

Cardiff School of Sport
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 Empirical ¹

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Comments	Section		
	<p>Title and Abstract</p> <p>Title to include: A concise indication of the research question/problem. Abstract to include: A concise summary of the empirical study undertaken.</p>		
	<p>Introduction and literature review</p> <p>To include: outline of context (theoretical/conceptual/applied) for the question; analysis of findings of previous related research including gaps in the literature and relevant contributions; logical flow to, and clear presentation of the research problem/ question; an indication of any research expectations, (i.e., hypotheses if applicable).</p>		
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**CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd**

CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SPORT

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS)

SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

**'Barriers to participation in competitive sport and physical activity for females aged
between 16 and 18'**

Sport Development

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SCHOOL OF SPORT

CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

**'Barriers to participation in competitive sport
and physical activity for females aged
between 16 and 18'**

Cardiff Metropolitan University
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Abstract

A large amount of research has taken place surrounding the factors that affect an adolescent female's decision to drop out of competitive sport and physical activity. Pate (2007) recognises that between the ages of 16 and 18 girls are most likely to drop out of competitive sport and physical activity, showing an 11% decrease in participation from ages 12-15. This research attempts to gain a greater understanding of the factors that influence a young female's decision to drop out of competitive sport and physical activity. This research was approached in a qualitative manner. 7 females aged between 20 and 22 were interviewed. All participants had dropped out of competitive sport while playing at county level and above. Participants were asked to discuss their experiences of competitive sport, physical activity and their reasons for dropping out of competitive in a retrospective view.

The information received from the participants was analysed in a thematic fashion. Social factors, psychological factors, life transitions and physical stress were identified as the main themes that influenced a young female's decision to drop out of competitive sport. Within these themes coach-athlete relationships, influence of friends and family and pressures were identified as being key factors for ceasing participation by participants.

Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction 1.0

Research has suggested that participation in sport and physical activity has a number of benefits, including; weight management, social interaction, enjoyment, mental health and intellectual development (Allender, Cowburn and Foster, 2006). Despite the evidence of the benefits of participation in competitive sport, sport as leisure and physical activity being well documented, participation levels in the UK continue to dwindle, particularly among the female population. The Active People Survey (2008) reported that 13.1% of women participated in sport and physical activity at least three times a week for thirty minutes. However, Active people Survey (2012) showed that only 12.8% of women participated in the same amount of sport and physical activity, showing further decline in participation levels. Active people survey (2012) also identified a large gap between male participation in sport and physical activity in comparison to females where 49.9% of males participated in comparison to 21.1% of females.

Svender, Larsson and Redelius (2012) recognise that the gap between genders has been a long standing issue, particularly within competitive sport. Collins and Kay (2003) argue that the gap has been closing since the 1970's. New government policies and legislations and new opportunities available to women are examples of reasons why Collins and Kay (2003) believe the gender gap in sport has continued to decrease.

Adolescent women aged between 16 and 18 have been identified as being the age at which drop out in competitive sport and physical activity has become most common. Pate (2007) found an 11% decrease of female participation in sport and physical activity by the time they reach the age of 16. Females of and around this age group have been subject of a vast amount of research concerning their participation in competitive sport and physical activity (Smith and Green, 2005; Shaffer and Witts, 2006; Normandile, 2006; Smith and Eli, 2007; Brooks and Magnusson, 2007; Sayman, 2007 Evans, 2008; Clarke, Spence and Holt, 2011).

National Governing Bodies such as Sport England and Sport UK have collaborated with other establishments like 'Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation' in order to try and address declining participation levels of adolescents aged between 16 and 18. Although a vast amount of research has been carried out, further research may identify new areas for National Governing Bodies and government policies to address, particularly in physical education in schools and community sports.

Aim of the Research 1.1

The overall aim of this study was to uncover the factors that determine whether young women aged between 16 and 18 decide to participate in competitive sport or not. The objectives of the study, with this aim in mind, are to;

1. Identify the potential threats and barriers to participation in competitive sport and physical activity, among young women, as well as the reasons that contribute towards participation in competitive sport.
2. Explore the environmental, social and psychological factors that may influence an individual's reasons for not participating in competitive sport.
3. Gain a perception of what types of action can take place in order to combat the issue.

Fulfilling these objectives could contribute towards a better understanding into the reasons for consistent decline of female participation in competitive sport.

Key Terms 1.2

Two key terms that should be made clear for this study are competitive sport and physical activity. Competitive sport is organised sport which requires structured deliberate practice and participation in a discipline, where as physical education and sport leisure can be performed at an individual's discretion (Wall and Cote, 2007; Brooks Magnusson, 2007).

Chapter Two
Literature Review

2.0 Background of the Study

Previous research into participation in sport among adolescents has shown a significant number of teenagers do not participate in competitive sport, especially adolescent women (Mulvihill, Rivers and Aggleton, 2000; Brown and Blanton, 2002; Brooks and Magnusson, 2007). Coleman and Schofield (2005) reported that participation in competitive sport, sport leisure and physical activity in secondary schools in the UK is higher among boys than girls. In addition Coleman and Schofield (2005) suggest that the gap between the genders becomes more pronounced with advanced age within teenage years.

A Sport and Physical Education participation survey of all schools in England and Wales undertaken by, Quick, Simon and Thornton (2010), showed that only 33% of girls in year 11 participated in at least 3 hours of Physical Education and out of school activity in comparison to 56% for boys of the same age. Boys in years 12 and 13 showed an even lower percentage of only 29% and girls, just 15%. Similar results are visible in the same survey where the percentage of boys and girls who took part in Physical Education for 120 minutes or more. Year 11 boys showed 50% participated, whereas only 45% of year 11 girls participated. Boys in years 12 and 13 had a participation level of 11%, and girls just 7%.

Additionally, the 'Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation' (2011), reported that just 12% of girls in secondary school aged 14-18 meet the official guidelines for physical activity per week and that at this age boys are twice as active. 'Active People Survey 6' (2012) shows that only 12.8% women aged 16 plus, take part in sport and physical activity for at least 30 minutes, 3 times a week, in comparison to 20.3% of males. This 12.8% of women is a decline from the Active people survey (APS), for 2007/2008 which reported that 13.1% of women took part in the same amount of sport and physical activity. More specifically the APS (2012) showed that women aged between, 16-24 had a participation rate in sport and physical activity of just 21.1%, less than half of men the same age who had a participation rate of 49.9%.

The highest dropout rate from competitive sport and sport in young women occurs between the ages of 16 and 18, with over 25,000 young people dropping out from sport every year, the majority of them being girls within this age range (Street Games, Us Girls and Sport England, 2012). Pate (2007) found that 45% of girls aged 12-15 participated in sport and competitive sport, in comparison to 34% when girls reached 16-18 years of age.

2.1 Competitive Sport, Government Policy and National Governing Bodies

Competitive sport is understood as practising a given sports discipline in an organised manner (Biernat, Tybarcy and Gajewski, 2011). Regular participation in physical activity and sport leisure is defined as practising a selected sports discipline or exercising recreationally, performed at the discretion of an individual for one's own pleasure rather than organised competition (Brooks and Magnusson, 2007). A key difference between competitive sport and physical activity and sport leisure, identified by Wall and Cote (2007) is that; participation in competitive sport requires participation in deliberate practice. Deliberate practice is a highly structured activity with the sole intention to improve performance in a particular discipline (Wall and Cote, 2007). Competitive sport is usually categorised through participation in training sessions, memberships in sports clubs and participation in competition (Biernat et.al, 2011). Participation in sport as leisure and physical activity requires little, if any organisation, without the need for training and is not limited by time constraints other than an individual's daily routine (Biernat et.al, 2011). Similarly, Bouchard and Shaphard (1994) describes sport as being a form of physical activity that can include elements of competition with closely linked benefits and directives such as; keeping fit, physical performance or health.

