Israel.

The research begins by highlighting the gender differences in sports participation internationally, emphasizing the lower participation rates among women and girls. The study explores differences, and identifies multiple barriers such as cost, lack of role models, body image issues, and cultural aspects. The research refers to existing literature on women's and girls' sports participation, the benefits of sports participation, and the high-performance context. The research also acknowledges the unique gender barriers in Israel due to its diverse religious and ethnic composition, in addition to obligatory army service.

Additionally, it addressed the issue of facilities, practice hours, and salary gaps that affect the participation and retention of women in sports. The research uses a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and interviews. The data analysis includes both quantitative and qualitative methods. Findings of this study aim to identify the hidden barriers and provide recommendations to decrease dropout rates among women high-performance athletes in Israel. The survey, completed by 76 HP women athletes, represent approximately 38% of the total population of HP women athletes in Israel.

Factors such as family support, positive relationships, enjoyment, personal investment, and the opportunity for advancement were identified as significant in the answers. Salary was the top concern for active athletes, while retired athletes highlighted injury, burnout, positive coach relationships, and career opportunities outside of sport. Interviews provided additional support for these findings, including 9 athletes, coaches and staff. Results from the study emphasized the importance of addressing salary, positive coach-athlete relationships, accommodating family, and recognizing the potential for combining sports and academic studies. Implementing these measures can enhance the retention of women athletes in high-performance sports.

The research findings highlight the importance of positive communication and behavior with high-performance (HP) athletes. It is recommended to introduce an annual educational program, led by external professionals, for national coaches, staff, and athletes. This program should focus on building positive behaviors and fostering healthier coach-athlete relationships. Additionally, to bridge the cultural gap regarding women's participation in HP sports alongside establishing family life, the recommendation is to normalize women as mothers in the Israeli sports culture through positive media representation. Providing tools for families to support HP athletes, investing in sports values education for parents. Facilitating connections between adult HP athletes and the younger generation are also suggested. Future research on youth HP women athletes is recommended, along with regular analysis and reporting to ensure the preservation of women HP athletes.

Keywords: sport, women, high-performance, retired, active, dropout.

## **Abstract-French**

Ce travail universitaire étudie les obstacles qui conduisent à l'abandon des athlètes féminines de haut niveau en Israël.

La recherche commence par mettre en évidence les différences entre les sexes dans la participation sportive à l'échelle internationale, en mettant l'accent sur les taux de participation plus faibles chez les femmes et les filles. L'étude explore les différences et identifie plusieurs obstacles tels que le coût, le manque de modèles, les problèmes d'image corporelle et les aspects culturels. La recherche fait référence à la littérature existante sur la participation sportive des femmes et des filles, les avantages de la participation sportive et le contexte de haute performance. La recherche reconnaît également les barrières de genre uniques en Israël en raison de sa composition religieuse et ethnique diversifiée, en plus du service militaire obligatoire.

En outre, il a abordé la question des installations, des heures d'entraînement et des écarts salariaux qui affectent la participation et la rétention des femmes dans le sport. La recherche utilise une approche à méthodes mixtes, combinant des enquêtes et des entretiens. L'analyse des données comprend à la fois des méthodes quantitatives et qualitatives. Les résultats de cette étude visent à identifier les obstacles cachés et à fournir des recommandations pour réduire les taux d'abandon chez les femmes athlètes de haut niveau en Israël. L'enquête, complétée par 76 athlètes féminines HP, représente environ 38% de la population totale en Israël. Des facteurs tels que le soutien familial, les relations positives, le plaisir, l'investissement personnel et la possibilité d'avancement ont été identifiés comme significatifs dans les réponses. Le salaire était la principale préoccupation des athlètes actifs, tandis que les athlètes à la retraite soulignaient les blessures, l'épuisement professionnel, les relations positives avec les entraîneurs et les opportunités de carrière en dehors du sport. Les entrevues ont fourni un soutien supplémentaire à ces résultats, y compris 9 athlètes, entraîneurs et membres du personnel. Les résultats de l'étude ont souligné l'importance d'aborder le salaire, les relations entraîneur-athlète positives, l'accommodement de la famille et la reconnaissance du potentiel de combiner les études sportives et universitaires. La mise en œuvre de ces mesures peut améliorer la rétention des athlètes féminines dans les sports de haut niveau. Les résultats de la recherche soulignent l'importance d'une communication et d'un comportement positifs avec les athlètes de haute performance (HP). Il est recommandé d'introduire un programme éducatif annuel, dirigé par des professionnels externes, pour les entraîneurs nationaux, le personnel et les athlètes. Ce programme devrait se concentrer sur la création de comportements positifs et sur la promotion de relations entraîneur-athlète plus saines. De plus, pour combler le fossé culturel concernant la participation des femmes aux sports HP parallèlement à l'établissement d'une vie de famille, la recommandation est de normaliser les femmes en tant que mères dans la culture sportive israélienne grâce à une représentation médiatique positive. Fournir des outils aux familles pour soutenir les athlètes HP, investir dans l'éducation aux valeurs sportives pour les parents. Il est également suggéré de faciliter les liens entre les athlètes HP adultes et la jeune génération. Des recherches futures sur les jeunes athlètes féminines HP sont recommandées, ainsi que des analyses et des rapports réguliers pour assurer la préservation des athlètes féminines HP.

Mots-clés: sport, femmes, haute performance, retraitées, actives, décrocheurs.

## **Introduction**

Internationally research shows that women participate in sport less than men do. In England for example, there are 2 million fewer women who actively play sports than men (Fasting, 2019, p.5). According to the 2020 rally report, 62% of Canadian girls do not participate in sport at all, 1/3 of those who do, dropout by the time they are teens, and only 16% of women aged 16-63 involved in sport actively (Keyser-Verreault et al., 2018, p.7).

Research shows that differences between women and men's participation in sport starts early. Participation is highest at young age, when the numbers of women engaging in sport decreases as they arrive to adolescence years. Barriers to women and girl's participation in sport are multiple, and particularly for women who face multiple forms of disadvantage, including, religious, ethnic groups, social-economic class, and minority status. The cost of participating in sports, lack of role models, body image issues and concerns about cultural appropriateness can all impact women's level of participation (Johnson, Et al., 2008). Studies have demonstrated that sport has the capacity to be a tool to generate personal change for girls or women. (Lim, Dixon, 2018). It has been suggested that women who actively participate in sport have gained a sense of competence, confidence, independence, and control over their bodies and lives (Trussell, et al., 2021).

Gender barriers for sport participation in Israel are even greater. The Israeli society is composed of various religion and ethnic origin groups with different norms regarding women's place in society in general and in sport in specific. From approximately 9.5 million citizens in 2022, about 2 million are Arabs (Muslim's, Cristian's, Druz and Bedewing tribes), 7 million are Jewish (1.8m are ultra-orthodox-Jewish), and 0.5m are from other religious groups (CBS, 2022). Among most of the orthodox Jewish and Muslim groups the participation in sport, and specifically in competitive sport, is very low, while for women there is almost no participation at all. This data is an important parameter contributing to the total low participation rates in sport in Israel. For the non-orthodox Jewish, the obligation to serve in the army at the age of 18 in both genders sets additional obstacle for those who wish to take the professional sport path. Although the army allows a specific number of soldiers in the athlete service program, for those who do not reach a certain level of achievement by adolescence year, the chances to stay in a high-performance path becomes impossible. Another important barrier which influences the participation of young girls and women is facilities and practice hours. According to conversations with large clubs' coaches in group sport federations (e.g., basketball, football, volleyball, and water polo), training hours for women and especially young girls are still pushed aside to the margins. In football and handball the gap is even greater, and many clubs practice in late hours, and in inappropriate, old, or not suitable facilities, while men and young boys are given the better afternoon hours, and the better courts and halls. At the elite league and national team level, facilities quality and hours might improve, but the gender gap remains. In football for example, the women first league went on a protest which ended in a lawsuit, demanding to equal the conditions of courts for women football. Salary gaps between professional men and women athletes in Israel are another obstacle for retention of young women athletes. Many athletes, sensing they have no future in professional sport occupation choose to drop out and invest their time in other fields of life.

