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Sport and Life Skills Development:
Examining the Experience from Former Student-athletes
in Malaysia

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Abstract

Sport and Life Skills Development: Examining the Experience from Former Student- athletes in Malaysia

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This research study explored the former student-athletes' perspectives on their life skills development during their sport participation in high school. In Malaysia, sport program had been implement in schools to develop student-athletes at early level. Despite positive outcome in sport achievement, there is more concern nowadays about the life skills that student-athletes as young people can gain through sport participation. For former student-athlete, they have to able to transfer those skills to other life domain. The research findings are based on the analysis through semi-structured interview of eight former student-athletes in high schools (national sport school) Malaysia from four different type of team sports. The findings are organized into three themes based on the research questions of

this study. Findings demonstrate many elements of positive developmental experience that participants believe they learned and practiced through sport. However, findings also shows negative experience especially related to academic. There are some life skills that participants learned and practiced in sport that can be transferred to other life domain such as self-esteem/ positive thinking, coping with stress, interpersonal communication and cooperation with other. In their personal development, the coaches were the most influenced them.

Key Words : Student-athlete, sport participation, life skills development.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Sport and Life Skills Development of Student-Athletes

Using sport as a tool of personal development has become an important focus in many countries today. Various programs and policies have been implemented to encourage students in elementary or secondary schools to participate in sport. High participation in sport among students can contribute in achieving a country's goal in sport development either for development of sport (competitive and elite sport) or development through sport (sport as a tool of development of other field).

Previous studies found that participation in sport can contribute to positive aspect of life skills development of youth or adolescent. The positive relationship between youth or adolescents' sport participation with life skill development is widely acknowledged by various researchers. However, minimal research has explored how active sport participation contribute to life skills development, specifically among student-athletes in high schools which implement sports schools system. The majority of research about student-athletes centers on the impact of on their academic or in-class learning outcomes. It is a necessity to have deeper studies on the former student-athletes' developmental experiences which could not be

revealed if the interviews been conducted with current student-athlete analysis.

Life skills are defined by (Danish et. all, 2004) as internal assets that enable individuals to succeed in different environments in which they live (For example: school, family, neighborhood and community). Sport provides a forum to learn skills such as discipline, confidence and leadership - teaches core principles such as tolerance, cooperation and respect - value of effort and how to manage victory, as well as defeat. (UNSDP, 2003a; UNAIDS, 2010). Bolles (1996) defined transferable skills which also be a termed as life skills, 'as those set of skills that are potentially transferable to any field or career, regardless of where they were first learned or developed (cited in. Mayocchi and Hanrahan, 2000:95).

Good, R. Chad (2015) in a research of ways in which participation in intercollegiate athletics contributes to the learning and development of student-athletes found that former student-athlete could have both positive and negative experience. In the research, almost all of the participants described their gains from athletic experience which were accountability, work ethic and dedication, time management skills, handling criticism, failure, and success, teamwork and collaboration skills, and a network of close personal relationships. The Other common themes were self-

motivation, interpersonal skills, improved self-esteem, valuing educational opportunities, critical thinking skills and self-discipline. However, there were also perceived negative experiences as a result of the participation in Inter-collegiate athletics. A few participants explained about negative aspects of their experience in terms of lack of social opportunities and lack of free time.

The World Health Organization (WHO: 1999) defines life skills as the ability for adaptive and positive behavior that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

In order for what is developed in sport to be classified as a life skill, it must be transferred and applied in different life domains such as work, school, and in the community (Gould & Carson, 2008). According to (Jones & Lavallee, 2009a), if a skill cannot be transferred, it is a sport-specific skill and cannot be deemed a life skill. Although the notion of life skill transfer may seem simplistic, in reality, it is a complex process that is heavily influenced by individual dispositions and environmental factors (Allen et al., 2014; Camiré et al., 2012). There are only a few studies in sport that have empirically explored life skill transfer (e.g., Jones & Lavallee, 2009b; Walsh, Ozaeta, & Wright, 2010).

Student who actively participate in competitive or elite sport can be considered as a *student-athlete*. Student-athletes has become an important group of people to be concern in the sport development in a country. Malaysia as a developing country has been focus and implement various policies in sport development which begin in the secondary school level. In Malaysia, sport program setting had been implement to develop student athletes at the elementary and secondary schools level especially in sports schools education program.

Based on schools statistic in Malaysia by Ministry of Education Malaysia, there are about 10,000 schools with 5 million students in Malaysia. From that, there are 5 national sports schools with about 2,000 current students-athletes, 15 state sports school with 3,500 student-athletes, and another 690 schools at district level development with 36,000 student-athletes age between 11-18 years old.

Despite positive outcome in sport achievement, there is more concern nowadays about the life skills that student-athletes as young people can gain through sport participation that can be transferred to other life domain. There is a fact that only fraction of young people who participate in competitive sport will develop careers in professional sport. For example, out of 8 million students participating in high school athletics in the United

States, only 480,000 or 6% will compete at NCAA schools and only a fraction will realize their goal of becoming a professional athlete (National Collegiate Athletic Association, Feb. 2017). The others need to apply the valuable principles learnt during sport participation to their adult pursuits. The experiences of college athletics and the life lessons they learn along the way will help them as they pursue careers in other fields.

1.2 Research Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this research are:

1. To explore former student-athletes' perspectives on life skills development during their participation in sport.
2. To investigate transferable life skills from their experience in sport participation to other life domain.
3. To examine the influential factors to the life skills development during student-athlete participation in high school sport

Sport and education policies in Malaysia had included the life skills development as one of their objectives. However, there are still lack of knowledge and explanations of what life skills can be gained through sport participation and how such life skills can be transferred to other life domain especially among student-athletes in Malaysia. It is important to understand what life skills can be developed through sport and closely examine how life skill can be transferred to other life domain.

Hopefully, the answer of this research will provide more systematic data and information in exploring and understanding how life skills can be learnt & developed through sport and transferred into other life domain. The findings might be useful for the government, ministry and schools administrators in improve or revise the sports schools program setting which can develop life skills learning among student-athletes. The future career and development of student-athletes is highly rely on the life skills that they have especially for those who not pursue their career as professional athlete or after elite athlete retirement. The aspect of life skills development among student-athletes is not only very important for Malaysia, but also to other

countries in global which concern about the personal development of their athletes.

1.3 Research Questions

This research will examining the experience from former student-athletes in Malaysia about their life skills developmental during sport participation and how the life skills could be transferred to other life situation. Thus, it address the following questions:

1. What life skills developmental experience do former student-athletes believe they acquired through sport participation?
2. What life skills do former student-athletes able to transfer from their experience in sport participation to other life domain?
3. What is the most influential factor to life skills development of student-athlete?

Chapter 2. Review of Literature

In order to explore the relationship or how sport can contribute to the student-athlete development, some literatures review of factors and environment that related to the student-athlete can be use as references in this research. Therefore, the concept of development through sport, youth development, life skills development, student-athletes, sports schools and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) - Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT) in sport need to be clarified.