During the 1980's governing bodies were intended to support primarily elite athletes, however when the Labour party came to power in 1997 sport policy moved up in the political agenda and Grass Root and School Sports gained greater focus (Collins, 2010; Grix and Carmichael, 2012). Recent strategies such as 'Game Plan' have worked with National Governing Bodies to try and utilise sport to double participation rates in physical activity by 2020 (DCMS/Strategic Unit, 2002). DCMS/strategy unit (2002) suggests that investment in elite sport creates a drive for participation at grassroots level, whereby role models are created and participation is inspired among young people. Grix and Carmichael (2012) describe this phenomenon as the 'virtuous cycle', where a greater 'pool' is created from which talented athletes can be selected and directed towards elite sport. In 2008 the responsibility of improving participation in physical activity was handed to the Department for Health, leaving NGB's to focus on improving sport from a grass roots level upwards (DCMS, 2008).

Collins (2010) argues that current policies specific to developing sport, such as 'sport for sport's sake' face many challenges including; resources, funding and experience, particularly when attempting to develop sport at a grass roots level. Grix and Carmichael

(2012) support this view, offering that high investment in elite sport prior to and after the 2012 Olympics leaves little room for investment in other areas of sport.

2.2 Funding and Initiatives

The issue surrounding participation levels of young women aged between 16-24 has sparked the government to support a number of initiatives and programmes aimed at combating the dilemma, as well as increased funding to national governing bodies wishing to tackle the problem, Hunt (2012).

Additional funding has been supplied to national governing bodies such as Sport Wales and Sport England who are working with their partners to help promote initiatives aimed at this particular problem (Sport England, 2011; Sport England 2012; Hunt, 2012). £10 million of lottery funding was contributed to Sport England, to be utilised within the 'Active Women Fund' (Sport England, 2011). The money was spent on improving facilities and coaches available to young women at grass roots level, as well as increasing the number of activities available to them (Sport England, 2011). A local initiative based in Bath and North East Somerset called 'Sport and Active Lifestyle', received funding from Sport England to be put towards subsidising the costs of a venue and session costs, where women aged between 16 and 24 could take part in 'Zumba' classes (Sport England, 2012).

The Welsh football trust received funding from Sport Wales to promote the use of 'The mentoring scheme' where professional female footballers were used to help lower levels of women football to boost participation and performance levels from grassroots upwards (Welsh Football Trust, 2010).

Announcements were made in 2012, by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, that a strategy for youth and community sport development and participation, costing £1 billion will be put together using the inspirational power of the Olympics to create a sporting habit in life young people (DCMS, 2012).

Existing initiatives such as the '5x60 scheme' have been developed to be more beneficial to young women in order to promote their participation in sport, by having more female coaches within the schemes (Sport Wales, 2010).

Equality Frameworks 2.3

Frameworks have been set up in order to help combat all kinds of discrimination in sport. The Equality standard and the Equality schemes are examples of these frameworks offered by sporting national governing bodies (Sport England, 2004; Sport Wales, 2012).

The idea of these frameworks is to give everyone the chance to benefit from taking part in sport and physical activity, without discrimination or having to face any barriers (Sport Wales, 2010).

‘Climbing Higher’, an initiative set up by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), focuses on all levels of ability and sport development, (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005). In collaboration with Sport Wales, this initiative set a number of targets to help improve participation levels and performance of young women in sport. A target was set to have 90% of secondary school girls participating in physical activity for 60 minutes, 5 times a week by 2020 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005). Achieving equality and opportunities in sport and physical activity for girls of all ability levels, from grass-roots upwards, was highlighted as a key target by the WAG (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005).

UK sport used the ‘Women’s Leadership and Development Programme’ to give women a position of power and significant representation in the creation of policies and initiatives to give females a greater influence in the creation of sport related policies (White, 2009).

Sport England (2012), set up an initiative called ‘School Games’. ‘School Games’ was set up in order to enable children to have the opportunity participate in competitive sport while working with UK Sport, Sport Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (Sport England, 2012). Using the Olympic legacy and working with the ‘Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation’, particular emphasis has been placed on delivering competitive sport of a high quality to girls and women (Sport England, 2012).

2.4 Benefits of participation in competitive sport, sport and physical activity

2.4.1 Obesity and the Cardiovascular System

Results released by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2012), concerning the obesity rates of women in Britain in 2009 showed 23.9% of women in the UK to be obese, 6.7% higher than the average for the countries within the survey. The OECD also reported the results of obesity levels in girls aged 5-17 in 2011. It was shown that 26.6% of girls were obese, 9.4% higher than the international average.

Young people’s lack of participation in sport and physical activity has been strongly linked to dramatic rises in obesity levels among this social group, leading to sedentary and unhealthy lifestyles and participation in popular sedentary leisure activities (Fruhbeck, 2000; Smith and Green 2005)

Participation in sport and physical activity combined with a well-balanced diet has shown to have positive results upon weight loss and continued participation contributes to

effectively keeping the weight off in the long-term (Brown and Blanton 2002; Fox and Hillsdon, 2007). The increase in jobs requiring less manual labour, advancement in technology substituting labour in areas such as the home, work and everyday life and dependency on cars and other motor-vehicles are just some of the reasons for why participation in sport and physical activity is becoming increasingly important in the fight against obesity (Fox and Hillsdon 2007; Haskell, Lee, Pate, Powell, Blair, Franklin, Macera, Heath, Thompson and Bauman 2007).

Low levels of cardiorespiratory fitness are associated with a sedentary lifestyle and a high risk of cardiovascular disease, (Church, Earnest, Skinner and Blair, 2007). Within their research Church et.al (2007), found that women within their study who previously lived a sedentary lifestyle showed signs of improved cardiovascular and respiratory fitness after 6 months of physical activity. 427 of the 464 participants showed positive responses to physical activity such as lower blood pressure, higher oxygen consumption and lower scores on the Body mass index.

2.4.2 Psychological Benefits

Participation in sport and rigorous physical activity has been shown to have a positive and strong effect on an adolescent's emotions and psychological well-being, particularly when concerning depression, stress reactions, mood state, anxiety response, self-esteem and body image, (Steptoe and Butler, 1996; Scully, Kremer, Mead, Graham and Dudgeon, 1998). Scully et.al (1998), suggests that through continued involvement in a specific physical regime, individuals can gain a therapeutic feel from the experience.

Findings have shown that physical activity is most effective in raising self-efficacy, as well as studies showing that involvement in extended aerobic physical activity can have as much effect on depression as the same magnitude of psychotherapeutic interventions (Fox, 1999; Netz, Wu, Becker and Tenenbaum, 2005).

Bailey, R (2006), suggests that through participation in physical activity stress levels among adolescents can be lowered and as a result lead to enhanced psychological well-being. Bailey basis enhanced psychological well-being on several factors; better self-esteem, positive effects on anxiety, depression and stress and more self-confidence.

2.4.3 Pregnancy and Diabetes

Health benefits that part-taking in exercise can have upon both, adolescent women and older women, is the impact that exercise can have previous to, during and after pregnancy

(Mogren, 2005; Lof and Forsum, 2006; Oken, Ning, Rifas-Shiman, Radesky, Rich-Edwards and Gillman, 2006; Zhang, Solomon, Manson and Hu 2006).

Regular physical activity and active leisure prior to pregnancy reduces the risk of accumulating joint problems, specifically in the back and pelvis, Mogren (2005). Mogren (2005) also suggests that continued exercise of a moderate-light nature during pregnancy can deter these sorts of problems as well as improve the recovery rate for a woman after pregnancy.

Lof and Forsum (2006), found that women who participate in regular amounts of physical activity before pregnancy deal better with the physical demands of pregnancy and the increase in the total energy expenditure than those who are more sedentary before becoming pregnant. Similarly to Mogren (2005), Lof and Forsum (2006), suggest that maintaining light levels of physical activity during pregnancy can contribute towards the positive effects.

Zhang et.al, 2006 and Oken et.al (2006), found within their research that women who had taken part in vigorous physical activity and light amounts during pregnancy less likely to develop abnormal glucose tolerance, Gestational Diabetes Mellitus and Diabetes type 2 than women who didn't.