Government investment in sport for the benefit of the society is clear to all, and still the budget invested in sport in Israel is very low. According to 2022 state budget the Sport Ministry budget was only 0.4% percent of the total budget, that sums in 1.7 billion NIS. Trying to address insufficient budget and gender gaps, the Ministry of Sport has issued in 2007 a program aimed to promote women in sport. The program is called Athena and is managed through a closed budget divided to 12 chosen main sports fields. By hiring a woman in each of the federations, the program helps to address gender issues in various fields such as facilities, professional surrounding, and gender knowledge. In addition, the program supports marketing and gender equity in sport in the wider scope for clubs, schools, and parents, including role models' programs, lectures, big events, and more. On the high-performance side, Athena and the NOC issued a sub-department, governed by both, providing the missing professional support for those on the competitive path. Research conducted by Athena in Israel, shows that a change occurred throughout the years both in numbers of girls participating in grassroots and high-performance sport, as well as in the knowledge of those surrounding the athlete, but the road is still long for gender equality in sport in Israel.

Therefore, the purpose of this research project was to identify barriers that effect and lead to drop-out of women high-performance athletes in Israel.



## **Review of existing knowledge**

In this chapter, the literature pertaining to women's and girls' sport participation will be reviewed along with the evidence that shows the benefits of sport participation. Lastly literature regarding high performance sport for women will be reviewed. women

### **Sport Participation: Women and Girls**

Studies examining sport participation have suggested that sport drop-out is relatively high, particularly during adolescence. There is evidence that adolescents play fewer sports than in childhood, and many drop out of sport completely. A retrospective study conducted in the United States reported that 94% of Grade 10 students had withdrawn from at least one sport since Grades 1 and 30% had permanently withdrawn from sport participation. (Rochelle, et al., 2020).

In another study of a total of 465,403 sport participants, it was reported that participation rate per resident population in Victoria, Australia was 40% for ages 10–14 and 23% for 15–19 years (Rochelle, et al, 2018). In Israel the situation is unfortunately not better. According to the central bureau of statistics (CBS,2020), only 3% of girls aged 12-18 and 10% of boys this age was occupying in competitive sport. Israeli sport ministry report 2019-20 (MOIS, 2020) indicate that 20% of the registered athlete were women, when in adolescent years they drop to 18%. Looking at the participation rate in 2019-2020 there is a clear gap from girl's participation in competitive group and individual sport In Israel (MOIS, 2020). Only 16% of girls are participating in competitive group sport, when in individual sport the number is higher and set on 56%. An explanation might be that many young girls participate in rhythmic gymnastics, which is mostly identified as a sport for women.

### **Benefits to Sport Participation**

Women participating in sport can benefit the individual in various fields from academic achievement, health, and wellbeing to influencing their surroundings and set an example and role model for others (Johnson, et al., 2008). When observing the wider scope, it has shown that the state economy benefits from sport participation as well, from lower rates of different diseases which women tend to suffer from more such as diabetes, osteoporosis, depression, obesity-related illness, and type 2 diabetes, to increase of employment rate and productivity. Women participation in sport is linked to longer-term labor market participation, and gender equality in the labor market is associated with a positive impact on countries' GDPs (Johnson, et al., 2008).The sports industry itself would also make a greater contribution to the economy through a rise in consumer spending, increased direct employment to meet demand, and increased output of goods and services (Johnson, et al., 2008).

For adolescence, sport participation has been identified as a valuable element in Positive youth development (PYD). A strengths-based perspective, focused on building natural skills, and aid to achieve healthy development and functioning. Sport participation helps to develop individuals who are healthy, engaged, and productive members of society, both in youth and later adulthood. (O'Connor, et al, 2019). Limited research focused on ways to retain women participation in sport, which emphasized the need for better understanding of the reasons for drop out, and in particular in adolescence years (Johnson, et al., 2008). Growing understanding of aspects such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, and/or social class of women's, draws attention to further complexities in understanding women's sport participation over the past two decades (Trussell, et al., 2021). Literature has emphasized the need for change in sport programs, to be strategically developed, managed, and governed in way that represent girls and women. it is now more than ever important to truly understand what it means to be

girls and women in the sport space. Although gender-equity policies are meant to enhance opportunities, research has pointed out the difficulties with change and implementation, where power positions are still mainly dominated by men leading the sport agenda. (Lim & Dixon, 2018)

### **The High- Performance Context**

Theories and models have been developed to better understand the different pathways of athletes, both across the lifespan generally, and for transitions such as into elite participation. These models identify six main elements: sport enjoyment, involvement opportunities/benefits, personal investments, social support, involvement or attractive alternatives, and social constraints. (Rochelle, et al, 2020). Looking at High Performance (HP) youth sport, it is typically focused on talent development and identification. HP youth sport is characterized by high pressure environments where the focus is on successful results often at the expense of holistic development. Individuals within HP youth sport environments are often faced with personal challenges which may not be conducive to psychosocial. For example, highly competitive sports environments have been linked with antisocial behaviors, low self-esteem, stress, burnout, injuries, and dropout among youth participants (O'Connor, et al., 2019). Only a third or less of individuals participate in high performance youth sport and progress to professional adult competitions, there is a need to better understand the high-performance youth sport environment (O'Connor, et al., 2019). Studies are required to better inform sport management policy and practice on participation to elite levels of competition, including detailed analysis of patterns of sport participation, retention, and attrition across the lifespan. (Rochelle, et al., 2020)

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to discover through interviews and surveys the unknown, hidden, and personal barriers that effect and lead to drop-out of women high-performance athlete in Israel. The survey part was administered to all high-performance women athletes in individual and group sport to receive a wider scope of opinions and data. The Interviews were focused mainly on individual sport, divided to 3 sections: athlete, coaches, and staff and was conducted among women athletes in 3 stages of their career: retired, at the beginning of their HP path and at the peak. Additionally, interviews were conducted with Coaches of national team and academy, and professional staff surrounding the athlete. By identifying key elements which repeat in both individual and group sport, this study will used the results to inform recommendations to help decrease dropout rate of young women from HP sport, and better maximize the NOC and Federations investment in future women HP athletes.

## **Methodology**

### **Data Collection**

The goal of the data collection for this research was to better understand the hidden, and more personal barriers which effect and lead to drop-out of women HP youth athletes in Israel. Around the world, a number of factors have been identified as to what retains young women athletes in amateur sport, while other research has suggested factors that promote retention in adult HP athletes in both genders. When designing this research to identify the barriers and motives for drop-out women athletes from of HP path in Israel, the data collected was focused on identifying whether the reasons for drop out from HP sport, is similar to the reasons identified in amateur sport for women athletes.

As such, the best method collection chosen for the research was a combination of survey and interviews. The survey was used to provide a wider scope of information on a range of athletes from different sport fields. In addition, it provided a perspective on different stages of professional career, and a wide range of age groups. The survey was distributed by text message and sent directly to each player to better personalize the process. When filling the form Questions directed and personalized depending on the answer given by the athlete. For example, if a respondent selected “retired from sport” as their current status, the next question that appeared was different from the one presented to a respondent who selected “current HP athlete”.. All answers were collected by Google Forms and analyzed in Excel.

The survey distributed to athletes in both group and individual sport at 3 stages of their professional career: beginning of professional career, retired, and at the peak. The survey was distributed to athletes in the age of 18+ to ensure that all respondents were of an age to consent themselves to participating in the survey. With the help of the Athena Top-team program, which gather data on all high-performance women athlete in individual sports in Israel. A follow up round of personal SMS was sent to the players to prompt responses. In addition, by personal connection, and to establish a wider range of data, that survey was sent to 4 national women group sports: volleyball, football, water polo and basketball. By gathering information from the 4 national group sport teams, this would allow the exploration of any similarities and differences between group and individual sport answers.

The interviews were divided to 3 sections focused mainly on individual sport, and included: athletes, coaches, and supporting staff. Interviews questions for athletes included the questions sent in the survey but had an additional second part of open questions asking on one's personal history, coach relationship, family, and allowed the athlete talk openly and in details on these issues. The athlete interviews consisted of players in all group ages, and in different stages of their career.

As a complementary, interviews were also conducted with several high-performance experienced and well-known coaches, working in academy and national teams, as well as professional staff surrounding the athlete to establish a strong wide perspective for drop-out motivation. A total of 9 interviews were conducted and included women and men coaches and staff.

## **Data Analysis**

Data for this project was collected and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The HP athletes' survey was written in Google Forms and sent by e-mail or SMS. Surveys were also distributed with the NOC channels or through NF representatives, following request from the NOC to ensure credibility and formal process.