2.1. Development through sport

The use of sport for developmental purposes has shown an incredible global growth in especially in this 20th century. The role of sport in development has become a focus by international community. United Nation (UN) in 2005 declared:

The world of sport presents a natural partnership for the United Nations' system. By its very nature sport is about participation. It is about inclusion and citizenship. Sport brings individuals and communities together, highlighting commonalities and bridging cultural or ethnic divides. Sport provides a forum to learn skills such

as discipline, confidence and leadership and it teaches core principles such as tolerance, cooperation and respect. Sport teaches the value of effort and how to manage victory, as well as defeat. When these positive aspects of sport are emphasized, sport becomes a powerful vehicle through which the United Nations can work towards achieving its goals. (UN IATF SDP, 2003a; UNAIDS, 2010)

In the United Nation (UN) Sport and Sustainable Development Goals, one of them is to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. In order to achieve this objective, physical education and sport activities can be used to enhance enrolment in formal education systems, school attendance and academic performance among school-aged population. Sport-based programs can also offer a platform for learning opportunities and for the acquisition of skills transferable to the workplace and to social life.

Sport and Development, Sport for Development, and Development through Sport are only a few examples of widely used terms for the use of sport as a tool in development processes. (Levermore & Beacom, 2009)

2.2. Youth development and life skills

(Lerner, Brown, & Kier, 2005) stated that Positive youth development (PYD) is a strength-based conception of development in which children and adolescents are viewed as having ‘resources to be developed’ rather than ‘problems to be solved’ Proponents of PYD search for characteristics of individuals and their social environments that can be harnessed to build strengths and foster positive developmental change (Lerner & Castellino, 2002). PYD has been widely used to study children’s and adolescents’ involvement in various types of organized and adult supervised sport programs (Holt & Neely, 2011).

The domains of youth development can be Findings of a review by Bailey (2006), which examined the effect of physical education and sport on the development of children, suggest that outcomes of physical education and sport (in schools) can be understood in relation to children’s development in five domains: physical, lifestyle, affective, social and cognitive.

2.3 Definition of life skills

There are some definition of ‘life skills’. Steve Danish of the Life Skills Center at Virginia Commonwealth University (one of the leading

advocates for life skills development in youth) and his colleagues argue that youth should be assessed, not in terms of their problems or lack of problems, but in terms of their potential. Being competent and successful is more than being problem-free. Youth should be taught the skills, values, attitudes and knowledge to enable them to grow confidence in the future, to get a better sense of personal control over themselves and their physical and social environment, and to become better citizens (Danish et al., 2004).

Danish and his colleagues define life skills as “those skills that enable individuals to succeed in the different environments in which they live, such as school, home and in their neighborhoods. Life skills can be behavioral (communicating effectively with peers and adults) or cognitive (making effective decisions); interpersonal (being assertive) or intrapersonal (setting goals)” (Danish et al., 2004,).

Another definition of life skills is given by (Gould & Carson, 2008), who did a literature review about life skills development through sport. They defined life skills as those internal personal assets, characteristics and skills such as goal setting, self-esteem, emotional control, and hard work ethic that can be facilitated or developed in sport and are transferred for use in non-sport settings. The essential in both definitions is that the skills have to be transferable to other life domain or situations.

Life skills development through sport has recently gained a lot of interest to study. Some literature review can be used as a guide to discover which life skills that athletes can learn through sport. (Danish et al., 1993) suggested that sport was particularly suited to teaching several life skills, including performing under pressure, decision making, organization, communication, patience, risk taking, commitment, self-control, self-evaluation, goal- setting and motivation.

Similar to the term development, there are many terms in the defining life skills, differing from the global agencies as WHO, UN or NGOs. However, there have been more consensuses in the definition of life skills than for the term development, even if some of the definitions of life skills tend to capture large aspects of the term.

WHO and UN suggested that life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. In particular, life skills are a group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathy with others, and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner.

Life skills may be directed toward personal actions or actions toward others, as well as toward actions to change the surrounding environment to make it conducive to health. (2012; UNESCAP, 2009; WHO, 2003)

Here, WHO and UN are operating with a highly broad definition of the term life skills, without any attempt to specify what they mean, leaving the life skills program developers to decide what type of life skills to concentrate on. Then, (Gould & Carson, 2008) suggested their definition of life skills to be "those internal personal assets, characteristics and skills such as goal setting, emotional control, self- esteem, and hard work ethic that can be facilitated or developed in sport and are transferred for use in non-sport settings". Gould and Carson were trying to be more specific about what kind of skills that should be characterized as life skills. Others have also defined the term life skills, and Ajzen (1991) defined life skills as "Those skills that enable individuals to succeed in the different environments in which they live, such as school, home and in their neighborhoods. Life skills can be behavioral (communicating effectively with peers and adults) or cognitive (making effective decisions), interpersonal (being assertive) or intrapersonal (setting goals)".

As we can see, the range of definitions of the term life skills suggests that a life skill is not only supposed to help the youth in the

participation of a sport activity, but that the transfer of a specific life skill to other settings outside the sport arena is demanded for the life skill to become a true life skill (Ajzen, 1991; Gould & Carson, 2008).

The life skills literature suggests that life skills are like physical skills, and that they are taught through demonstration, modeling and practice. Highly important is the meaning that sport itself is not the thing that teaches these skills, they need to be intentionally taught and practiced throughout the sport experience. However, the similarities with physical skills makes the sport context a desirable backdrop for teaching life skills, because here skill development is the norm, the youth is often highly motivated to participate, and it provides clear results for hard work (Ajzen, 1991; Gould & Carson, 2008).

When developing new programs to develop life skills, the direction of the programs and interventions should be decided by the definition of life skills, and program developers should see life skills as psychosocial characteristics, rather than isolated behaviors (Ajzen, 1991; Hodge et al., 2012). There have been several other terms in use to describe life skills as Social- emotional learning, emotional intelligence, positive psychology, resilience, and character education. (Hodge et al., 2012)

2.4 Life skills development through sport

According to the World Health Organisation (1999) the teaching of life skills is essential for the promotion of healthy child and adolescent development, and for preparing youth for their changing social conditions. It is argued that life skills can be learned in the same way as physical skills, through demonstration and practice. Some important skills that can be learned in sport that are transferable to other life domains include: “the abilities to perform under pressure, solve problems, meet deadlines and/or challenges, set goals, communicate, handle both success and failure, work with a team and within a system, and receive feedback and benefit from it (Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005).

Something can qualify as a life skill, when efforts are made to transfer skills to other domains of life (Gould & Carson, 2008). An example of an effort to transfer a skill to other life situations is when a trainer/coach emphasizes the importance of transferring a certain skill to other life situations. An important question is: Are life skills developed through sport participation?

Results of studies examining whether life skills are developed through sport are inconsistent (Gould & Carson, 2008). Some studies show that life skills are not developed through sport and other studies show that,

under the right conditions, sport can be important in facilitating the development of life skills (Gould & Carson, 2008). The researchers conclude that sport has the potential to facilitate the development of life skills. However they must be specifically targeted in the sport program (Gould & Carson, 2008).

Intervention studies have been held to assess the efficacy of certain sport programs aiming to develop youth life skills. Papacharisis et al. (2005) examined a sport life skills program with an intervention and a control group. The intervention group followed 15-minutes sessions where goal setting, problem solving and positive thinking was the focus. The results indicated that the intervention group showed better knowledge of life skills taught, had better belief about problem solving, more constructive thinking about goal setting, and also performed better physically than the control group (Papacharisis et al., 2005).

Another study by Holt et al. (2008) examined how youth learned life skills through their participation in a high school soccer team. They did not find evidence for direct learning of life skills, however they identified the importance of the structure and context (climate) of the sport program to facilitate positive outcomes of sport participation. The relationship between the coaches and the athletes, and the conditions that are created by the coach

to teach the young athletes certain skills are important. Gould et al. (2006, 2007) examined high school football coaches who are recognized for their abilities to teach life skills in youth. They conducted interviews and they indicated four sets of factors that were important characteristics of the coaches.