The effects of physical activity on diseases such as diabetes and coronary heart disease (CHD) have been shown to be positive and preventative (Lee, I., Rexrode, Cook, Manson and Buring, 2001 ; LaMonte, Blair and Church, 2005; Weinstien, A., Sesso, H., Lee, I., Rexrode, A., Cook, Manson, Buring and Gaziano, 2008).

Lee et.al (2001), found that women who walked even as little as just 1 hour per week can lower the risk of developing CHD. It was also suggested within the research that woman had lower levels of cholesterol, when their participation in physical activity was higher, longer and more intense than those who had lower levels of physical activity, contributing to a lower risk of developing CHD.

In support of the research undertaken by Lee et.al (2001), Weinstein et.al (2008), found that women with higher levels of physical activity scored better than those with lower levels of physical activity on the Body Mass Index (BMI). Lower BMI's are associated with avoiding obesity, Meaning the lower the BMI the less obese someone is ultimately reducing the risk of CHD and diabetes (Weintien et.al 2008; LaMonte et.al, 2001)

2.5 Factors that Affect Female Participation in Competitive Sport

Understanding what factors influence girls to want to continue with participation in sport and what makes them want to drop out is important to decide how best to tackle the problem.

2.5.1 Social

Coakley and White (1992) suggest that support of influence from parents have an important influence on whether an adolescent female decides to participate in sport or not. When financial and resource support is given to adolescent females they are more likely to participate in sport. Similarly Smith and Green (2005), propose that females who are given consistent support from parents at an early age are more likely to continue participation in sport and physical activity. Smith and Eli (2007) report that among females, 'friendship groups' can have an impact on an individual's decision to take part in sport. The influence of peers and friends becomes stronger with age and a female is more likely to make her decision based upon this factor (Smith and Eli, 2007).

2.5.2 Enjoyment

Research has shown that girls who participate in competitive sport, sport and physical activity continue to do so only when they find the activity enjoyable and they have control and choice over the activity (Shaffer and Wittes, 2006; Brooks and Magnusson 2007; Rintagau and Ngetich, 2012). Control refers to the extent of emotional control and external pressure faced by the individual (Brooks and Magnusson, 2007). Brooks and Magnusson (2007) found that the more emotional control a female has in a sport and the less external pressure that she is faced with will make her more likely to partake in sport, particularly individual sports such as tennis. An earlier study undertaken by Brooks and Magnusson (2006) revealed through interviews with adolescent females that choice of sport and clothing was highly influential on whether the young women took part in physical education school. Similarly, Shiffer and Wittes' (2006), research suggests that the more a female enjoys the sport the more she will play and the more competent she will become, contributing to further enjoyment and participation. Self-esteem can be reinforced by experiencing enjoyment in sport and physical activity, consequently leading to enhanced motivation to continue participating in physical activity (MacPhail, Gorely and Kirk, 2003). Sayman (2007) suggests that coaches and teachers who are able to deviate away from traditional methods of coaching and stereotypical sports are more likely to gain engagement from females in their session.

Physical Appearance 2.5.3

Weight loss is another contributory factor to female participation in sport and physical activity (Sleap and Wormwald, 2001; Gillison, Standage and Skevington 2006). Sleap and Wormwald found that women were motivated to get involved in sport and physical activity if they had friends who were 'skinny' and 'thin'. Vincent and McCabe (2000) undertook research showing that young women were more likely to want to lose weight if they were pressured by their peers or felt out of place in friendship group, supporting Sleap and Wormwalds research. Gillison et.al (2006), discuss that motivation to lose weight was one of the main reasons identified for female participation in exercise, although it should be noted that the percentage of females motivated by weight loss was not as high as males. Young females may feel the need to shape their bodies in light of what is considered socially acceptable or attractive, because as they emerge into adolescence more importance is placed in their physical appearance (Frost, 2001; Garrett, 2004).

2.5.4 Competence and embarrassment

A lack of competence, a fear of letting down others and low self-confidence have been identified as influential themes within the research around young women's motives for dropping out of competitive sport and physical activity (Normandile, 2006; Brooks and Magnusson, 2007; Lodewyk, Gammage and Sullivan, 2009; Abbott and Barber, 2012). Normandile (2006) and Brooks and Magnusson (2007)), identified the pressure of winning and fear of letting others down as a key motive for young women dropping out of sport. The perception of letting down 'others' refers not just to coaches but also, team-mates, friends and family, resulting in unnecessary stress upon an individual causing them to dropout of competitive sport (Normandile,2006; Brooks and Magnusson, 2007).

Women, particularly adolescent women, have a higher tendency to perceive themselves as physically inadequate in comparison to men (Garrett, 2004). Lodewyk et.al (2009), discuss that young women identify embarrassment of their body and lack faith in their capability as contributory factors for their lack of participation in competitive sport.

2.5.5 Resources and Time Management

Factors such as jobs, school work, money, travel and facilities are all factors identified by adolescent girls aged between 16-18 as crucial reasons in their decision for choosing to stop playing competitive sport (Normandile, 2006; Evans, 2008; Clarke, Spence and Holt, 2011). Pressure from parents to do well in school and to get a job at this stage a young women's life lead them to have to give up other areas of their life (Normandile, 2006).

Poor local facilities and the need to travel to clubs and other facilities make continued participation in sport and physical activity difficult for young women. Clarke et.al (2011)

Of the reasons specified, money was identified as a major motive for dropout when factors such as travel and equipment costs are taken into consideration (Evans, 2008).

2.5.6 Religion

Muslim Women, a minority group within the sports participation world, face religious restrictions on their participation in sport and physical activity. Strict Islamic policy and a clash between 'authentic Muslim identity' and various cultural overlays, make it extremely difficult for Muslim women to participate in any form of sport or physical activity (Palmer, 2011; Knez, MacDonald and Abbott, R). Pamler (2011) argues that there is need for political revision in order to support this social group.

2.5.7 Male influence and stereotyping

A longstanding argument within participation in sport and physical activity has been the amount of inequality between males and females (Svender, Larsson and Redelius, 2012). Johns and John (2000), state that sport is a way for males to express their masculinity, in comparison to a female perspective which is far more complex.

The fear of over stepping masculine boundaries is a factor identified by the young women in the research undertaken by Slater and Tiggemann (2010), who claimed that their social image among peers made them self-conscious. The 'Image Problem' is where women feel that their heterosexuality is being challenged particularly when participating in 'male-dominated' sports such as rugby union (Johns and Johns, 2000; Knight and Giulinao, 2003).

Svender et.al (2012) identified stereotyping as major problem when promoting sport to young women, discussing that the majority of sports being offered to young women in and out of schools are mainly those associated with the female stereotype. Svender et.al (2012), suggested that a wider range of sports should be offered to females in order to break down the stereotyping barriers.

A lack of diversity of sports, in schools and in physical education lessons, is a reason identified by Sayman, D (2007), who also discusses the favouritism of boys among Physical Education teachers, as a potential threat to female participation in sport.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.0 Research Framework

The overall aim of this study was to uncover the factors that determine whether or not young women aged between 16 and 18 decide to participate in competitive sport. The objectives of the study, with this aim in mind, are to;

1. Identify the potential threats and barriers to participation in competitive sport and physical activity, among young women, as well as the reasons that contribute towards participation in competitive sport and physical activity.
2. Explore the environmental, social and psychological factors or themes that may influence an individual's reasons for not participating in or dropping out of competitive sport and physical activity.
3. Gain an understanding of the action that needs to take place in order to improve the rate of participation in competitive, from a young women's perspective.

3.0.1 Qualitative Research.

Qualitative research has specific relevance to exploring and analysing the results of a study of social relations, (Flick, 1998). A qualitative approach was adopted therefore in order to understand the feelings, individual thoughts perceptions and experiences of the participants in terms of drop-out in competitive sport and physical activity.