Google Forms enabled easy access with less barriers for the athletes, as it is a common software for survey in Israel, which enabled a larger number of survey responses for the project. Numerical data was analyzed in Excel software to identify trends. Presentation of the data shown by graphs and charts helped to identify trends in the survey responses.

The interviews with athletes and coaches were conducted either in a recorded face-to-face interview or through a recorded zoom or recorded phone call. The interviews were used to identify main themes from the professional side (e.g., coaches, staff), and compare these results with those provided in the athletes' interviews. The interview results were used to support insights discovered in the survey and identify any differences. In collaboration and with the assistance of the NOC, specific Coaches and athletes were chosen for the interviews. All were approved and supported by NOC, which contacted them personally by e-mail or phone call prior to the interview, to ensure the cooperation and credibility of the research.

The interviews were transcribed by Word dictate feature and manually checked. Language differences from Hebrew to English were made manually to assure all information is valid and accurate. Interviews data was analyzed manually as well, to better identify main themes repeating in the answers.

## Results

This research project utilized two methods of data collection: a survey and semi structured interviews. A survey was circulated to approximately 200 high performance (HP) women athletes in Israel and was answered by 76 HP women athletes, providing a sample of approximately 38% of the total population of HP women athletes.

The second data collection involved 9 interviews with individuals from both individual and group sport. The sample included athletes (n=4), HP coaches (n=4), and NF woman CEO (n=1). Out of the coaches, 3 were women, all former HP athletes themselves in the past. Athletes interviewed were split between *Active* (n=2) and *Retired* (n=2). Interview questions similar to the survey but were formulated according to the flow and development of the conversation with the interviewee.

### Survey Results and Analysis

The survey part represented a large range of 20 different Olympic sports fields in both *Individual* and *Group* sports. All athletes answering the survey are or were HP athletes, in high rank level in Europe championship, world games, or Olympic games in their sport as can be seen in *Table 1: Sport participation*, a majority or 79% of the athletes participating in the survey represented *Individual* sports, and 21% from *Group* sports. The largest count of answers represented: Judo (n=22), Volleyball (n=9) followed by Athletics (n=5) & Artistic Gymnastics (n=5).

*Table 1: Sport participation*

	<b>Sport Fields</b>	<b>Active</b>	<b>Retired</b>	<b>Count</b>
<b>Individual Sport</b>	Sailing	5% (n=4)	0% (n=0)	4
	Judo	21% (n=16)	8% (n=6)	22
	climbing	4% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	3
	Archery	1% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	1
	Triathlon	1% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	1
	Weightlifting	5% (n=4)	0% (n=0)	4
	Olympic shooting	3% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	2
	Biking	5% (n=4)	0% (n=0)	4
	Rowing	1% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	1
	Fencing	4% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	3
	Athletics	7% (n=5)	0% (n=0)	5
	Swimming	1% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	1
	Gymnastics	1% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	1
	Artistic Gymnastic	0% (n=0)	7% (n=5)	5
	Taekwondo	1% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	1
Artistic Swimming	1% (n=1)	1% (n=1)	2	
<b>Total Sum- Individual Sport</b>		<b>48</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>60 (79%)</b>
<b>Group Sport</b>	Volleyball	12% (n=9)	0% (n=0)	9
	Beach Volleyball	1% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	1
	Water polo	3% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	2
	Football	5% (n=4)	0% (n=0)	4
<b>Total Sum-Group Sport</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16 (21%)</b>

<b>Total Number</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>76</b>
---------------------	-----------	-----------	-----------

The first part of the survey asked general demographic data and found that the majority of 77% of the athletes (n=59) answering the survey were between the age of 18-24. As illustrated in Figure 1: Age Distribution of Respondents, many of the athlete responses were from athletes between the age 19-21. This finding is valuable to the research, as in most sports it's also an important main period in a professional career. The largest count of 59% represented age 18-22 (n=38) in Individual sport, and in Group sport age 19-22 had 63% (n=10) of the answers as presented in Figure 2: Age Distribution of Respondents-Group sport and 3. Age Distribution of Respondents-Individual sport.

From Israel's perspective, this age range is valuable to the retention and preservation of women HP athlete, as between the ages of 18-20 most women serve as soldiers in the army, in parallel to their sport career.