First, the coaches must well-developed coaching philosophies that emphasized the importance of teaching life skills. Second, they were able to form strong relationships and connections with their players. Third, the coaches had several well-thought out strategies on how to teach life skills. The fourth factor was the recognition of the influence of the social environment on the development of life skills, and the adaptation to resolve certain issues because of the social environment (Gould, Chung, Smith, & White, 2006; Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2007).

The coaches in the study by Gould et al. (2006, 2007) viewed the teaching of life skills as an integrated activity from their general coaching duties. They infused the teaching of life skills in their on-the-field coaching. As indicated by the inconsistent results of studies, more research is needed to get a better understanding of if and how life skills are developed through sport and what the role of coaches is in the facilitating of teaching life skills.

2.5 Self-Determination Theory (SDT) - Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT)

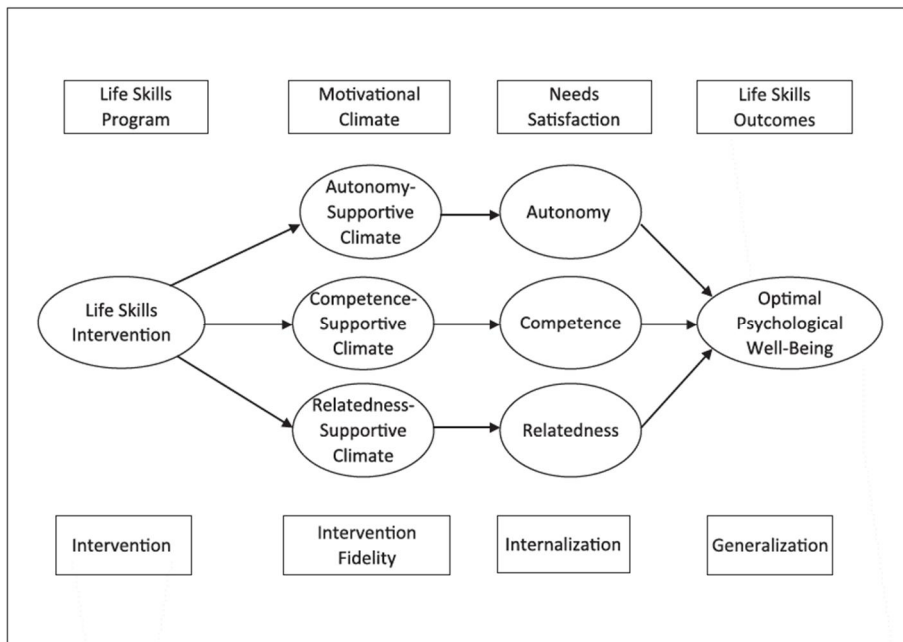
Self-Determination Theory (SDT) - Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT) elaborates the concept of evolved psychological needs and their relations to psychological health and well-being. BPNT argues that psychological well-being and optimal functioning is predicated on autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Therefore, contexts that support versus thwart these needs should invariantly impact wellness. The theory argues that all three needs are essential and that if any is thwarted there will be distinct functional costs. Because basic needs are universal aspects of functioning, BPNT looks at cross-developmental and cross-cultural settings for validation and refinements.

In order to examine the life skill development and transfer, which according to the Life Development Intervention (LDI) / Basic Need Theory (BNT) model (Hodge et al., 2013), suggest that the basic needs of the participants were theoretically satisfied. They proposed integrating aspects of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) with the LDI model.

In order to ensure in a deliberate manner that student-athletes' basic needs are satisfied in high school sport, coaches can foster the need for

autonomy by encouraging athletes to regulate their own behaviour (e.g., allowing athletes to decide the number of practice sessions and provide input into team rules). The need for competence can be promoted by having coaches provide opportunities for their athletes to communicate with their peers (e.g., allowing athletes to lead team meetings, having captains communicate the coach’s instructions to the team, banning electronic devices). To satisfy the need for relatedness, coaches are encouraged to be considerate of their athletes’ feelings.

Table 1: Life Development Intervention (LDI) / Basic Need Theory (BNT) model (Hodge et al., 2013)



2.6 Student-athletes and sport development in sports school

2.6.1 Student-athlete characteristic

Student-athletes face strong time and energy pressures from their athletic participation. This may put athletics in conflict with academics by enhancing athletic commitment while diminishing academic commitment. Lageman (as cited in Foltz, 1992) stated that “the term student-athlete describes an individual whose education is combined with intercollegiate athletic participation. The sequence of the words, however, may not accurately reflect the respective emphasis placed on each area in the student-athletes life. At various university environments, athletics is the focal point and academics are secondary priority”.

Hanks and Eckland (as cited in Hanson and Kraus, 1998) explained that young people who were involved in sports in high school will be looked on favorably when they enter higher education and occupational roles; they will be seen as having important skills and being well rounded. Then, Hanks and Eckland, Otto and Alwin, (as cited in Hanson and Kraus, 1998) mentioned "feeling of recognition and accomplishment may give young individuals self-confidence d a feeling that compels them to achieve success in other areas, such as academics". The unique opportunity for creating a

plan to enhance academic potential reinforces the unquestionable benefits of participating in team sports.

Otto and Alwin (as cited in Hanson and Kraus, 1998) "argued that extracurricular activities, like sports, give students the opportunity to learn and practice the attitudes, skills, and values that are important for future status success". Pascarella, Smart, and Ryan (as cited in Taylor, 1995) "have reported the following positive effects from participating in college sports: increases in social involvement in college, interpersonal and leadership skills, or satisfaction with college and motivation to complete one's degree". In addition, Thompson (1986) believes, athletics assist with education by providing: experience with teamwork, control, self-respect, accountability, and organizational skills. According to Hale (as cited in Thompson, 1986) "athletics provide the potential to prepare people to fit into larger economic, social, and political roles. Personal and moral character, coping strategies, risk taking and achievement behavior are all readily developed in the sport context".

According to (Pascarella et al., 1995) "although athletic participation in college may often function to facilitate the social mobility of individuals from relatively low socioeconomic backgrounds, both Dubois and Howard found little to indicate that various objective indexes of career success are

significantly correlated with collegiate athletic participation". Furthermore, Blann, Bredemeier & Shields, Kennedy & Dimick, Sowa & Gressard, Stone & Strange, (as cited in Pascarella et al., 1999) mentioned that intercollegiate athletic participation may be negatively associated with such outcomes as involvement and satisfaction with the overall college experience, career maturity, clarity in educational and occupational plans, and principled moral judgment. There are three essential qualities of student-athletes which are self-discipline, competitiveness, and having a positive sense of themselves. Self-discipline is the inner motivation, which drives someone to do what has to be done to succeed. The second essential quality is competitiveness which involves more than a want, but a desire. An athlete that has a very high level of competitive drive is likely to become an overachiever in many aspects of their life. Self-esteem focuses on how an athlete deals with failure and whether they succeed through failure. If an individual has positive self-esteem, they will view failures as nothing more than an inevitable part of the game. These three qualities of athletics may be instrumental towards the development of character in the whole person.

Student-athletes or former student-athletes is a unique group of people who have experience both in development of sport and development through sport. Student-athletes are also included in the youth category who

can be an example of how youth can contribute to development of sport. At the same time, they may have experience of how life skills gained through sport could be transferred in to other life domain.