Creswell (2009, p.4), defines qualitative research as being ““A means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem... The final report has a flexible structure.”

The flexibility of qualitative research allows for the emergence of unexpected ideas during research and results in the opportunity to delve deeper in to social issues which may arise (Shank, 2002).

Gratton and Jones (2004, p.22) describe qualitative research as being able to “capture qualities that are not quantifiable, that is reduced to numbers, such as feelings, thoughts, experiences and so on”. Qualitative research works worth research that is non-numerical and focusses more with intention “to approach the world ‘out there’ and to understand, describe and sometimes explain social phenomena ‘from the inside’” (Flick, 2009, p.6).

The qualitative research undertaken was carried out in a rigorous manner, as well as being carefully planned so that the research design encompasses all aspects of the study, to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings (Koro-Ljungberg and Douglas, 2008; Borrego, Douglas and Amelink, 2009).

The literature reviewed has shown that a considerable amount of research has been undertaken surrounding the subject area and most have offered the view that more information is needed in regard to fully understanding the scenario (Mulvihill et.al, 2000; Schiffer and Witts, 2006; Pate, 2007; Clarke, Spence and Holt, 2011). As a vast amount of the previous research has recognised that participation and drop-out in competitive sport and physical activity has suffered most within females between the ages of 16-18, adopting a qualitative approach in the study has provided an in-depth analysis as to the reasons why this phenomenon is occurring.

3.1 Research Method and Data Collection.

There are a number of different qualitative data collection methods available to qualitative research such as interviews (face to face or telephone), focus groups, document review and observations (Merriam, 1998). Of these techniques interviews were chosen as the most appropriate method of retrieving the relevant data. Interviews allow participants to discuss their views and perceptions of a particular phenomenon in their own words on an honest and more in-depth level (Gratton and Jones, 2004; Smith and Osborne, 2008). The interviews used within this research were semi-structured. Daymon and Holloway (2011), describe semi-structured interviews as a revealing strategy. Yin (2011), offers the view that by using semi-structured interviews, the participants will not be limited to single word responses and the interviewer will have the opportunity to explore any factors that may arise without influencing the interviewees response. Interviews are more likely to produce better results when they are semi-structured and close to an everyday conversation (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

An interview guide was created (available to view in the appendix) in order to provide a structure for the interviewer and raise the reliability of the research by ensuring the same guide was used for all interviews. The interview guide and questions were developed in relation to the research question and the literature reviewed. Within the interview guide three types of questions were used: main questions, probe questions and follow up questions (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). The main questions within the interviews were open, decisive and kept simple as they tend to provide the fullest of answers, particularly when supported by probing and follow up questions (Shaffer and Elkins, 2005; Yin, 2011). Probing questions also helped to provide elaboration on a particular subject or clarification of an answer (Kvale, 2007). Yin (2011) suggests that while a semi-structured interview follows a set of questions, its flexible nature allows the sequence of questions to alter and for probes to be used dependant on the situation. An advantage of semi-structured interviews is that it allows for elaboration or digression of a particular area (Cohen, Manion

and Morrison, 2007). This allows for unexpected data to emerge and allows the participant to elaborate on the topics being discussed, providing further detail to their answers.

Kvale (2007) suggests that the setting of the interview stage is crucial to a successful interview. A familiar environment for the interviewee is likely to make them feel more comfortable in the interview and will be more likely to talk freely and openly about their feelings and thought (Kvale, 2007). Interviewees were given the choice of location of the interview in order to make them feel as comfortable as possible.

Similarly building a good rapport with the participant can help to make the interviewee feel more comfortable in their surroundings (Gratton and Jones, 2004). Rapport was gained by 'briefing' the participant before the interview started, allowing them the opportunity to ask any questions that they may have had about the procedure and informed of their right to stop the procedure whenever they wanted. The fact that the interviews would remain anonymous was stressed to the participant in order to give them a piece of mind and the knowledge that all of their views would remain known only to the interviewer. Rubin and Rubin (2005), recognise that building a good rapport can make the participant more likely to trust the interviewer and open up to them during the interview. Gaining a good rapport and having the participant comfortable with their surroundings adds to the validity of the research as the answers will be more truthful and open (Kvale, 2007).

Rubin and Rubin (2005), advocate that there are ways in which the interviewer can help to give confidence to the participant. Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest that by empathizing, through body language, with emotional responses of the participant will make them feel more comfortable with the interviewer and will gain confidence by not being embarrassed by the situation. Empathy can be shown through posture of your body and facial expressions (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Gratton and Jones (2004), suggest that being able to view the body language of the participant is also important as it allows the interviewer to react appropriately. Gratton and Jones (2004) also suggest that interviewers must be careful when body language as they may be biased without realising. Actions like nodding and agreeing with participants, can lead participants to answer in ways that they feel they should rather than how they actually feel. As a result this may impact upon the validity of the results.

A disadvantage of semi-structured interviews is that because they are flexible, interviewers may find the interviews going off track and moving the focus away from the research question (Yin, 2011). Validity and reliability may be affected by the diversion. The use of

an interview guide then becomes essential for the interviewer to ensure that relevant data is obtained.

In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the interviews a Dictaphone was used to record the data. This enabled for the interviews to be played over and over until an accurate and full understanding of the girls' experiences was found.

3.2 Pilot Study.

The Skills and Structure of interviewing, are learned by interviewing practice and the use of intense listening skills combined with the ability to interact with the interviewee (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Yin, 2011). In order to ensure the maximum potential of the interviews, a pilot interview was held prior to the real ones, in order to 'iron out any mistakes' and increase the proficiency of the interviewer (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Day and Meriwether (2001), promote the use of pilot studies by suggesting that it not only helps to test equipment and instruments used, but also helps develop the confidence and effectiveness of the researcher. The pilot interview undertaken, involved interviewing an individual using the interview guide that was developed from the literature reviewed. The pilot study was also recorded to ensure the efficiency of the Dictaphone.

As a result minor changes were made to the original interview guide. Questions that were deemed irrelevant or obsolete were removed. Any questions that were seen as 'leading' were removed maintain the validity of the data. Some questions were also re-phrased in order to make the question easier clearer and easier for the interviewee to understand. Ensuring that questions are easily understandable is an important factor in receiving valid answers from participants (Oppenheim, 1992). The questions were also rephrased in order to encourage a more in-depth response from the participants. Some questions were also placed at a different point in the guide in order to give more flow to the interview. The pilot interview guide can be seen in appendix C".

3.3 Participants and Sampling.

The participants that were used with in this study were 8 females aged between 20 and 22. The study was focussed on reasons why the drop-out rate in competitive sport and physical activity was highest among females between the ages of 16 and 18. The girls within the study had dropped out of competitive sport at this age and so were looking at the scenario in a retrospective view. Allowing the participants to look at and reflect on their own experiences in a retrospective manner will allow them to reveal in depth answers relevant to the research (Hess, 2004). Giving the participants hindsight may allow the

research to identify areas that may not be identified if the girls were interviewed at the age they were when they dropped out. It also allows for analyses to take place of the effect that dropping-out of competitive sport can have upon an individual.

The participants were selected on the basis that they had participated in competitive sport i.e. they had; participated in training sessions, memberships in sports teams or clubs (county level or higher) and participation in competition adapted from Biernat et.al (2011).

Although using a random sampling method will produce less bias within a study, it would be inappropriate for this as participants are required to meet certain criteria in order to be eligible to participate in the research (Gratton and Jones, 2010). In this case it was just females who had been selected for the process. Similarly Marshall (1996) suggests that some informants are 'richer' than others in information and that these people are more likely to provide insight and understanding to the researcher than someone chosen at random, therefore qualitative research is rarely suited to a random sampling method.

Gratton and Jones (2010) define purposive sampling as when you are trying to achieve findings to a set group of subjects rather than the wider population. This sampling method was chosen for the research because the research question is focussed on drop-out in competitive sport and physical activity of females aged between 16 and 18 rather than any other social group. The sample was purposefully selected on the grounds that participants met the criteria required to answer the questions with relevant knowledge on the subject are through personal experience.