Figure 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

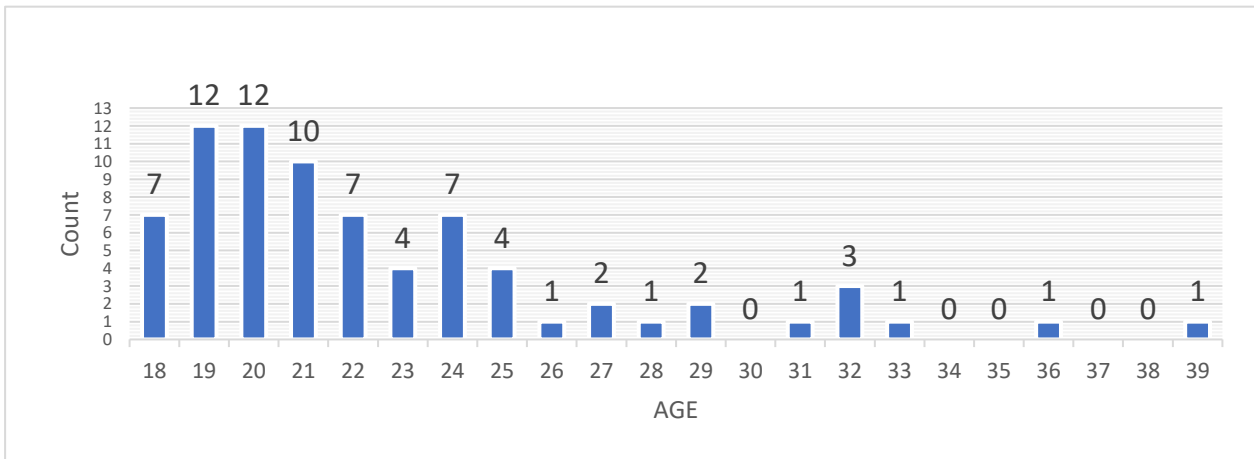


Figure 2: Age Distribution of Respondents-Group sport

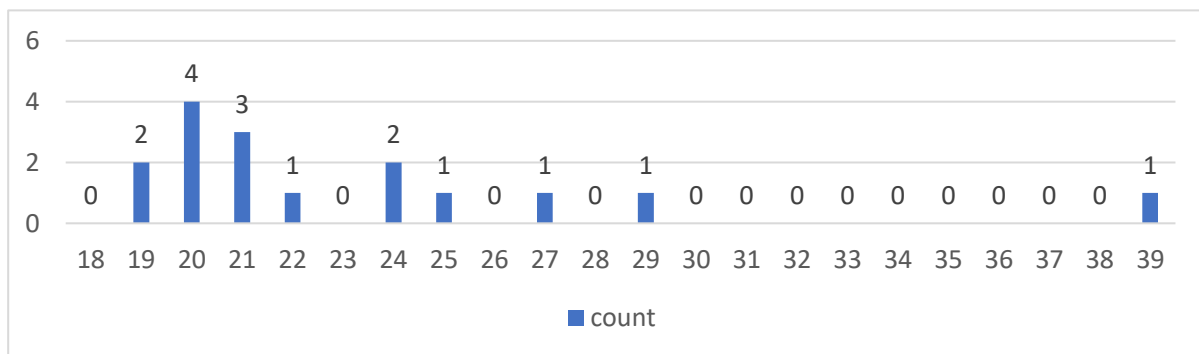


Figure 4: Age Distribution of Respondents-Individual sport

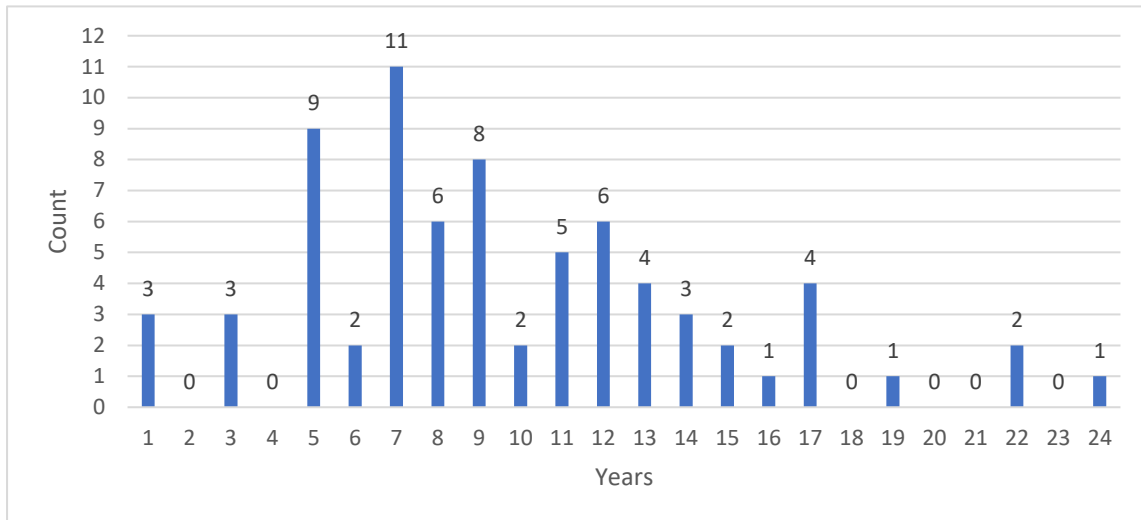
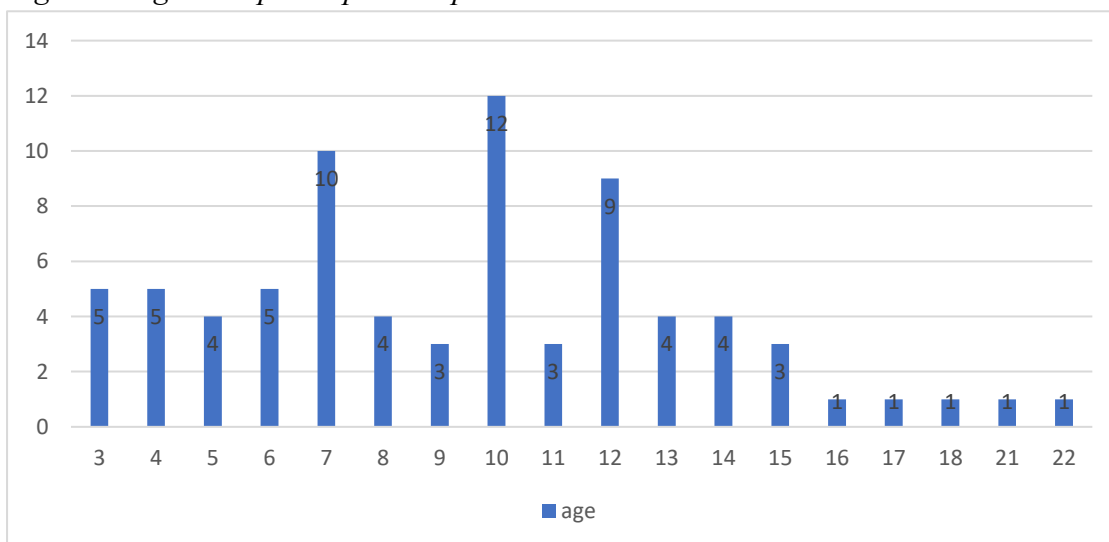


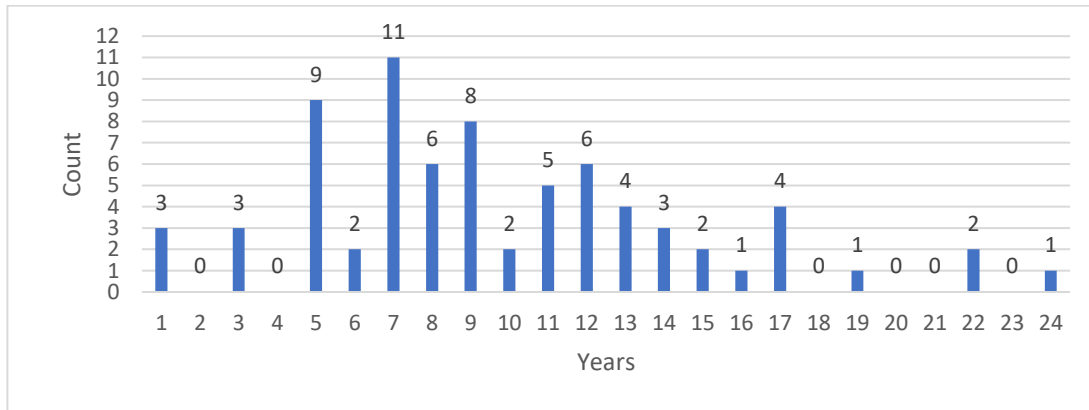
Figure 4: Age start participate in sport below, presents the starting age for participating in sport. Age was distributed evenly from age 3 to 15 with a significant period of 32% (n=24) between the ages of 10-12, following 25% (n=19) between age 5-7 years. Highest responses in total of 40% were of age 7 with 13% (n=10) age 10 with 15 (n=12) and age 12 with 12% (n=9) years old.

Figure 5: Age start participate in sport



From the answers shown in Figure 6: Years Participating in sport below, most athletes 50% (n=38) athletes participated in sport for between 5-10 years, and 26% (n=20) have participated between 11-13 years.

Figure 7: Years Participating in sport



The first part of the survey also examined general topics impacting the athlete’s life, such as the level of facilities available for training and participation of family members in competitive sport, with the aim of identifying significant elements that might have an impact. As presented in *Table 2*, 63% (n=48) answered that there is no family member participating in competitive sport in their family. Among the other 37% (n=28) athletes answering “yes”, 82% (n=23) mentioned they have a brother or sister in HP sport. The athletes were also asked if they had a woman coach or assistance coach throughout their career. Most of the athletes, 84%, answered they had.

Table 2: Total "YES" answers (from each sub-group)

	Good quality of facilities in clubs	Good quality of facilities in HP	Woman coach
Group	56% (n=9)	38% (n=6)	100% (n=16)
Individual	88% (n=53)	87% (n=52)	80% (n=48)
<b>Sum</b>	<b>82% (n=62)</b>	<b>76% (n=58)</b>	<b>84% (n=64)</b>
Retired	75% (n=9)	92% (n=11)	100% (n=12)
Active	83% (n=53)	73% (n=47)	81% (n=52)

### **Factors that Influence Athletes to Leave HP Sport**

The second part of the survey asked questions around the main parameters that had significant impact on the thoughts/motives for an athlete to retire or drop out of sport. Athletes were asked to rank 13 elements from “no influence at all” = (1) or “little influence” = (2), “high degree of influence” = (3) and “very high degree of influence” = (4). Some questions were also explored in the interviews conducted. The following section reports the results from the survey as well as supporting or contrasting results from the interviews. The data below reveals that there is much similarity in responses between *Active* and *Retired Athletes*, but with *Active Athletes*, answer choice number 1 – “no influence at all” was dominant with a huge gap from all other rankings while *Retired Athletes* ranking was spread more evenly. To evaluate which elements were the significant ones of them all on current athletes, an element that received a response rate of 30% and above was used to represent a high-level response for *active* athletes. For *Retired Athletes* the percentage of elements that was selected by 50% of respondents and above was used as the standard. Establishing these standards allowed further examination of what elements were impacting these two groups of



athletes. Figure 6 illustrates the results of *Active Athletes*, while the results for the *Retired Athletes* are presented in Figure 7.