2.6.2 Sports School system for student-athlete

Combining top-level sports and education has turned out to be one way of keeping competitive sports at the international level in several countries. The best-known examples of combining sports training and education can be found in the former German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union, where athletically talented young people or, more accurately, children were assembled in a few boarding schools. Sports authorities from many countries have become acquainted with the socialist countries' elite sport school systems, but these have not been copied. The United States is also a special case, because there almost all competitive youth sport has been integrated into the existing school system in the form of high school sports and into higher education as intercollegiate sports. Setting up an athlete's educational opportunities has been justified in many ways. A prevailing argument for these special educational arrangements has been the guarantee of success in the ever tougher international sports events. In addition, these special institutions and arrangements also provide an

excellent opportunity to screen and train the most talented young people. Other motives for the establishment of these special arrangements have been to provide young athletes with an opportunity to educate themselves, so that after the sporting career the transition to the labor markets would be easier. (Timo Metsä-Tokila, 2002)

Sports school is a special type of educational institution for children and is believed originated in the Soviet Union in 1930. Sports schools were the basis of the powerful system of physical culture (fitness) and sports education of the USSR. The main features of this system remain in the system of sports education in Russia and other post-Soviet states, and also became the basis of similar systems in other countries, one of the most powerful ones at the present time being that of the People's Republic of China.

Soviet experience of mass children and youth sports education was applied by Eastern European countries, in particular East Germany. Similar sports schools were established in the People's Republic of China, North Korea and Cuba allowing these countries to raise the level of sportsmen and achieve highest results at World Championships and Olympic Games. At the present time some 3,000 sports schools exist in the People's Republic of

China, including full-time ones, and this system is essentially based on the powerful system of sports schools of the USSR.

However, sports school system is not only has been practise in so called communist countries, but also in other democratic countries including Malaysia. In 1996, Malaysia officially operate it first national sport school in Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur slightly two years before Malaysia being the host for The 16th Commonwealth Games 1998. It is a boarding school with comprehensive sports and educational development program. Started with one sports school in 1996 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia then have second sports school in Johor state in 1998. Both of these two sports schools are very well known in Malaysia. Malaysia then have another three more national sports school with the latest one was opened in year 2016. Each sports school has about 400 to 500 capacity of student and involves 24 sport.

In an International review about sports school (Dr Sabine Radtke & Prof. Fred Coalter, 2007) wrote that in most countries the sports schools are state secondary schools and include pupils of all abilities and educational levels. Student-athletes must meet the standard academic requirements to achieve the relevant secondary school graduation diploma. However, there are substantial degrees of flexibility to enable the student-athletes to train and compete in their sport. The time dedicated to training and related

activities was varies. In France, there are 24 hours of school lessons and about 20 hours of training per week. Meanwhile in Belgium the weekly 32 hour curriculum has 12 hours of sport. Further, the time dedicated to training varies between different sports.

In Malaysia national sports schools, student-athletes also have to follow sport training session about two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening. In average, they have to spend at least 20 hours per week for sport beside their daily academic class. Their spending time in sport may increase when they have to participate in sport tournament during weekend or additional intensive training at night in preparation for certain important games.

(Richard Way, Carl Repp & Thom Brennan, 2010) wrote about sport schools in Canada that Sport school programs have developed quickly in Canada over the past 10 years without much structure. The flexibility and choice in education now allow student-athletes to complete their high school education and have the opportunity to intensively participate in sport. However due to the less formalized structure, Canada has a fragmented system that is not held to any standard of design, instruction, performance, or evaluation, with the exception of Quebec. International models seem to

have been successful in developing student-athletes both academically and athletically, but not without formalized structure.

Most sport organizations do not include sport schools in their LTAD or strategic plans. As well top aspiring high school high performance athletes do not derive any benefits from these programs.

2.7 Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) and student-athletes

Talent development is holistic in nature due to the complex interaction of interdisciplinary issues that directly impact on athletic opportunity and progression. Such concepts have been critically acknowledged and documented in a recent comprehensive report (Bailey et al., 2010). Bailey and colleagues (2010) discuss such interactions methodically and recommend future considerations to sport and physical activity stakeholders who wish to enhance participation and performance levels. Such discussion has also been documented in recent review articles (Burgess & Naughton, 2010; Phillips, Davids, Renshaw, & Portus, 2010). Although we recognize such considerations are significant, this review focuses upon the popular “Long-Term Athlete Development” (LTAD) model (Balyi & Hamilton, 2004), which by design is fundamentally based upon physiological principles.

Paul Ford et al. (2011) wrote that within the UK, the “Long Term Athlete Development” (LTAD) model has been proposed by a variety of national governing bodies to offer a first step to considering the approach to talent development. The model, which is primarily a physiological perspective, presents an advancement of understanding of developing athletic potential alongside biological growth. It focuses on training to optimize performance longitudinally, and considers sensitive developmental periods known as “windows of opportunity”. However, it appears that there are a number of problems with this theoretical model that are not necessarily transparent to coaches. Principally, the model is only one-dimensional, there is a lack of empirical evidence upon which the model is based, and interpretations of the model are restricted because the data on which it is based rely on questionable assumptions and erroneous methodologies. Fundamentally, this is a generic model rather than an individualized plan for athletes. It is crucial that the LTAD model is seen as a “work in progress” and the challenge, particularly for paediatric exercise scientists, is to question, test, and revise the model. It is unlikely that this can be accomplished using classical experimental research methodology but this should not deter practitioners from acquiring valid and reliable evidence.

LTAD model has been widely used in many countries in sport development either for elite sport development or for social and human development. One of the interesting example is what has been implement by Canada. In 2005, Sport Canada assembled an Expert Group to lead the process and Canadian Sport Centres published the Canadian Sport for Life – Long-Term Athlete Development Resource Paper (Balyi, Way, Higgs, Norris, & Cardinal, 2005). This document provided a framework and philosophy for promoting lifelong engagement in sport and physical activity for all Canadians, while also revitalizing Canada as a competitive force in the international arena. Since that time, the Canadian Sport for Life Expert Group has worked to facilitate the development of Long-Term Athlete Development frameworks and associated materials for each of the federally supported National Sport Organizations (NSOs).

Canadian Sport Institute – Pacific in 2014 had published the Canadian Sport for Life – Long-Term Athlete Development Resource Paper 2.0 which is a renewed Canadian Sport Policy for 2012-2022 (CSP 2012). While the first Policy was a catalyst for the Canadian Sport for Life movement, CSP 2012 fully integrates Canadian Sport for Life – Long-Term Athlete Development. The policy goals of CSP 2012 incorporate the key outcomes of Physical Literacy, Excellence and Active for Life that are

foundational to Canadian Sport for Life – Long-Term Athlete Development. Now, Canadian Sport for Life – Long-Term Athlete Development is written into Canada’s Sport Policy “roadmap,” and concepts such as physical literacy and the Long-Term Athlete Development stage names (e.g. “Learn to Train,” “Train to Compete”) are included throughout the policy to guide the understanding of readers. Canadian Sport for Life – Long-Term Athlete Development has become the organizational paradigm of Canadian sport. Thousands of sport leaders and researchers world-wide have contributed to Canadian Sport for Life – Long-Term Athlete Development by learning how to practically implement it, extend it into new areas, critically analyse its underlying principles, and build an evidence base that supports the benefits of the Long-Term Athlete Development approach.

The Canadian Sport Policy 2012 contains five major goals (Introduction to sport, Recreational sport, Competitive sport, High performance sport, Sport for development) and five major outcomes Goals (Excellence, Enhanced education & skill development, Improved health & wellness, Increased civic pride, engagement & cohesion, and Increased economic development & prosperity).