The participants were informed that participation in the study was purely voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any time, or to not take part at all should they wish not to.

3.4 Data Analysis.

As mentioned all interviews were recorded in order to aid analysis of the data collected. Once completed and recorded interviews were transcribed into a written structure of the interview allowing for closer analysis, beginning with the original transcription (Rapely, 2007).

The data transcribed will then be coded in a thematic fashion, enabling the research to be easily categorised, retrieved and understood (Gibbs, 2007). Coding the information in this way will allow key quotes to be taken from the transcripts and categorised in a framework of thematic ideas (Gibbs, 2007).

Analysis of data will be undertaken inductively. Inductive analysis commences with specific instances and seeks to establish generalisations (Hyde, 2000).

3.5 Ethical Considerations.

The awareness of ethical issues in qualitative research has grown considerably in the last decade (Hopf, 2004).

Ethical issues of interviews occur because of the complexities of researching private lives and placing accounts in the public domain, (Birch, Miller, Mauthner and Jessop, 2002). Flick (2007) reports that it is important that research questions are relevant to the research and are not intrusive into the participant's personal lives outside the subject area. With this in mind the questions used within the interview were kept topical and in the briefing before the interview participants were informed that if they were uncomfortable with a question that they had the right not to answer.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) stress in the importance of retrieving informed consent from the participants before the research takes place, securing confidentiality and considering the possible effects that the study may have on the participant. The participants were informed of the overall purpose of the investigation, the procedure as well as risks and benefits that participation could have in research project as suggested by Kvale (2007). Also participants were asked whether or not they would like to have their names used within the transcriptions of the interviews for the sake of anonymity, as suggested by Parker (2005). Those who did not wish to have their names used had their names changed in the transcripts.

Chapter Four

Discussion

4.0 Discussion

Analysis of the interviews identified a number of key themes that contributed to female dropout in competitive sport between the ages of 16 and 18, which were; social factors, psychological factors, physical stress and transitions in life. Along with these factors participants identified the impact that participating in competitive sport had upon their attitudes towards sport and physical activity.

4.1 Social Factors

A number of social factors were unearthed that influence an adolescent females decision about whether to participate in competitive sport or not, some of which were considered the most influential factors for the individuals. The social factors that were found include; family and friends, role models, time consuming and stereotyping.

Five out of seven of the participants identified parental influence as an important factor for initial engagement in competitive sport. When discussing the influence that family can have on the decision to participate in sport one participant responded: “my dad [was an influence] because he played competitive sport and like, my whole family is quite sporty”. Another of the participants stated: “my mum’s quite a sporty person herself; she’s head of P.E in a primary school”. This is supported by the research undertaken by Coakley and White (1992), who recognise that parental involvement and support, is likely to have a major influence on their child’s decision about whether to participate in sport or not. Sport England (2006) state that, children in an inactive family are less likely to participate in physical activity or sport. This indicates that the influence of family, particularly parents, has a strong influence on the decision about whether or not to participate in competitive sport. Parents can have a bigger influence on their children at this age as they have more control and are supported by schools where participation in P.E is compulsory (Kremer, Ogle and Rew, 1997). It is harder then, for parents to have an influence over their children when they reach the age where participation in sport and P.E in school is no longer compulsory and girls are given the decision of whether to continue or not. At this stage friendship groups and peers become a major influence on adolescent girl’s decision about continued participation in competitive sport.

All of the participants identified friends as a crucial influence on their decision on whether to participate in competitive sport or not. “The social side was a massive thing obviously. It’s a completely different friendship zone to what I had in school; there was a really big thing about the social side and obviously the enjoyment”. Evans (2008) and Clarke et.al (2011) found that if a girl had active friends then they were more likely to be active and

would continue to be so. The participant identifies a good social group as contributing to the enjoyment factor associated with sport which a number of different researchers have identified as the main reason for participation in sport and physical activity (Shaffer and Wittes, 2006; Brooks and Magnusson 2007; Rintagau and Ngetich, 2012). Evans (2008) recognised that social support from friends was important for helping individuals gain confidence in their sport and feel comfortable in their team, which is supported by one participant who said: “For me it definitely helped me with confidence, when I started playing team sports I was more open and I got more friends”.

Participants also shared reasons for why a lack of friends leads them to drop-out of competitive sport: “I think I just wasn’t really as friendly with the girls who played netball for them so I just stuck to playing for my club”. Here the participant is discussing when she decided to stop playing sport after moving schools. Because she wasn’t as friendly with the team members, she decided to stop playing competitive sport at school level. Similarly another participant stated that: “there was the local women’s team but, well the average age was twenty eight and I was under eighteen so I felt maybe a little intimidated”. After moving to a new area the participant was reluctant to join a competitive team because she didn’t know anyone her own age and felt that she would have found it difficult to make friends. Without the support of friends, particularly of her own age, the participant may have lacked the confidence needed to join a new team, despite a keen interest in the sport.

Missing out on friendships with people who do not participate in sport was also identified as a potential reason for drop-out in high level competitive sport, as mentioned by one participant: “I think it was a little bit too much, too young, I mean I missed out a lot on friends that didn’t participate in sport so I missed out on a few girly holidays”. Girls who are in friendship groups where their peers have positive attitudes towards sport are more likely to participate in and continue to play sport (Normandile, 2006).

Family and friends clearly show high levels of contribution towards an individual’s initial engagement in competitive sport and continued participation. Without social support from family and friends it seems likely that an adolescent female is more likely to drop out of competitive sport when combined with other factors. Participants identified training and match schedules as overwhelming and keeping them from having a proper ‘social life’. One participant stated that: “it all got a bit too much, too many training sessions with not a balance I suppose” and then went on to say “netball and school; netball and life; netball and anything else. Netball over ruled everything”. Another participant commented on how she: “missed my cousins wedding”. Competing at a high level requires dedication and time

when working towards achieving goals (Biernat et.al, 2011). Being kept away from social events with friends and family due to commitment to training and sport clearly takes its toll on adolescent women and has a clear influence on an individual's decision about continued participation in competitive sport.

Another social factor that was established was a lack of elite role models for females in their sport. Many of the participants identified parents as an influence for starting competitive sport and as possible role models, but none of the participants specified any elite athletes as role models for their involvement in competitive sport. One participant commented: "I didn't have a role model that I wanted to be like; it [sport] was just more of a way of life". Another of the participants mentioned the lack of coverage for her sport: "if you go to places like America, its [volleyball] its covered and its one of the biggest sports in America for women, but in the UK it's not really covered and therefore it's not really a big influence to play". Government policy towards sport has been directed at creating model at elite levels to inspire participation among people at a grass roots level (Grix and Carmichael, 2012). From the information obtained from the participants, there are limited elite role models in their sports, particularly in sports such as netball, volleyball and women's rugby. The participants identified that their sports receive little or no media coverage, limiting their opportunities to see their sports played by elite athletes. Another participant commented: "it's [netball] not very well covered is it? And there's not the same spirit as there is for say football or rugby". The suggestion could be made that more should be done to try and increase media coverage of female sport at a professional level to produce elite female role models in a wider range of sports, just as high media coverage has contributed to producing well known elite male role models e.g. David Beckham.

The final social factor that appeared was the issue of stereotyping which five out of seven of the participants experienced within school and P.E lessons. A comment made by one of the participants concerning stereotyping in school was: "the boys had a wide range of sports to choose from, but the girls just kind of narrowed down to three or four main sports". Quick et.al (2010) recognised that of 16 to 18 year olds, boys have a participation rate in physical activity of 29% in comparison to girls who had just 15%. Offering girls the same amount of opportunities to participate in different sports as boys may be a solution to this gap. Correspondingly another participant offered: "at school not everybody knew that girls actually played rugby" and went on to say: "They stereotype you as being a certain type of person". Over stepping perceived male boundaries can play a highly influential role in and adolescent females decision about whether to participate in competitive sport or not (Slater and Tiggemann, 2010). These boundaries have been identified as being most

common within secondary schools, linking back to friendship groups and the role that peers and friends can have upon a female's decision about participation in competitive sport. This could suggest that more should be done within schools to open up a wider variety of sports to females to try and eradicate perceived boundaries that may exist to try and promote sport to adolescent females (Svender et.al, 2012).