Figure 8: Elements influencing active athlete to consider lower professional level

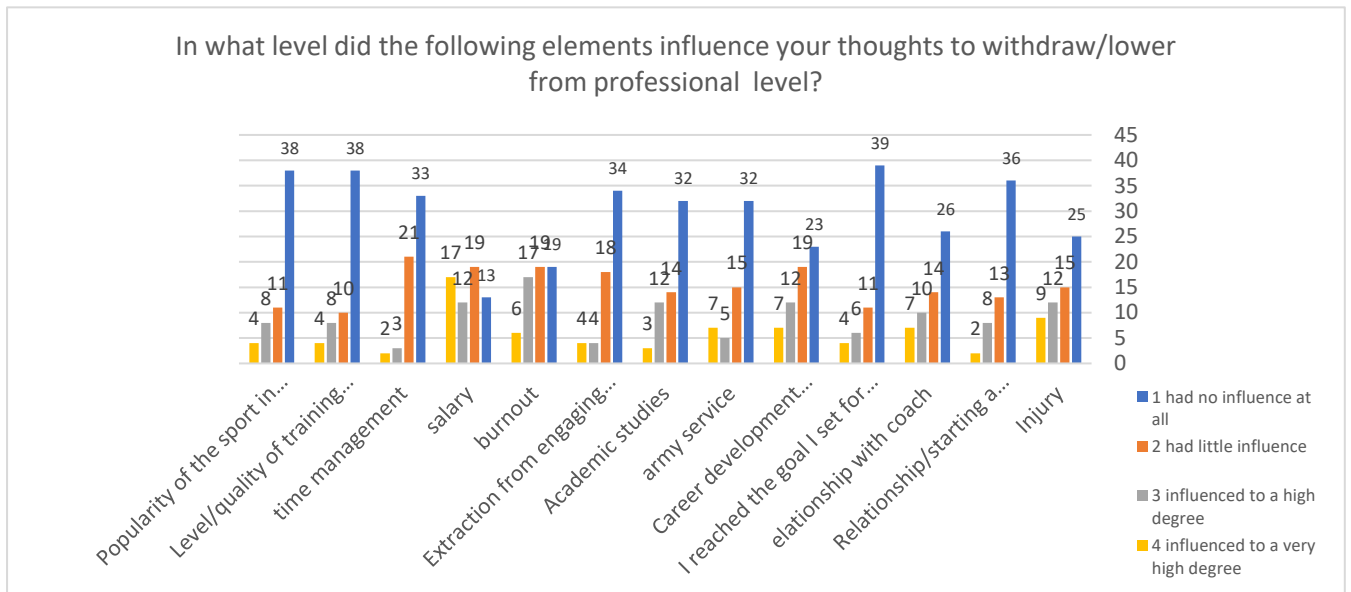
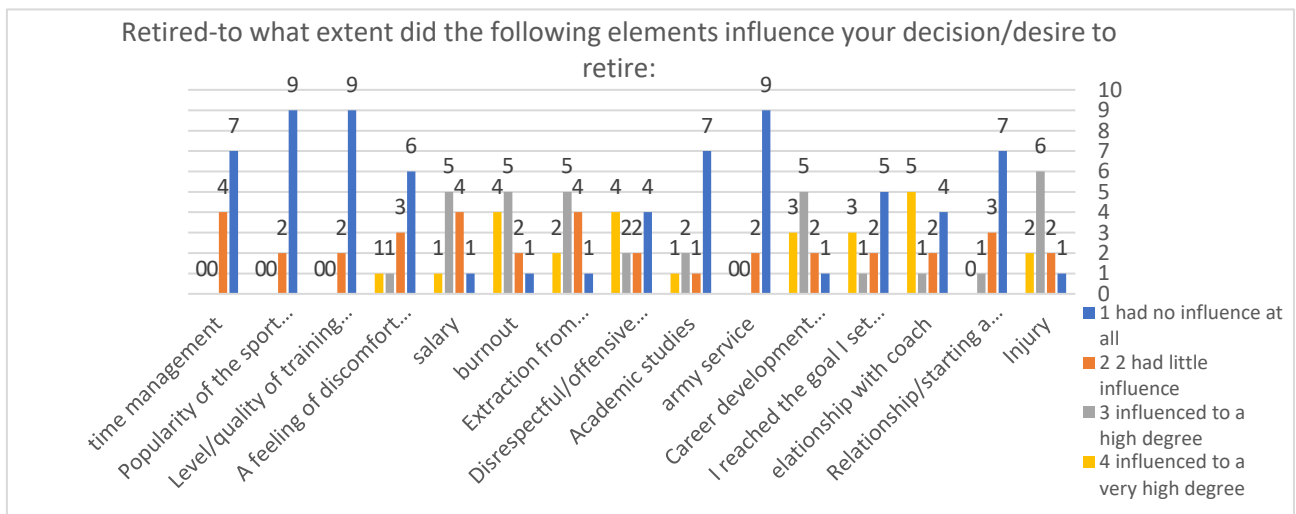


Figure 9: Elements influencing Retired athlete on the decision to retire



Following, each one of the elements was analyzed separately as shown in Table 3: Example for element analysis by the example for “Injury” element. Percentage was accumulated by adding the total number of high influence responses (e.g., respondents choose either 3 or 4) and then dividing by total number of answers of the chosen group to discover the ranking impact of a certain element. By analyzing each element from different parameters, we could identify which ones were ranked the highest by the athletes, enabling to identify the elements that athletes selected as having an impact on them continuing HP sport participation.

Table 3: Example for element analysis

**Injury**

number of players answering 3+4 in group/individual/retire/active

	Active	Retired	Sum
Individual	19	7	46%
Group	2	1	16%
Sum	33%	67%	38%

percent of active players answering 3+4 between group/individual

	Active		
Individual	40%		
Group	12%		

For this research project, the goals were to find out not only what impacts a woman athlete’s choice to leave HP but also what factors might help retain these athletes. During the data collection phase, several elements were identified in the studies as significant in keeping women in sports. These elements were the focus of the last section of the survey of *HP Active Athletes* where they were asked: “What kept you in HP Sport?”. Elements like *family support*, *positive relationships*, *appreciation*, *personal investment*, and more were rated on a scale of importance between 1-4. The results, as presented in *Table 6* show that the leading elements for retention were enjoyment with 93% (n=57), personal investment 89% (n=55), the feeling of not yet achieving professional goals(n=57), and the opportunity to advance to higher levels 87% (n=53). Out of 16 *Group Sport* athletes’ family support also ranked high with 75% (n=12), and with *Individual Sport* athletes the feeling of real chance to succeed ranked highest at 85% (n=4).

Table 4: Element summery by Individual and Group sport

	enjoyment	positive Relationship with my coach	I feel invested in the sport and it’s important to me	I feel like I have a chance to succeed	I feel that I have not exhausted my abilities	An opportunity to advance to a higher level	Social support-friends	family support	Social involvement	involvement in sport activities for the next generations	feel appreciated / important
INDIVIDUAL (n=48)	(n=42) 88%	(n=36) 75%	(n=41) 85%	(n=41)85%	(n=45)94%	(n=40)83%	(n=26)54%	(n=35)73%	(n=32)67%	(n=26)54%	(n=25)52%
GROUP (n=16)	(n=15) 94%	(n=7) 44%	(n=14) 88%	(n=12)75%	(n=12)75%	(n=13)81%	(n=11)69%	(n=12)75%	(n=7)44%	(n=4)25%	(n=8)50%
SUM (n=64)	(n=57) 93%	(n=43) 69%	(n=55) 89%	(n=53)87%	(n=57)93%	(n=53)87%	(n=37)60%	(n=47)76%	(n=39)65%	(n=30)48%	(n=33)53%

**Results – Thematic Analysis**

In this section, the thematic results from the interviews are presented and analyzed to expand the understanding of these elements, to offer solutions and areas for future approach. Results from the survey are also presented in support of each theme. Overall, the themes identified indicate that the major parameters effecting retention and dropout of women athletes are same for both *Active* and *Retired Athletes*, in group and individual sports but the importance given to each factor was where the difference was noted. For *Active Athletes*, *salary* was the top

reason that the women would consider leaving their sport, while for retired athletes, *injury*, *burnout*, *Positive relationship with the coach and career opportunities (not in sport)* also received high rankings. *Retired Athletes* ranked one additional element as high *Exhaustion from engaging sport*. The following sections will outline the major themes found in the interview data collected. Results from the survey will also be presented along with evidence from the interviews conducted to provide additional support for the themes.

Table 4 below presents a summary of the top 5 elements identified in the survey, showing the differences in ranking for each one by each athlete group. This helps to indicate a higher or lower impact on a certain group. *Salary* came first in all cross analysis with 45% in *Active*, 53% in *Group sport* and biggest impact in total of 46%. *Burnout* was next with 75% in *Retired* and a total 42%, and *Injury* closed the top 3 with 38% in total, and 46% -the highest score among *Individual sport*.