Sport development and the implement of long term planning in Malaysia began with National Sports Policy in year 1988. It is a

comprehensive document towards the advancement, progress and development of sports in the country. Through the formulation of this policy, it is the country's desire and aspiration to produce a healthy, fit, united, disciplined, productive society and a generation of competent athletes to enhance and reinforce the country's image internationally. Then In 2009, Malaysia had been implement a new National Sports Policy. The main objective of the new policy is to create the sport culture among Malaysian. Malaysian were encouraged to participate in sport through Sport for All (mass sport), High Performance Sport and Sport as an Industry. At the community or society level, sport is aim to give benefits and contribute to improve the health level of the society. Sport nowadays not only just focusing on competitive or elite sport development, but also on human development through sport.

The Canadian Sport Policy 2012 also being a good reference for this study which related to life skills of student-athletes. In the policy, a major objective of LTAD is a holistic approach to athlete development. This includes emphasis on ethics, fair play and character building throughout the various stages, an objective that reflects Canadian values. Programming should be designed considering athletes' cognitive ability to address these concepts. The concept of the LTAD in the policy is about building the entire

person, not just the athlete. Training, competition and recovery programs should consider the cognitive, moral and emotional development of each athlete. This is not simple, since there are no easily visible markers for the transitions between stages of cognitive, moral and emotional development. Sport development can be integrated or related to intellectual and emotional development other than just physical development. At the all stages, the athlete at the range of 12-18 years old are involve which mostly are student-athletes. Then, the Canadian Sport Policy 2012 also has illustrate a model to show where athlete development happens in order to provide more clear picture for related organizations, institutional or individuals to play their roles in strategic leadership for sport.

The institutional such sport schools and sport academies become the important platform in athlete development. The process of designing and implementing LTAD programs involving athlete centred, coach driven and administration, sport science and sponsor supported.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Aims and Objectives

Using the related model or theories, this research will examine the experience from former student-athletes in Malaysia about their life skills developmental during sport participation and how the life skills could be transferred to other life situation. Thus, it address the following questions:

1. What life skills developmental experience do former student-athletes believe they acquired through sport participation?
2. What life skills do former student-athletes able to transfer from their experience in sport participation to other life domain?
3. What is the most influential factor to life skills development of student-athlete?

In order to examine the life skill development and transfer, the Life Development Intervention (LDI) / Basic Need Theory (BNT) model (Hodge et al., 2013) was used as a frame to investigate those research questions. The former student-athletes can provide their view or perception from their real experience in life skill developmental through sport participation either positive or negative that can be classified as life skills and how it can be transferred to other domain. The focus group also may provide input on what influential factors contribute to such skills development.

3.2 Research Method

Qualitative research is a rigorous approach to finding the answers to questions. It involves spending an extensive amount of time in the field, working in the often complex, time consuming process of data analysis, writing long passages, and participating in a form of social and human science research that does not have firm guidelines or specific procedures.

(Margot, 1991) stated that qualitative research wants the subject to speak for themselves and to provide their perspective in words and other action. The key concept of qualitative research is to deal with subjectively constructed rather than objectively determined (Wong, 2014). It is also important to note that the qualitative approach will provide grounds to gain

the sample's perspective from within their social context (Gratton & Jones, 2010). This is in line with Schwandt (1994), who noted that qualitative approach provides deep insight into “the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it”.

There are few qualitative research studies (Umbach et al., 2006; Toma & Kramer, 2009) pertaining to the perceptions and outcomes of the educational experiences of college student-athletes. A definition of qualitative research is research that generates findings not arrived at by using statistical or other means of quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The characteristics of qualitative research and qualitative analysis require that the researcher makes sense of the relevant data gathered from sources, such as interviews or documents, and responsibly presents what the data reveal (Caudle, 2004). Qualitative research can also be thought of as a situational activity with the observer located in the world, whereas the observer or researcher must interpret or make sense of the phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

(Gould & Carson, 2008) had view that qualitative research is helpful for exploring new areas, such as how coaches go about developing life skills in their athletes.

3.2.1 Interview

This qualitative research use phenomenological approach that central to the inquiry. This entails data collection by utilizing semi-structured interviews of former sports schools student-athletes. The study participants are asked to reflect on their experiences as student-athletes and their perceptions on what they may be able to attribute as developmental outcomes from their participation in sport program. The qualitative researcher can choose from one of several interview structures. An interview can be structured, semi-structured, unstructured, or of an oral history format (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). For this study, respondent interviews were conducted in the semi-structured style. This allowed for more freedom to explore topics (Merriam, 1998). Dille (2000) recommends gathering information about interview subjects as an important first step in interview preparation.

Culver et al (2003) notes that interview was the most widely method that use to collect the data especially in sport research. Interview itself has a definition of a conversation between people in which one person plays the role as a researcher (Grays, 2004). Gratton and Jones (2010) state that the interview may be set in comparison to the questionnaire survey that is attributed a more structure characteristic to it regarding the type of data and

how it is collected. But the significant features that a researcher can add to the interview after using their skills to enable obtaining meaningful qualitative data, serve as a contrast to the questionnaire survey. Also they note that interview is the simplest way to collect the data from the people.

Gratton and John (2010) state that interview is allowing the discovering of "why" and "how" of the situation from the respondent's perspective. The interview also enables to associate that data to concepts that are difficult or inappropriate to measure. It is related with the definition of Wong (2014) in his article that state that qualitative research is tend to answer the question of "why" and "how".

There are various methods of collect the data by the interview. Therefore, in order to be able to prompt the interviewees, rephrase the question, and make change depending on the situation, this research will adopt semi-structured interview (Galletta, 2012). Furthermore, Galletta notes that semi-structured interview will provide the reciprocity between the interviewers and interviewees. This is relevant to the study and will help the research to possess a good output. Bryman (2012) also notes that semi-structured interview will provide greater interest in interviewees' view-points and gives insight into what they see as important. This is important to

the research to find people's opinion and it allows unexpected data to emerge which adjusts the emphasis of the research (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

3.2.2 Sampling

From the sample population of student-athletes in Malaysia, a group of sampling was selected from the former National Sports School student in Malaysia. There were 8 former student-athletes who the range of age is between 28 to 35 years old. This sampling group is choose by considering their reliable experience after graduated from the schools and have experience in their current career. The proportion of the sampling consist of difference sport and level of sport participation level experience of the former student-athletes. The number of eight participants was sufficient in a phenomenon study as recommended in some literature. In addition, there are literature recommends at least six participants (Sandelowski, 1995).

3.3 Thematic Coding Analysis

Fettterman (1998) describe data analysis as the processing of information in a meaningful and useful manner. Thus, data analysis is considered as much of a test of the researcher as well as data collected (Fettterman 1998). There are no single methods of analyzing qualitative data

in sports research (Gratton & Jones, 2010) but for the purpose of this study general guidelines for the thematic coding analysis of qualitative data would be used (Robson, 2011). Guidelines for the thematic coding analysis for this research will be as follows:

- i. Familiarizing with data to be collected:** This will be done by transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, taking notes and writing memos about ideas for formal coding and initial thoughts about themes.
- ii. Generating initial coding:** This section will involve organizing data collected into meaningful groups. Extracts of data to be collected from the entire study will be coded in a systematic fashion, with similar extracts given the same code.
- iii. Identifying themes:** The codes extracted and the themes identified will be checked in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set.
- iv. Constructing thematic networks:** Themes identified will further be put into main theme and sub-themes in relation to the research questions of the study. While the main theme represents a network of various sub-themes about coded data from the study, sub-themes are basic themes which offer elaborations

about main themes (Robson, 2011). This will serve the basis of developing a thematic map of analysis.