4.2 Psychological Factors

The first psychological factor identified was body image. The view of one participant was: "You want your body to be really good... You feel better about yourself when you know you look good". Similarly another participant stated that: "the way your body looks I think is really important to take into consideration". Frost (2001) and Garrett (2004) argue that adolescent women are pressured into getting a body that is considered 'attractive' by social media. In this case this factor promoted the girls to participate in competitive sport and physical activity. Although this can be seen as a positive, more importance should be placed upon the benefits that come from being physically active rather than what society deems acceptable. In contradiction to research undertaken by Brooks and Magnusson (2006), sports kit and clothing was considered an immaterial factor in an adolescent woman's decision on whether or not to participate in sport, one participant commented: "obviously in sport you've got to wear what you've got wear, so I don't see any problem with it".

A psychological factor that was reported by all participants as having a major effect upon their decision about participation in competitive sport was; the amount of pressure and emphasis that was put on the individuals to win in their particular sporting discipline. Different sources of pressure were identified by the participants including; self-inflicted pressure, pressure from team mates, pressure from coaches and pressure from parents. "It became really competitive and I didn't really like that side of it, I just wanted to have fun and see my friends". Normandile (2006) recognises that when competitive levels in sport rise, as do the amount of pressures perceived by athletes. Here the participant is talking about when she moved to playing netball at county level and discusses that the pressure of playing at that level interfered with the social side of sport. Similarly another participant commented that "I would put way too much pressure on myself [playing nationally] and then when I played at school I was just free to do whatever so I maybe had better performances for them". This statement suggests that when pressure levels are low, performance is better contributing to higher enjoyment levels which is supportive of the research of Shiffer and Witts (2006), who comments that competency in sport leads to higher enjoyment levels and increased motivation to participate.

In contradiction to the majority of the participants, one identified a lack of pressure and competition as a main reason for dropping out of competitive sport, stating that: “without pressure it wouldn’t be as much of an accomplishment” and then going on to say “there were only a few teams that we could play [volleyball] against so it meant that it wasn’t competitive anymore”. The findings suggest that balance needs to be established in order to maintain the competitive nature of sport, while combining it with other aspects such as fun and social involvement. Minority sports such as volleyball receive little funding, restricting the potential of these sports to grow, consequently limiting sport choices to females.

This research also unveiled the pressures associated with different sport; “in a single sport you’re on your own, you feel a lot more pressure. Whereas in a team you’re supported by a lot of people”. This factor can be linked back to social factors as four participants identified that they were more likely to continue with competitive sport in team sports rather than individual sport as they had social support and weren’t burdened with all the pressure alone. This is supportive of the research of Brooks and Magnusson (2007) who also suggests that the less external pressure felt by an individual, the more likely they are to enjoy their sport and continue with it. This research does differ slightly to that of Brooks and Magnusson (2007) who claim that individual sports produce less pressure on an individual. This research suggests however that more needs to be done to promote team sports to adolescent females which have been identified in this research as having more of a positive influence on adolescent females’ participation in sport in comparison to individual sports.

The final psychological factor that showed to have an influence over the participant’s decision to drop out of competitive sport was their relationship with their coach. A poor coach-athlete relationship was a contributing factor for all of the participants dropping out of competitive sport due to motivation being lost by the participants. “She [the coach] wasn’t very approachable. Quite rude sometimes and quite patronising which made you just not enjoy playing”. Another participant stated that she dropped out of sport because the coach was; “showing a lack of confidence, no confidence in your performance at all and it puts you down... I don’t take feedback very well when it’s actually quite belittling”. The same participant went on to say: “if I had a different relationship or I was in a different team I don’t think that I would have dropped out”. It can be observed that when athletes feel they are being unfairly subjected to criticism it can have a negative effect upon their self-efficacy and confidence which may result in their decision to ultimately drop out of sport. Coach athlete relationships affect athletes both in and out of training and game

situations. It can be seen that perceptions of coaches and their methods not only deter athletes away from their coaches but also from the team they play for and the sport altogether, as all participants dropped out of the sport altogether, only to continue with physical activity. Along with the relationship with the coach, poor athlete perceptions of a coaches ability is also an influence in their decision to drop out of competitive sport: "I had this coach and he was awful...I possibly could of done a better job." Sayman (2007) suggests that the most effective coaches are able to manage individual personalities and not just the sport. One participant discussed her experiences of a coach who changed their methods and addressed issues that were contributing to the team performing poorly: "Then after the coaches realised what they were doing, we had a meeting afterwards and it was fine, but if they didn't do that I don't think I'd of been there for long". Being able to recognise what is best for their athletes and communicating with them is more likely to give them an incentive to continue with competitive sport. Also, coaches being able to recognise when they need to change their methods is an essential factor in successfully retaining the participation of their athletes.

4.3 Physical Stress

Two out of seven of the participants discussed that injury played a pivotal role in their decision to stop playing competitive sport. Participant 1 commented on how she had injured her back: "I screwed up my back as well...plus I'm a forward so everything you need for a scrum or for a lineout". Similarly another participant noted: "Problems with ankles and currently injured with a knee problem so definitely physical strain". Sport is one of the main causes of injury for adolescents (Abernethy and Bleakley, 2007). Abernethy and Bleakley (2007) suggest that injury in adolescents can impact upon future participation in physical activity and so stresses the importance for producing effective protective equipment to help prevent sporting injuries. "I didn't know that I was running my body into the ground". A suggestion should be made training regimes for high level competitive sport teams should be moderated as should the athletes who participate in them. As mentioned by Abernethy and Bleakley (2007) a degree of control should be exercised when working with adolescent athletes in order to ensure their physical health is not being compromised. Consideration of age, gender and individual fitness levels should be taken in order to maintain fitness levels of athletes without causing long term damage through training or games.

Another factor relating to physical stress was training intensity involved with competitive sport. Four participants identified that the higher the level of sport they played, the more intense and regular the training sessions became. "Our training camps [for the national

team] were way too intense". Wall and Cote (2007) suggest that with competitive sport come rigorous and specific training regimes. The research identifies these highly intense training schedules made it hard for the participants to continue with competitive sport and other aspects of their life due to the fact they were frequently tired: "We had done so well in pre-season and stuff that we were all a bit burnt out and fed up". Similarly another participant stated that she was: "tired constantly. It was quite tiring on the body". This research shows that combination of the demands of training and competing in sport created difficulties for the participants. They may have been particularly susceptible to physical fatigue because of their age and also because they were either playing more than one sport, or for more than one team.

4.4 Life Transition

This research uncovered a number of factors that relate to transitions in life for adolescent females as barriers to participation in competitive sport. Factors that were identified include financial dilemmas, work commitments and university.

Three participants identified that as they got older, the realisation that they would not be able to support themselves through playing sport was a factor in their decision to drop out of competitive sport. "Unless you could make some money out of it and you could support yourself, if you can't support yourself then what's the point in dragging it out?" Another participant stated that: "because women's rugby isn't professional so I can't bank on just my ability and stuff, I need something to back it up". Clarke et.al (2011) recognises that paying for things like sports equipment and travel expenses are a major cause for drop out in competitive sport among adolescents. The participants within this research comment on the realisation that they are unlikely to either make it far enough in their sport to make money or that they would not be able to even if they did. This realisation triggered the participants to begin to prioritise what was more important to them; competitive sport or work.