Table 5: Top elements identified as reasons for dropping out of sport

Element	Active	Retired	“Individual” sport	“Group” sport	Total impact
“Salary”	45%	50%	44%	53%	46%
“Burnout”	36%	75%	42%	42%	42%
<i>Injury</i>	33%	67%	46%	-	38%
<i>Career opportunities</i>	30%	67%	35%	37%	36%
<i>Relationship with coach</i>	-	50%	37%	37%	30%
<i>Exhaustion from engaging sport</i>	-	58%	-	-	20%

To evaluate if any differences emerged in the responses, based on the length of an athlete’s career, all survey elements analyzed based on 3 categories of career length: under 10 years, between 10-15 years, and above 15 years. Below is shown in Table 5 the results of the Top 5 elements. For *Retired Athletes*, *Burnout*, *Injury* and *Career development opportunities (not in sports)*, had increased with time, especially from 11 years and up. *Salary* was identified as a major factor in both groups, but looking at *Retired Athletes*, the factor increased over time while for *Active Athletes* it climbed to its peak between 11-15 years and then dropped down. An interesting opposite response occurs for *Active Athletes* regarding *Career development opportunities (not in sports)*, starting with 53% under 10 years in sport, and ending at only 16% for over 15 years in sport. Such a difference might suggest that *Active Athletes who* participate in HP sport for more than 15 years, might see the competitive sport occupation as their major career and not as a chapter in life.

Table 6: Top elements summery

Retired Athletes								
Injury			Career development opportunities (not in sports)			Exhaustion from engaging in competitive sports		
11<	11-15	15>	11<	11-15	15>	11<	11-14	15>
0%	38%	63%	0%	29%	71%	0%	33%	67%
Relationship with coach			salary			burnout		
11<	11-15	15>	11<	11-15	15>	11<	11-15	15>

0%	67%	33%	0%	40%	60%	0%	44%	56%
----	-----	-----	----	-----	-----	----	-----	-----

### Active Athletes

Injury			Career development opportunities (not in sports)			Exhaustion from engaging in competitive sports		
11<	11-15	15>	11<	11-15	15>	11<	11-14	15>
45%	40%	15%	53%	32%	16%	50%	38%	13%
Relationship with coach			salary			burnout		
11<	11-15	15>	11<	11-15	15>	11<	11-15	15>
47%	35%	18%	39%	36%	25%	18%	55%	27%

For *Retired Athletes*, *Burnout* ranked at 75% and *Exhaustion from engaging in competitive sports* ranked with 58%, compared to low ranking in the other group. This was corroborated through the interviews, as one *retired* athlete mentioned: " *This sense of burnout. I didn't wake up in the morning with the same hunger. It got harder and harder. I stopped loving what I was doing*" (*Athlete1*), pointing out that towards the end of their career, these elements influence each other when considering retiring.

The positive relationship with the coach element was the biggest differences between the 2 groups: 27% (n=17) *Active Athletes*, and 50% in *Retired Athletes* (n=6). One assumption to the gap is that *Active* athletes are still in the "system" and lack the *Retired Athletes'* perspective and point of view, as well as the ability to openly express themselves. As mentioned by *Athlete1*: " *The coach was a control freak. If you train, train less, if you work, don't work, if you are at school, exams are not important, morning training is...mainly it affected everyday life. How much you enjoyed or suffered along the way. The girls there really wanted to succeed, and this was the only way. Take it or leave it, but then it's giving up your dream. There is no other way...the coach needs and wants to bring results, there is not always a thought about the athlete as an individual, but as part of the larger system and goal*". Combining data for average age of 9.5 years old starting to participate in competitive sport, the age of 21-25 as the most affected by coach relationship, in terms of their retention in sport. This is also a prime age range for athletes in the HP career in most of the sport fields.

To better understand the sense of protection and personal space of the athletes, an additional element was asked only for *Retired Athletes* in the survey: *Disrespectful/offensive attitude*. The reason to ask only *Retired Athletes* was to receive open free answers, which with athletes still in the system, could be tilted. Of the *Retired Athletes*, 50% (n=6) ranked this as a major factor contributing to their drop out from competitive sport with 100% (n=2) from group sport, and 40% (n=4) from individual sport indicating this element as a reason for dropping out of sport participate. For future research, it would be interesting to evaluate these findings with answers from *Active Athletes* and youth HP athletes.

In several interviews, the element of *starting a family* came up strong, indicating the change in other sports fields around the world are recognizing and supporting the combination of parenting and competitive career. As mentioned by *ceo1*: " *I think starting a family is a very significant issue. We don't have a culture of women athletes with a family.... There are women in the world aged 30 plus who are champions, some of them with families or mothers. I don't think we are ready for it even mentally to have a woman who has a child to continue in the HP. It still sounds like a dream. We don't have anyone today, not even at the highest levels, who has a child, even though it is part of the culture of sport worldwide. World champions*

*are all married and with children. This is one of the things that is far from our culture. We are far from it”.*

### **Salary, career opportunities (not in sport) and Academic studies**

*Salary*, throughout the research, was major element for all, especially for *Active Athletes* with less than 11 years in HP sport. For *Retired Athletes*, salary was strong influencer to their drop out decision and increased as years go higher. *Career development outside of sports* parameter, also marked high for *Active Athletes* with under 11 years in sport, then drop down dramatically, while with *Retired Athletes* the trend was opposite when the pick came after 15 years in sport. Looking at these two results alongside the cultural aspects, one possible explanation might be that as the years pass, those who stay in the HP path, consider it as a legitimate main profession, and seek less career opportunities outside of sport. Therefore, these athletes might also expect to be paid accordingly so salary becomes a major issue.

In Israeli culture, being a competitive women athlete is not considered a respectful profession but more of a temporary pursuit. Girls are not encouraged to engage in a professional sports career. Therefore, HP women athletes must continue in their sport while simultaneously working to acquire a profession to prepare for a career in “real life”. This issue was brought up by several coaches and athletes in the interviews, who stated that often the best athletes travel abroad for higher education studies, where they can combine it with HP career. As said by *Coach2* from group sport: “*Those who grow up here (Israel) don't see a future... They can't combine professional career and studies. Many want to go to college because there the framework allows them to combine it all. ...I don't see how it can be integrated in Israel, which is why many go to study abroad and then never return”.* *Coach 1* also echoed this sentiment: “*Women in Israel are very accomplished women. It is very difficult for them to support themselves financially as while continue as HP athlete...study and also have to work because the sport does not pay enough to support them... Then they receive good offers from colleges, and they leave and eventually retire”.* *Athlete2*, an active athlete qualifying to the Olympics who leave abroad the past few years, summarize her daily struggle: “*As an athlete, the financial difficulty is the hardest. If there are no achievements now, there are no scholarships. Sometimes the scholarships are not enough and then you must look for a job, then you can't train and it's a wheel. Those who don't have a supportive family cannot survive... I'm recovering from an injury, and there are no target competitions yet so I can't get scholarships... these months are very difficult. I need to get a rank to keep a scholarship. As soon as I get it, I might be injured again and then what? I have no breathing space. I plan financially all the time. The Olympic Committee helps, and the club abroad helps, but it is difficult.”*

The study seeks to offer a new perspective to women in competitive sports. Greater attention must be paid to the development of academic studies and financial programs that will allow women athletes to get paid according to their experience or combine higher education studies or careers with sports. To adapt to the dynamic and moving world, sport must move with it. The world of competitive sports in the future should consider the athlete and offer her a more balanced combination between her present and her future. By doing this, it might increase her stability and therefore engagement in the competitive sports system for a long period.

### **Coach-Athlete relationship**

One of the issues marked as a significant parameter in surveys as well as interviews was *Coach-Athlete relationship*. *Coach3*, (individual sport) mentioned: *“I think it's (coach-athlete relationship) important, where there were crises there was the issue of trust, Trust in the system, Trust that those who works with the athletes want their best. In individual sport, you work as a group, but in the end it's personal... It is very important for them to know that the coach and the surrounding staff are doing the maximum for their personal success... It is not just one thing that leads to retirement in adults, but it is important from what I have seen. A large part left because of a lack of trust in the coach or the system”*.