- v. **Integration and interpretation:** This section will involve cross case comparison (Yin, 2009) between the different aspects of data using display techniques such as tables and networks. Exploring, describing, summarizing and interpreting patterns of data collected will be highlighted.

Triangulation, Peer Debriefing and Member Check will be use as strategies for validating the findings.

3.4 Ethical Consideration

The sampling and focus group in this research are the former student-athletes at national sports schools in Malaysia. All confidential data of the alumni students shall be used just for the research purpose. The research also use *pseudonyms* to ensure anonymity and privacy of all participants. Thus, all information regarding participants shall be preserved.

Table 2. Respondent candidates for the qualitative research

	Formal Student-athletes Sports Category	Pseudonym
1.	Hockey-1 (man)	H1
2.	Hockey-2(man)	H2
3.	Hockey-3 (women)	H3
4.	Volleyball-1 (man)	V1
5.	Volleyball-2 (man)	V2
6.	Football-1 (man)	F1
7.	Football-2 (man)	
8.	Netball (women)	N

Note: The real name of the interviewees were not provided for the protection of their privacy.

Chapter 4: Findings

The aim of this research study was to examine former student-athletes' perspectives on their life skills development during their participation in high school sport and how those life skills can be transferred to other life domain.

The research findings are based on the analysis through interview of eight former student-athletes from four different type of team sports which are volleyball (2), hockey (3), football (2) and netball (1). The findings are organized into three themes based on the research questions of this study.

4.1 What life skills developmental experience do former student-athletes believe they acquired through sport participation?

The data were collected from former student-athletes which are also alumni member of national sport schools Malaysia. All participants now have their own career in various sectors and are not national or international athletes. They expressed their thought and view based on their experiences in different ways. Inputs from them can be an important source of reference to understand how life skills development of student-athletes can be obtained through sport participation. The findings are divided into two

categories which are positive developmental experience and negative developmental experience:

4.1.1 Positive Developmental Experience

The data were coded based on Life Development Intervention (LDI) / Basic Need Theory (BNT) model (Hodge et al., 2013) which integrate the aspects of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Using this model, the initial codes are generated based on life skills category which associated with the basic need. Findings shows that various positive developmental experience mentioned by the respondents. Then, the key elements of positive developmental experience that emerged from data analysis were organized into related life skills category as per table below:

Table 3: The key elements of positive developmental experience and related life skills

Basic Need	Category of Life Skills	Key elements of positive developmental experience that emerged
Autonomy	Self-esteem	Confident during competition Positive mindset Mental and physical prepared Concentration during playing Can do better Never give up
	Independent thinking	Able to give opinion in a team Free to ask something to the coaches Using creativity Implement strategy/tactical play
	Self-control	Overcome nervous during competition Avoid anger and aggressive Handle frustration if lost in competition
Competence	Problem solving	Implement alternative plan/strategy Always get prepared

		Response during team player injured Involve in game post-mortem
	Coping with stress	Balancing sport & academic Improve mental & physical strength Absorb pressure Be patient
	Interpersonal communication	Interaction with coaches & teammate Meet new people More social interaction
Relatedness	Cooperation with other	Have team spirit/ teamwork Build good relationship Accept different approach by coaches Can work together Accept friend from different background
	Consideration of other's feeling	Support each other Proud of other's success Help each other in tough situation
	Social responsibility	Help team and coach during training Do something voluntarily Feel more patriotic Take care team sport equipment

i) Autonomy

Many participants mentioned that during their time as student-athlete, they have learned and practiced some positive elements that are categorized in three life skills categories (Self-esteem, Independent thinking, Self-control) that can foster autonomy. Sports coach UK, 2015 in a guide book for coach stated that autonomy is a feeling of someone have control over their own actions. However according to Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000), within Self Determination Theory, autonomy is not refers to being independent, detached, or selfish. It is rather to the feeling of volition that

can accompany any act which either dependent or independent, collectivist or individualist.

Self-esteem. Hewitt, John P. (2009) explained that self-esteem reflects a person's overall subjective emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a judgment of oneself and encompasses beliefs about oneself. Participants believed that participating in sport as a student-athlete make them feel more confident and feel good about themselves. Most mentioned about how they learn to be *confident during competition*:

“I feel that I'm more confident and motivated. When I participate in sport especially in big tournaments, both mental and physical need to be well-prepared. In doing the best and winning the game, concentration and confidence are very important. Student-athletes were trained to compete.”(V2)

Another participant also highlighted about confidence and *positive mindset*:

“Besides physical and playing skills, high level of confidence and focus to win were also emphasized. Of course, there were also situation where my level of self-confidence became low. In such situation, I learned how to speak positively to myself. During competition, our coach always tells us to be confident and maintain our focus. (H2)

Independent thinking. Independent thinking has more to do with the desire to think for oneself. It is always important, even in team exercises where independent thinkers can strengthen a team. That is because they

understand that different backgrounds and perspectives bring different ideas and solutions. It is different with critical thinking which is the process used to deal with information. (NDT Resource Center)

Most participants said that they were encouraged to give opinion or engaged in decision-making when participate in sport. So, they were *able to give opinion in a team* and also *free to ask something to the coaches*:

“Even though most of the time, we just followed what the coach teach and train us, but we also can give our opinion and ask something. (H2)

Another participant also mentioned:

“I can discuss with team and then decide what strategy we want to use. My position required me to decide what tactical and attacking strategy to be used.” (V1)

Self-control. Self-control can be refer as restraint exercised over an individual’s responses and emotions (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007). Participants shared various experience how participating in sport has helped them to learn how to manage their emotion. Many mentioned about their experience to *overcome nervous during competition* and *avoid anger and aggressive*:

“It is depend on the level of the competition and it situation. Sometime I felt very excited and enjoy, but sometime felt nervous. In competition especially, we have to face not only the opponent but also the fans and spectator that can give more pressure. If I cannot control

my emotion, it will distract my focus and I cannot perform well during the match. (F2)

Another participant said:

“Sometime, the referee's unfair decision or opponent provocation can make us feel angry...but we need to control our behavior.” (V1)

ii) Competence

Competence refers to individuals feeling effective in their ongoing interactions with the social environment. They also experiencing opportunities to exercise and express their capacities (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). According to Hodge et al. (2013), example of life skills that also related to competence are problem solving, coping with stress and interpersonal communication.