Work commitments were identified not only as a barrier to participation in competitive sport but also as a taking priority over other aspects of physical activity. Participants identified the transition into part and full time work as having an influence on their decision to participate in competitive sport. "I was going to the gym quite a lot, say four or five times a week, but that's dropped dramatically now but I suppose that has something to do with full time work". This participant commented on how work interfered with the training and match schedules of competitive sport as well as limiting her time to continue with physical activity. Work commitments are often prioritised over participation in sport as well as other areas of

life (Normandile, 2006). “I had to prioritise between the two (work and competitive sport), I would say that work was the big factor that stopped me playing netball”. “There are more important things to do like degree and working”. Normandile (2006) argues that at this stage in their life women are pressured by parents and peers to direct their lives towards something, often this direction is work or higher education. It should be mentioned that of the sports played by the participants (netball, hockey, women’s rugby union and volleyball) do not offer as much financial support, due to lower levels of funding at an elite level, as other sports (swimming, tennis, athletics etc.).

The final factor that was identified by participants was the transition and desire to go to university. Five out of seven of the participants went to university and discussed that by not playing competitive sport they were able to give more of their attention to their degrees. “Not going back into it [sport] has allowed me to be at university and I have been able to focus on my studies”. Similarly another participant commented on her reasons for not continuing to participate in competitive sport “there’s more important things to do like my degree”. Similar to work commitments, participants commented that their degree had to come first above most other things. Clarke et.al (2011) recognises that with age adolescents mature and begin to realise what is more beneficial to their future. Although many adolescents continue to play sport while at university one participant stated that there was a lack of status for her particular sport: “when I came to uni I really wanted to be part of sport and volleyball but we weren’t even entered into BUCS”. This suggests that it is not only commitment to work that causes adolescent girls not to play sport but also a lack of interest in the sport they wish to play, which links back to the social factors. Although many universities offer a wide range of sport and are scheduled in order to be student friendly it should be considered that more opportunities should be made available for girls to continue participation in competitive sport during their university life.

4.5 Attitudes towards competitive sport and physical activity

Interestingly, despite all participants dropping out of competitive sport they all expressed themselves as having positive views of sport and physical activity. When asked about her views on competitive sport three years after having dropped out, one participant replied “it’s very good to be involved in and obviously watching other people who are involved in competitive sport is very good and like I say, I think it’s something you keep with you on a general basis really”. The same participant stated that even after dropping out of competitive sport she continued to participate in other forms of physical activity, as did the other participants. Involvement in competitive sport at an early age seems to have influenced all the participants’ decision about continued participation in physical activity. All

participants identified a number of benefits of participation in physical activity, the majority of which came from their experiences of competitive sport. "I was definitely aware [of the benefits of participation in physical activity] because playing internationally it was one of my requirements; I needed to know everything about the weights room and things like that". Participation in competitive sport at a high level was able to teach these participants that to drop out of competitive sport and physical activity completely would not be beneficial, indeed it would be the complete opposite. Competitive sport could be used as a tool to demonstrate the benefits of physical activity in physical education lessons in schools and also through government schemes and initiatives.

Additionally 5 of the 7 participants expressed the desire to return to competitive sport either to play or to coach. "Well I want to teach so hopefully I will have my own little club". Similarly another participant stated, when asked about the possibility of returning to competitive sport "I mean if it's not the playing side and it has to be the coaching side or rehab or even conditioning, just to be involved". In light of this information it should be acknowledged that more should be done in order to promote the benefits, opportunities and different roles that exist towards adolescent women to being involved in competitive sport. This should be done not only to women and girls who already participate in sport but also to those who do not. Using competitive sport as a tool in this way could potentially open up new gateways into competitive sport for adolescent females. Creating new pathways could also prevent dropout rate in competitive sport among 16-18 year old women by offering them different roles within their specific sport.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

5.0 Conclusion

The main aim of this research was to identify reasons for dropout in and barriers to, participation in competitive sport and physical activity among females aged between 16 and 18. The Active people Survey (2012) identified women aged between 16 and 24 had a participation rate in sport and physical activity of just 21.1%, less than half of their male counterparts. Pate (2007) identified 45% of girls participated in sport and physical activity between the ages of 12 and 15 with the percentage dropping to 34% when the girls were aged between 16 and 18. Female participation in sport and physical activity has received a wide amount of research from authors: (MacPhail et.al, 2003; Normandile, 2006; Shaffer and Witts, 2006; Brookes and Magnusson, 2007; Lodewyk et.al.2009).

This study showed that there are four main types of barriers and factors that exist which have an influence on an adolescent girl's decision to drop out of competitive sports, which were; psychological factors, social factors, physical stress and transitions in life. Many of the factors were found to be able to be linked to one another, particularly psychological and social factors. Influence of friends, family, pressure and the relationship with coaches was identified as the most contributory factors towards their decision to drop out of competitive sport. Pressure can be linked to the three other areas as participants discussed pressure as being highly influential particularly when coming from external sources like friends, family and coaches.

The research also acknowledges the effect of self-inflicted pressure. Participants identified that often they were put pressure on themselves to perform because they were playing for high level competitive teams. Participants felt that when they were coming under such intense pressure externally and internally, their performance would suffer and as a result they would lose enjoyment from the sport. Participants identified enjoying school sport more because they felt they were under less pressure when playing in an atmosphere that was described as being 'more laid back'. The creation of such an atmosphere was acknowledged as being best achieved when the participants were playing in team sports rather than in individual disciplines where the pressure could be shared among team mates.

Furthermore physical stress and injury was identified as being contributory to participant's decision to drop out of competitive sport. Training session intensity and regularity was discussed as being 'too much' and leaving the participants struggling to maintain other important areas of their life such as school and work. The higher the level of sport the participant played the more intense the sessions were described as being. Being

physically and mentally drained from training and games left participants with time little else. Establishing a balance between competitive sport and other areas of life should be sought by sports club and athletes in order to help maintain participation in competitive sport. Injury was also identified as being a highly influential reason for drop out in competitive sport and also causing a barrier to participation in physical activity at a later date.

The final barrier that was identified as being a main cause for dropout in competitive sport was prioritisation of jobs and university work. Making these transitions in life took priority over competitive sport, where training sessions and games clashed with commitments of university and careers. Participants recognised that they would not be able to support themselves in the future through participation in competitive sport because of a lack of money. The desire remained with all participants however, to maintain participation in physical activity showing that through competitive sport the participants had gained an understanding of the benefits of participation in physical activity.

5.1 Limitations of Research

This research lacks any quantitative data. Combining the interviews with a method a quantitative data collection (e.g. questionnaires) would contribute to providing this research with higher validity and reliability. Mixed method approaches have also been referred to as being 'data triangulation', which would bring more information to the research giving a wider range of data that could be analysed (Shank, 2002).

5.2 Further Research

Further research should aim to gain a deeper understanding of the of the factors that influence 16 to 18 years old girls participation in competitive sport from this and past research. Further research should continue to address females of this age to identify reasons for continued participation in competitive sport. Identifying an explanation of reasons why males of the same age have a higher participation rate than females would benefit future research in identifying a solution to closing the 'gender gap'.

Research including coaches and females who continued to participate in competitive sport, would contribute to gaining an understanding of how coaches can influence females aged between 16 and 18 to continue participating in competitive sport. Coaches may become more aware of the role they play in encouraging adolescent females to be involved in competitive sport.

Further research may also benefit from including girls who are still within the age range, rather than looking at the scenario from a retrospective view point. This would be beneficial as new reasons for drop out in competitive sport maybe identified.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Title of Study: 'Barriers to participation in competitive sport and physical activity for females aged between 16 and 18'

Information Sheet

Background

This study is an attempt to identify and understand the barriers that girls aged between 16 and 18 face towards participating in competitive sport and physical activity. This is an undergraduate dissertation from Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Why have you been asked?

You have been selected to participate in this study as because between the ages of 16 and 18 you ceased playing competitive sport at a high level.

What would happen if you agree to participate?

If you should agree to participate then you will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher. The interviews will consist of questions about your experiences of playing competitive sport and your participation in physical activity. The interviews will be held at a time and location that is suitable to you. The interviews could last between 20-30 minutes.