The effect that coach has on the athlete can sometime be used in a less positive way, As mentioned by *Athlete1*: *“Where I come from, there are few girls who really have good conversation with the coach. There is a constant fear of how he would react, when he would get angry... depending on the day. There are a lot of personal and hurtful comments regardless of the reality... Very personal things that are not professionally related. He knows how to use his power as a coach...today looking from perspective, I still hear what the athletes are saying, they are repeating what the coach is saying. It's crazy to me that they speak the coach's words.”*

As part of the relationship between coaches and athletes, the research also showed the importance of positive healthy communication between coaches and athletes. Better understanding of ways for communication along with constant reflection of the way the coach is perceived by the athletes is also a significant thing to look at.

### **Relationships and starting a family.**

This interesting parameter that did not rank high in the survey but did come up from different perspectives in the interviews was around *relationships and starting a family*. This relates to the issue of a woman's' traditional place in the Israeli culture still today, and how it fits the occupation of HP sport.

As well described by *Athlete3*:” *I would love to see women who combine personal life with competitive sports. Family life or relationship. I couldn't see it coming together. Maybe because of the cultural thing. Maybe professional or a thought that I took with me as an athlete that is the expectation from me, that it is impossible to have a family at the same time or a relationship... This is what I felt and other women athletes feel. I would very much like to see, as in the USA, women whose family life and motherhood go hand in hand with the world of sports. This does not have to contradict and can preserve over time more accomplished women in the system”*.

Enforcing this statement from the management position, *CEO Sayed*:” *All over the world it's a very old sport, and worldwide we can find champions men in their 40s and women in their 30s plus. Some with families or mothers. I don't think we're even mentally ready yet for a woman who has a child to continue in competitive sports. Today there is no one, not even at the highest levels, who has a child, although this is part of the sport culture worldwide. Many*

*of world champions are married and with children. This is one of the things that is far from our culture. We are far from it.”*

Summarized well by Athlete3: *“I think it's possible. If a man can have a family and occupy in HP sport, why can't a woman? It is true that there is birth, but we have to continue to support, and this is where we fall. More retention of women athletes in the age of 30+ as long as they are healthy and able. Right now, the system is learning how to preserve them and not only the young women”.*

### **Family & role model in sport environment**

Most HP women athletes who indicated that they had a family member in sports, had a brother or sister. Having 2 siblings from the same house occupying sport might suggest that these families educating to sport values, supporting promoting their children on a sports path. Important data to take into consideration is that the majority of interviewees were former athletes and could provide a perspective point of view on this issue.

*Coach 4, (Individual sport) a former HP athlete, shares the power of family and surrounding support in her sports field: “Usually an athlete will come from a club that had a successful athlete there. Must be some model...it Could be a mother or coach or other athlete. It creates a connection. This is what helps them stay, and also helps introduce them into the HP path. If I look at my leading women athletes, most of them have someone from the family in the sport. The sense of belonging is very important. It is difficult to enter the HP path if there is no one to look up to.”* In her interview, the CEO also talked about the importance of role models: *“young women still lack role models because boys have champions and tradition and with women, we build.... I think it is very significant. we don't have a culture of women in HP in the country”.* Athlete1 also indicated the importance of having a supportive family: *“The family was very supportive. Thank God my parents had my back”.*

## **Recommendations-work plan 2023-2024**

Following research results, future recommendations are offered in the table below, divided according to subject groups in which there is a common content or a logical connection. In these recommendations, I have also drawn on my personal experience in HP sport in Israel as an athlete, coach, administrator, and parent, to provide further insights to help ensure successful implementation.

### **Referring to positive healthy communication and positive behavior toward athlete in the**

**HP sport space:** The research results that an educational program guided by outside professionals, for national coach and staff, and for the athletes (separately) might be a good place to start. The program should be part of the annual professional training for all involved in HP sport. Establishing an annual program that focuses on building positive behaviors, will eventually lead to positive impact and healthier relationships between coaches and athletes.

**On the matter of Family Cultural gap in Israel:** Participating in HP Sport and establishing family /have a relationship, here the recommendation is to normalize women as mothers in Israel sport culture through media and presenting them in positive manner. Showing the young generation this combination can co-exist might help to keep some athletes in sport when they are considering the next steps in life such as marriage and motherhood.

**Regarding the training environment for women athletes:** Lack of knowledge and awareness and the importance of women role model for women athletes, and cultural gaps, the research suggest and recommend providing tools for families to support the athlete on their path to success. Investing in education programs on sports values for parents of young HP athletes who enter the sports systems at a young age is one recommendation. In addition, promoting the adult HP to connect with the young generation of athletes, reinforcing both the athletes and the new generation to stay in HP sport pathway for longer.

On a personal note, as a former HP adult athlete myself, I feel it's important to have supportive family and surroundings when participating in sport, especially as a young girl. As a daughter of a HP women athlete, my siblings and I were raised with clear sport values. Our surroundings were aimed toward our participation in sport, at all levels, and from very young age. Support of parents on all aspects, from driving us to practice, to paying for training camps, and cheering us on in competitions, meant a great deal for all of us, and I am very sure that without that, I would not have chosen to participate in sport much less competitive sport.

Personally, having my mom as a role model had a huge influence on my character, learning firsthand on how to be an HP athlete, and seeing other women who did that. Therefore, in my opinion, education for sport values of the athlete's surrounding is important to its success.

Unfortunately, due to time issues, it was not possible to obtain research ethics approval to gather data from athletes under 18 years old. Many future Olympic champions are still under 18 years of age, therefore the recommendation is to continue with future research of youth HP women athletes, to have a better perspective on retention in Israel.

In order achieve the goals of preserving women HP athletes, control measures should be carried out regularly and analyzed. Therefore, the recommendation is to issue a report of conclusions and future suggestions every 6-8 months, addressing the research plans that have



been implemented. Success measures must take under consideration that in some cases, the process is educational one, and will show in time by society behavior and change in numbers of women athletes in HP. As such, the suggestion is for the NOC to choose the most important process to apply and manage, which is most likely to be stable over long period of time.

### Salary, career opportunities (not in sport) and Academic studies

Issues to address	Target audience	Recommendation	Resources	Timelines	Critical success factors
<p><b>The need for occupations.</b> Parallel development outside of sport.</p> <p><b>Cultural gap:</b> lack of understanding of HP athletes' virtues as employees</p>	<p><b>Athletes</b> <b>NF</b> <b>Companies</b> <b>Universities</b></p>	<p>1. <b>Collaboration with universities:</b> custom made program of study, allowing the athlete to combine a high education degree with HP sport. Expend the number of women athletes that can apply (increase budget).</p> <p>2. <b>Collaboration with companies:</b> part time jobs specialty structured to allow combination of work and sport (work from home, flexibility in working hours...).</p> <p>Addressing companies supporting excellent and success in their company vision.</p> <p>3. <b>Program with Ministry of Economic Development:</b> promoting HP athletes in the industry. Wide campaign endorsing hiring HP athletes.</p>	<p><b>Managed by the NOC:</b> coordinator for universities/companies' collaboration and programs.</p> <p><b>Budget:</b> ministry of economic University funds Company's funds</p>	<p><b>Writing program due date:</b> <b>30/10/23</b></p> <p><b>Implementing by:</b> 1/2/24-1/5/24</p> <p><b>First monitoring:</b> 1/9/24</p> <p><b>2025:</b> <b>Adding Group sport -bigger number of players.</b></p>	<p>2024: 5-7 HP women athletes to be part of the program. Integrated in industry or higher studies.</p> <p>2025: Total of 20 HP women athletes including group sport to be part of the program. Integrated in industry or higher studies.</p>
<p><b>Economic stability:</b> compensated according to seniority and contribution</p>	<p><b>Athletes</b> <b>NF</b></p>	<p>Two years scholarship based on veteran and contribution to the sport along with HP achievements: contributing as role models for young HP generation, presenters of the sport in media. Benefit for the NF and NOC maintaining the athlete in HP path.</p>	<p>-Private funds and donors. -Companies-supporting excellence -NOC budget</p>	<p><b>1/8/2024:</b> <b>Identification of specific athletes for the scholarship, based on NF recommendations and NOC agenda</b></p>	<p>Identify 4-5 athletes to support for 4 years of Olympic cycle starting July 2024</p> <p>Maintain the chosen athletes for that period agreed</p>