Problem Solving. Participants had mentioned that they ever faced with challenging or unexpected situation during sport participation and learned how to handle the situation or solve the problems. For example, one participant explained how he learned and practiced to *implement alternative plan or strategy*:

“Sport is challenging and of course there were unexpected situation occurred either during training or competition. There were situation when my teammate get injured and our team have to change our tactical play. The position and our strategy also had change. I

learned how to implement plan A and plan B in sport.”
(F1)

They also mentioned about *always get prepared* in sport competition:

“Sometime I become the main player in the team and sometime become reserve player. There was a situation when I become reserve player, the coach suddenly asked me to play and replace the main player. At that time, our opponent led the scores. So, I need to help my team to catch up with the score. (V1)

Coping With Stress. Most respondents said that become a student-athlete is challenging and sometimes was stressful. They have to manage the stress usually in *balancing between sport and academic* and also *absorbing pressure* during games:

“Being a student athlete is challenging both mentally and physically. Not only we have to maintain our performance in sports, but also academic.” (H3)

“Sometimes, the coach scolds us during training or during games to improve our performance and avoid mistakes. In overcoming stress, I need to improve my mental and physical strength. I have to absorb the pressure and be patient.” (V2)

Interpersonal Communication. According to (Hargie, 2011), interpersonal communication refers to the verbal and non-verbal processes by which individuals directly interact. All participants mentioned that sports program provide them many opportunities to interact and communicate with

peoples. They always *interact with coaches & teammate*. They also got opportunities to *meet new peoples* during competitions:

“In sports, we always need to communicate with our teammates and coaches. We spent a lot of time together either during training or tournament especially with my sports school team. Then, when I was selected to represent state or national team, I need to get used to training with new friends and coaches.” (H3)

“When I joined many competitions at different level, I have the opportunity to meet with new peoples. They are from many other places. Some tournament were held for a week or a couple of days. At that time, I was able to know and talk with many people either players or coaches.” (N)

iii) Relatedness

According to (Ryan & Deci, 2000a), relatedness refers to having a sense of belonging both with other individuals and with one’s community, feeling connected to others, and also caring about and being cared for by others. According to Hodge et al. (2013), example of life skills that also associate with relatedness are cooperation with other, consideration of other’s feeling, and social responsibility.

Cooperation with other. All participants had experience in interact or work as a team with people that they didn’t necessarily like. However, many of them mentioned that sport emphasized on *teamwork or team spirit* and *build good relationship*:

“For me, sports is about teamwork. I had no problem playing or working with players or coaches who have different character. Sometimes, of course...I didn’t like the way or approach that the coach train us. But then, I learned how to accept his approach and work with him.”(H1)

“I learned how to work together, live and build good relationships with my teammates and my schoolmates who come from various cultures, religions and races. We were young at that time. Everyone has different characters and behaviors. All are still in the process of learning and our thinking is not as mature as now.” (N)

Consideration of other’s feeling. According to (Clark, 1980), consideration of others’ feelings or being empathetic refers to an individual’s ability to share the emotions and experiences of others. Findings shows that *proud of other’s success* and *support each other* were learned and practiced by student-athlete. All of them mentioned they were happy and also proud of their teammate. During tough situation, many said that they had support each other as a team or friendship:

“I felt happy if my friend or teammate had success or perform better than me. It is good for our team. Even though my friends were selected to play for national team but I was not, but I am still happy and proud of them.”(V2)

“As a student-athlete, our situation was quite tough and we should support each other. If my friends or teammates were in troubles or in tough situation, I also felt sad and try to help them. Sometimes, I lend my sports equipment to my friends if they really needed. ” (F1)

Social Responsibility. Social responsibility refers to the process of acting on someone's feelings of concern for others in society (Conrad & Hedin, 1981). All participants said that during their time as a student-athlete, they felt responsible towards their teammates and also other people. Many mentioned that they always help their team and coach during training and do something voluntarily:

“During training or sports competitions, I always help to collect the ball, help coach in training and carried sports equipment. We were responsible to take care the sport equipment that belong to our team.” (H2)

“I learned to do something voluntarily. I also like to support other teams and feel more patriotic. As a student athlete at that time, I was not only actively participate in sport but also have opportunity to watch and support others team from many sport. But the most that I like was supporting our national team. I am proud of my team, my school and my country.” (H3)

4.1.2 Negative Developmental Experience.

Despite positive developmental experience which the participants believed they acquired and practiced many life skills through sport participation, they also had expressed about negative experiences. Most of them mention about their worry in academic performance when they actively participate in sport program.

“The worst situation was when I cannot balance my sport and academic performance. It has affected my academic result in the class.” (H2)

Another participant said:

I was struggling to improve and balance my academics and sports. The pressure gets higher when important examinations is near. (F1)

4.2 What life skills do former student-athletes able to transfer from their experience in sport participation to other life domain?

According to (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins, 2004; Danish et al., 2004), there are evidence to suggest that many of the skills required in sport are transferable to other life contexts. These skills include problem solving, goal setting, coping with success and failure, time management, and performing under pressure. Gould and Carson (2008) also said that sport-based life skills are “those internal personal assets, characteristics and skills such as goal setting, self-esteem, emotional control and hard work ethic that can be developed in sport and are transferred for use in non-sport settings.

All participants said that their experience as a student-athlete gave long term positive effects on their career and their life. Findings shows that they had applied some of life skills they learned and practiced in sport to other life domain. The most life skills mentioned by the participants are self-

esteem/ positive thinking, coping with stress, interpersonal communication and cooperation with other.

Self Esteem / Positive Thinking. Participants explained their view:

“My experience as student-athlete in high school has had a lot of impact on my life. Particularly in developing self-esteem, dare to face new challenges and positive thinking. In my life now, I believe most of the life skills that I have learned and practiced in sports have an influence and positive impact on me.”(N)

“Sports teach me about discipline and think positive. I always apply this in my life now.”(H2)

Coping with stress. Some participants mentioned about managing stress. A participant explained:

“Remembering my time as student-athlete, it was challenging. Many pressure in sport that require mental and physical strength. I faced the same situation in my current career. It is sometimes challenging and stressful... the discipline and commitment were required. Serving in the uniformed department requires resilience. How do I manage the situation? I think I use my experience as student-athlete. Like how I need to balance sport and academic, now I have to balance work and life.” (H1)

Interpersonal Communication.

“I currently working in banking industry that have to deal with many people and clients. Almost every day I meet and communicate with new people.” (V1)

Cooperation with other. All participants mentioned about the important of cooperation or team work as the skills are very relevant either in sport or in other aspect of life:

“The most important aspects of sports are discipline, self-esteem, teamwork, respect and focus. Besides learned how to work as a team, sport emphasized on building good relationships with others. That same aspects that I applied not only in office but also in my life.”(F2)

4.3 What is the most influential factor to life skills development of student-athlete?

This research question sought to answer the most important factor that influence the life skills development of student-athletes during their time in high school. Participants stated that they were coaches, friends and teachers. However, all of them mentioned their coaches were the most influenced them.

Two of the participants describe:

“We spend most of our time with the coaches. They not only develop our skills in sports but also other aspects such as confidence, courage, team spirit, creativity and discipline. Besides daily training, we participate in many tournaments outside the school.” (F1)

“The first coaches during my secondary school play a big roles. But the one that really turn out to be my inspiration was Mr. K. He was the coach that inspire me, a role model, always encourage his players to improve everyone’s level, raising us like his own son. He is more like a father to me.” (H2)

It shows that good relationship between coaches and athletes has an influence to the life skills development of student-athlete. According to a study by (Jowett et al., 2005) about coaches, he mentioned that the philosophy about teaching life skills of a coach and ability to establish relationships with athletes are the key factors for teaching life skills. It was also found in a study by (Gould et al., 2007).

Chapter 5: Discussion

The findings in this study extending the life skills literature by providing details about former student-athletes experience on their life skills development that acquired through sport. It has support the past research that demonstrated how sport can be suitable context for the development of life skills. However, the context of sport participation among student-athlete may different with other high school student. Most of student-athlete were highly involve in sport competition and their focus more toward achieving goal in sport instead of life skills development.

Interestingly, findings demonstrate many key elements of positive developmental experience that participants believe they learned and practiced through sport. It is consistent with aspect of Life Development Intervention (LDI) / Basic Need Theory (BNT) model (Hodge et al., 2013). For example, using creativity and implement strategy/ tactical play during sport competition emerged as element that can develop independent thinking skills that can foster the need of autonomy. However, findings also shows negative developmental experience especially related to academic that may influence student-athlete intellectual and psychology.