Are there any risks?

There are no significant risks from participating in this study. You will not be forced into doing anything, or answering anything you do not want to. All information will be kept private and consent forms will be kept securely away from the main study. All information given will be kept anonymous when the study is written up.

What happens to the results of the study?

The results will be analysed for the sole purpose of the dissertation. As a participant you have the right to view the transcription of the interview to ensure that the answers you gave are what you meant and are not misinterpreted. The results will remain confidential prior to, during and after the dissertation.

Your rights

You have the right to withdraw from the study whenever you wish. If there are any questions in particular that you do not wish to answer you have the right not to.

Are there any benefits?

By participating in the study you will have the chance to express your views on what barriers you think there may be towards participation in competitive sport and physical activity

Appendix B

CARDIFF METROPOLITAN INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CSS Reference No:

Title of Project: 'Barriers to participation in competitive sport
and physical for females aged between 16
and 18'

Name of Researcher: Morgan Lewis

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 25th February 2013 for this evaluation study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that it is possible to stop taking part at any time, without giving a reason.
3. I also understand that if this happens, our relationships with the Cardiff Metropolitan University, or our legal rights will not be affected
4. I understand that information from the study may be used for Reporting purposes, but I will not be identified.
5. I agree to take part in this study identifying the reasons behind Participation of females in competitive sport and physical activity

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature of person taking consent

* When completed, one copy for participant and one copy for researcher's files.

Appendix C

Interview Questions- Pilot Study

Introduction

Introduce participant. This interview is going to be about looking at your experiences of competitive sport and physical activity and discussing the reasons why you dropped out of competitive sport. If you have any questions during the interview or wish stop please feel free to let me know.

Introductory Questions

1. Participants age?
2. How old was the participant when they dropped out of competitive sport?
3. Sport they were involved in?

Question	Probe
First of all, could you tell me a little bit about how you came to be involved in your sport?	-what was the main influence for you to start?
Could you tell me about your experiences of playing competitive sport?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How often did you train? - What was the intensity of your sessions like? - Were you ever pressured into playing competitive sport? - Were there any external influences on you to play sport? - How did you find balancing your time around competitive sport and school? - Were travel arrangements or any other resources such as money an issue?
What was the main motivation for you playing sport at a competitive level?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social factors? - Enjoyment? - Stay in Shape?
Did you ever play sport competitively for your school?	- Did you compete in any other sports?
What were the main differences for you between school sport and county or club sport?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What was the difference in training sessions? - Was there more or less pressure when you were playing for your school? - What was the difference between having coaches at a club and in school?
Could you describe your experiences of Physical Education in school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What were your teachers like? - Did you have a wide range of sports to choose from in school? - Do you feel like there was any stereotyping or male favouritism in Physical Education or school sport? - How did you feel about having to wear a specific kit style?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What were the facilities like in your school? Do you think they had any influence on your decision to play school sport competitively? - What experiences did you have with your teachers?
What sort of benefits do you think of from participating in competitive sport and physical activity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental? - Physical? - Social?
Would you say that you were aware of these benefits when you dropped out of competitive sport?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Of the benefits you just named which do you think had the biggest influence on you to play competitive sport and participate in physical activity? Why?
What were the main influences on you that made you decide to drop out of competitive sport?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why do you say that? - Were there other factors involved? - What times of day were you training and playing? Did this ever influence your decision in any way? - Did you ever come under any physical stress while playing competitive sport?
After dropping out of competitive sport, did you drop out completely or did you continue with other forms of physical activity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What sort of physical activity were you doing? - Are you still participating now? - Do you enjoy what you are doing now as much as when you were playing competitive sport? - Why do you say that?
From your point of view do you feel that dropping out of competitive sport was a good decision for you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why? - Do you feel that other areas of your life have benefitted? - Do you have any regrets about dropping out of competitive sport? - Would you ever consider taking up a sport that you haven't played before? - Are there any other forms of physical activity that you are thinking of getting involved in or would like to?
Since dropping out, have your attitudes changed towards sport in any way?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In what way have they changed? - If you are considering starting again, what are your motives for doing so? - Are there any other attitudes that you had towards physical activity that have changed? - Why do you think they have?

To what extent are you aware of any government initiatives that exist to promote female participation in sport and physical activity?

- Can you think of any from when you were in school?
- Can you think of any that exist now?
- Do you feel that more needs to be done in order to get more females involved in sport and to continue to do so?

Appendix D

Interview Questions

Introduction

Introduce participant. This interview is going to be about looking at your experiences of competitive sport and physical activity and discussing the reasons why you dropped out of competitive sport. If you have any questions during the interview or wish stop please feel free to let me know.

Introductory Questions

1. Participants age?
2. How old were you when you dropped out of competitive sport?
3. Which was your main sport?
4. What level were you playing your sport at?

Question	Probe
First of all, could you tell me a little bit about how you came to be involved in your sport?	-what was the main influence for you to start?
Could you tell me about your experiences of playing competitive sport?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How often did you train? - What was the intensity of your sessions like? - Were you ever pressured into playing competitive sport? - Were there any external influences on you to play sport? - How did you find balancing your time around competitive sport and school? - Did competitive sport ever get in the way of work? - Were travel arrangements or any other resources such as money an issue? - Did you ever have any role models that inspired you to play?
What was the main motivation for you playing sport at a competitive level?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social factors? - Enjoyment? - Stay in Shape? - Role Models?
Did you ever play sport competitively for your school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did you compete in any other sports?
What were the main differences for you between school sport and county or club sport?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What was the difference in training sessions? - Was there more or less pressure when you were playing for your school? - Which did you prefer? - What was the difference between having coaches at a club and in school? - Do you think that your teachers had a good understanding of coaching in your sport?
Could you describe your experiences of Physical Education in school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What were your teachers like? - What was your attitude towards Physical Education?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did you have a wide range of sports to choose from in school? - Do you feel like there was any stereotyping or male favouritism in Physical Education or school sport? - How did you feel about having to wear a specific kit style? - What were the facilities like in your school? Do you think they had any influence on your decision to play school sport competitively? - What experiences did you have with your teachers? - Do you think the teachers had a good knowledge of what they were trying to teach you in practical sessions?
What sort of benefits do you think of from participating in competitive sport and physical activity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental? - Physical? - Social?
Would you say that you were aware of these benefits when you dropped out of competitive sport?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Of the benefits you just named which do you think had the biggest influence on you to play competitive sport and participate in physical activity? Why? - Do you think that you have missed out on many of the benefits just named since dropping out? If so, which ones?
What were the main influences on you that made you decide to drop out of competitive sport?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why do you say that? - Were there other factors involved? - Was the emphasis that was put on winning too much? - What times of day were you training and playing? Did this ever influence your decision in any way? - As you grew older did other aspects of life become more important? - Did you ever come under any physical stress while playing competitive sport?
After dropping out of competitive sport, did you drop out completely or did you continue with other forms of physical activity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What sort of physical activity were you doing? - How often were you taking part? - Are you still participating now? - Do you enjoy what you are doing now as much as when you were playing competitive sport? - Why do you say that?

<p>From your point of view do you feel that dropping out of competitive sport was a good decision for you?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why? - Do you feel that other areas of your life have benefitted? - Do you have any regrets about dropping out of competitive sport? - Do you think you have the potential or the desire to take up the sport again? - Why? - Would you ever consider taking up a sport that you haven't played before? - Are there any other forms of physical activity that you are thinking of getting involved in or would like to?
<p>Since dropping out, have your attitudes changed towards sport in any way?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In what way have they changed? - If you are considering starting again, what are your motives for doing so? - Are there any other attitudes that you had towards physical activity that have changed? - Why do you think they have?
<p>To what extent are you aware of any government initiatives that exist to promote female participation in sport and physical activity?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you think of any from when you were in school? - Can you think of any that exist now? - Do you feel that more needs to be done in order to get more females involved in sport and to continue to do so?