## Family support & role model-in sport environment

<b>Issues to address</b>	<b>Target audience</b>	<b>Action/ Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Timelines</b>	<b>Critical success factors</b>
Family surrounding for women athletes- Lack of knowledge and awareness	<b>HP athlete parents</b>	Orientations twice a year. Guidance by professionals. tools and knowledge on supporting the athletes on their HP path	NOC: Olympic NF require to promote the orientations families who are already in HP.	<b>NOC NF</b>	Writing and submitting a professional program due date: 1/9/23  Implementation: 1/11/23	Questionaries to parents after each orientation and one in the end of the year. Success will be measured by positive response to the process
	<b>NF</b>	NF local program for parents: twice a year. Lectures for clubs. Educating for sport values and virtues + benefits & knowledge.	NOC+NF	<b>NOC NF</b>	Writing program due date: 1/9/23  Implementation: 1/11/23	
The importance of women role model for women athletes: Lack of knowledge and awareness & Cultural gap	<b>HP Athletes</b>	<b>Mentoring program:</b> senior HP athletes & youth HP athletes. Monthly phone call, meeting between them. 1 year mentoring.	NOC HP adults are to be chosen by the NOC and NF based on their archives. Including 2-3 meetings with professional advisors to provide with the tools for communication with the young HP athletes.			
	<b>NF staff and coaches</b>	Awareness and information: Yearly seminar to all Olympic staff and coaches' online information, newsletter act.	NOC	<b>NF NOC</b>	Planning seminar due date: 1/11/23  Implementation: 1/2/24	2023: Participation of more than 65% of NF coaches and CEO  2024: Participation of more than 75% of NF coaches and CEO

## Relationships and starting a family

Issues to address	Target audience	Recommendation	Lead	Resources	Timescales	Critical success factors
Cultural gap in Israel: Occupy HP and establish family /have a relationship.	HP women athletes in their 20's  NF  Population in Israel	-NOC "sport mom's" campaign including all federations. Social media, tv, awareness on the issue. -potential medalists or those who are ones. Choosing the top 3-4 women potential to stay in HP and contribute to Olympic success that have thoughts on family/motherhood	NOC with ministry offices	Ministry of gender equality  Ministry of economic  Ministry of sport Privet companies- address to women audience (always...)	Writing program due date: 1/10/23  Lunch campaign: 1/3/24	Awareness and positive response to the campaign

## Coach/staff-Athlete relationship

Issues to address	Target audience	Action/ Recommendation	Lead	Resources	Timescales	Critical success factors
Positive healthy communication  Positive behavior toward athlete in the HP sport space	HP coach of National teams  HP surrounding physiotherapists, ass. coaches  Federations CEO and staff	<b>-4-6 obligatory orientations</b> for HP coaches in Olympic and non-Olympic sports each year. -Educational program guided by outsource professionals  <b>1 obligatory orientation</b> for CEO and staff in Olympic and non-sports each year.	NOC-coordinator by the NOC to run and inspect the program	NOC Olympic solidarity	Writing program due date: 1/12/23  Implementation: 1/2/24	Improvement measured in surveys each year for athletes: - positive healthy relationship -better understanding of the new generation language and ways for better communication, personal safety.
Protection and safety environment	All of the above	<b>2 obligatory orientations</b> for CEO and staff in Olympic and non-sports each year				

## Appendix 1

### **20.3.23- interview with coach**

**I would appreciate it if you could tell me a little about yourself in general - who are you? Your path into competitive sports? How did you get there, and how long you are in this sport?**

*Well, I started as a bicycle rider. My HP career lasted 10 years. During my first degree at Wingate University of sport in physical education I won the university championship in Israel. From there, I entered the international arena, later on in life, as a mother and a member of Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'Emek, I began to represent the country abroad and pursue the Olympic criterion.*

**Could you please point out the sport?**

*Bicycle*

**Ok thanks**

*I was 7 years champion in Israel. Part of the Olympic bicycle team. 2012 When I failed to achieve the Olympic criteria I continued to compete for another year. During my goal for achievements, I took an instructor's course and a coach's course, and I decided that as soon as I will decide to have family, I would withdraw from competitive sport as athlete and become a HP coach. This is who I have been since 2014. I coach the Israeli women's mountain bike team. For many years I was an assistant coach until I got the title of head coach. I can't say the salary is what I would like to be in my position as coach, but today I have a full position as a national coach. I did a course for national coaches of the Olympic Committee, the first course for national coaches. In addition, I am the coordinator of Athena women project in the cycling association. I also run all HP bicycle teams in the bicycle association and Athena.*

**Wonderful. In terms of background in women's training, did you coach from the beginning only women?**

*No. Through-out my professional career, I coached groups - women and children for years, and I also had trainees, most of whom were men whom I coached. But for the national teams and high performance, also in cadets I coached young people, and my main specialization was in women.*

**Ok. And what ages have you coached over the years? Youth, adults, both?**

*Mostly youth, that is, from the age of 10 to 16 and graduates. but also women and men.*

**To summarize your background could you please elaborate on the achievements you have reached in terms of female athletes?**

*The achievements are for the first time, 2 women mountain bikers in the Olympic squads. Rider ranked 45th in the world ranking. Better results in world championships and competitions.*

**From your point of view as someone who has been in this sport for years, do you feel that it's equal for women in Israel?**

*It is. Thanks to the affirmative action they did in sport.*

**In your opinion, are there certain areas where there is equality and places where there is not?**

*I would say yes, but I will say it carefully, because the number of female riders is also very small compared to the number of male riders.*

**Why do you think the number is still small?**

*I think it's increasing over time. When I look at the list of the girls competing in competitions, it has gone up, but the number of boys went up as well. We never had such big numbers of women athletes on the starting line, but we are still 20% of the total amount in the sport, and the reason is that they have increased, and the boys have also increased.*

**You mentioned that it is difficult to increase the number of female riders, are there certain reasons you think it is more difficult to promote female riders than male riders?**

*I think it's a matter of resources. From my perspective, there is gender equality in my federation. We saw that a female rider who made it to the Olympics on road bike received the same budget that the state gives to a rider; but the federation does not have a budget surplus that he gives. The extra budget that came from the Athena programs was the one who made the difference. From federation perspective, it does not look at gender but at the level, if there is a rider reaching a specific rank, she will receive the same as men.*

**In your opinion, does female athletes in your sport face specific difficulties? Did you notice any repeating subjects that came up during the years?**

*From what I saw, a major issue was a supportive environment, a family, a school, and a role model. Most of the riders came from a club that had successful riders. tradition. Must be a model. It could be a mother or a coach or an athlete from the club, but eventually, it's what I see that creates the connection.*

**That's what helps them stay if I understand you? preserve them?**

*Yes. And promote them to the HP path. If I look at my leading female riders, most of them have someone from the family involved in cycling, come from the sport, from a club. A sense of belonging is very important. The young riders look for role models to look up to. It's difficult to enter the HP path if there is no one to look up to.*

## **Bibliography**

Fasting K., 2019, *All in! Towards gender balance in European sport*, Analytical report of the data collection campaign, Council of Europe.

Keyser-Verreault E., Moore e., Kriger D., Demres G., 2018, *What works? Promising practices for the inclusion of women and girls from participation to Leadership*, A Literature Review. E-Alliance, [www.ealliance.ca](http://www.ealliance.ca).

Lim S., Dixon M., 2018, *A conceptual framework of sport participation and women's empowerment*, Routledge- Taylor & Francis group, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2018.1499437>

O'Connor D., Gardner L., Larkin P., Pope A., Mark A., 2019, *Positive youth development and gender differences in high performance sport*, Journal of Sport Science, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2019.1698001>

Rochelle E., Harvey J., Charity M., 2018, *girl's transition from participation in a modified sport program to club sport competition-a study of longitudinal patterns and correlates*, BMC public health, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Rochelle E., Harvey J., Charity M., Westerbeek H., 2020, *Longitudinal Trends in Sport Participation and Retention of Women and Girls*, *frontiers-in sport and active living*

The Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020, *Israel population by gender and age 2020* <https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/subjects/Pages/%D7%90%D7%95%D7%9B%D7%9C%D7%95%D7%A1%D7%99%D7%99%D7%94.aspx>

Trussell E., Kerwin S., Lyn A., Losinski L., 2021, *Gender +Equity Sport participation in Canada: transforming what we know*, Brock University.

Women in sport, 2018, *From barriers to benefits-The economic benefits of women and girls participating in sport*, <https://womeninsport.org/research-and-advice/our-publications/barriers-benefits-women-participation-sport>. Women in sport foundation.