The most life skills that participants learned and practiced in sport that can be transferred to other life domain are self-esteem/ positive thinking,

coping with stress, interpersonal communication and cooperation with other. In their personal development, the coaches were the most influenced them.

5.1. Life Skills Developmental Experience of Student-athletes

Student-athletes who actively involved in sport have many positive developmental experience over the negative. Their life skills development still can be acquired through sport by learning and practicing some of key elements in various category of life skills. Even though as student-athlete, they were more focusing on sport. (Gould & Carson, 2008) said that some studies show that life skills are not developed through sport and other studies show that, under the right conditions, sport can be important in facilitating life skills development. In the context of this study, the student-athletes life skills development were indirectly acquired through sport participation. According to (Hodge et al., 2013), life skills development can occur via the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs which are autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Sport provide a platform for student-athlete to learn and practice the positive element related to life skills development. For example, they can develop their self-esteem/ positive thinking by being confident during competition, have positive mindset, mental and physical prepared and

concentration during playing. Their coping with stress skills can be developed by balancing sport & academic commitment, improve mental & physical strength, absorb pressure and be patient. The interaction with coaches & teammate, meet with new people and have more social interaction during sport participation can develop their interpersonal communication. The positive element of learned and practiced in sport such as having team spirit, build good relationship, accept different approach by coaches, accept friend from different background can develop the life skills of cooperation with other. All those skills then can foster the basic needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness. (Hodge et al., 2013) also explained about the balance across the three basic needs. They mentioned that there is a growing body of evidence within the Basic Needs Theory literature that a “balance” of needs satisfaction across the three psychological needs is more important for psychological well-being than being high in one need and being moderate in the other two needs.

Besides positive developmental experience, the former student-athletes also had expressed about negative experiences. Most of them mention about their worry in academic performance when they actively participate in sport program. A few studies shows that sport participation have positive impact on academic performance. As what was explained by

(Bailey, 2006), The cognitive domain can be affected by sport or physical education as it might enhance academic performance by “increasing the flow of blood to the brain, increasing mental alertness, enhancing mood, and improving self-esteem”. However, in the context of student-athlete in sport schools in Malaysia, their packed schedule and high commitment both in sport and academic sometimes had affected their academic performance. The pressure gets higher when important examinations is near. Based on the sport schools’ curriculum schedule, there are about four hours allocated every day for sport training session. It was not including the time that the student-athlete have to spend in many other competitions.

5.2. The Transferable Life Skills of Student-athletes

From their positive developmental experience in sport participation, the former student-athlete believed that it has long term positive effects on their career and their life. They able to apply some of life skills they learned and practiced in sport to other life domain. The most life skills mentioned by the participants are self-esteem/ positive thinking, coping with stress, interpersonal communication and cooperation with other. According to (Danish et. all, 2004), life skills is the internal assets that enable individuals

to succeed in the different environments in which they live. This was also found in (Gould and Carson, 2008) study.

The former student-athletes perspective about their life skills development gained through sport and how they can transfer those skills to other life domain support the previous literature study by (Danish et. all, 2004) and (Gould and Carson, 2008). However, most of the former student-athlete are not realize that the life skills experience they acquired during sport participation as student athlete in high school has positive value or effect in their life span. That is because of the lack of awareness and the exposure of knowledge about life skills development through sport.

The important of life skills development among athlete was also emphasized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Their concern is mainly for the athlete who already retired from elite athlete career. In year 2005, the IOC Athletes' Commission in cooperation with Adecco had introduce IOC Athlete Career Program (ACP). The three pillars in the program are life skills, education and employment. One of the objective in is to provide resources and training to develop athlete life skills, maximize educational and employment opportunities. In was mentioned in the ACP about the attribution of athletes who able to demonstrate, winning attitude, stamina and passion, the ability to work as a team, commitment to go the

extra mile, focus and energy to achieve success, ability to plan, prioritize and organize project, discipline and perseverance to achieve goals. Those life skills is valuable and can be transferred to other life domain.

In 2016, the Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) also has an agreement with Adecco, which is a world leading provider of HR solutions to implement the Athlete Career Program (ACP) in Malaysia. The OCM-Adecco ACP will assist Malaysian athletes in their transition from sports to other careers.

However, for the student-athlete in high schools, they have to get prepared for their new challenges in higher institution before they start their career. For student-athletes, their transition time is when they are in the final year in high school and during shifting their athletic life from high school to university.

5.3. The influencing factors to life skills development of student-athlete

Student-athletes at high school level are the young people who still in their learning and development process. Their daily life mostly spent in schools and teachers or coaches have big influence to them. For student-athletes who actively involves in sport, their coach is the most important

factor that can influence their learning and development specifically in life skills development. All respondents said that coach is the most influential to them. Their coach may not teach them directly about life skills, but many of the key elements learned and practiced in sport are related with the life skills category that can satisfied their basic need of autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Most of them were trained and focus on sport performance and there have no direct and intentionally taught about life skills. The good relationship between student-athletes and their coaches provide a positive developmental experience for student-athlete. As stated by (Jowett et al., 2005), the coach philosophy about teaching life skills and ability to establish relationships with athletes are the key factors for teaching life.

5.4. Limitations of the Study

There were a few obstacles and limitation in the study. The first is the number of participations that available in this study. Considering the focus of this study was to examining the experience from former student-athletes, some criteria were set in order to get the relevant input. They are

many former student-athletes from various sport category and their current profession, but this study only select the participants from team sport. Thus, the exclusion of former student-athlete from individual sport in the study had reduce the number of target participants. However, eight participants is sufficient in a phenomenon study as recommended in some literature.

The second is about the awareness and knowledge about life skills development among the participants. Most of the participants have no clear understanding about the details aspect of life skills that they have learned and practiced during their time as student-athletes. However, after initial briefing and explanation of some example or element of life skills, they able to answer the interview questions and explain in more detail.

5.5. Suggestions and Future Direction

From all the discussion above, there are some suggestion that can be implement in order to improve the developmental experience of student-athletes in high schools. Many elements of positive developmental experience can be learned and practiced through sport. However, student-athlete were not directly taught about life skill during their participation in

sport. Hence, it is important for coaches or schools to give them knowledge or exposure about the life skills and sport. The focus between sport and life skills development of student-athlete also should be equal. The negative developmental experience especially related to academic that may influence student-athlete intellectual and psychology also should be considered.

The coach's competency is very important to implement life skills development through sport. Coaches can use either direct or indirect strategies to teach life skills. The coaches also should integrate the element of life skills in sport and intentionally teach or give exposure to their athlete. The high schools which conduct sport development program among young athlete also should balance their athlete performance both in academic and sport.

For the future research, it can explore in broader perspective about the others perception or experience in life skills development either coaches, schools or current student-athlete.

5.6 Conclusion

Sport can be used as an important platform in human life skills development. Sport participation not only important to teach life skills among children or young people, but also can give positive effects for

athlete who spent most of their life time in sport. The awareness, more knowledge and understand about how life skills development can be acquired through sport.

Through sport participation, many positive elements can be practice and able to develop various life skills that foster autonomy, competence and relatedness. Hence, created psychological well-being in our life.

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Appendix A

Qualitative Interview Questions

1. Can you explain about your background and about yourself (e.g.: age, occupation, level of education, sport & level of competition, how many years in sport school).
2. Why did you decide to participate in sport and became a student-athlete at national sport school?
3. Did participating in sport as a student-athlete make you feel more confident and feel good about yourself?
4. Did you were encouraged to give opinion or engaged in decision-making when you participate in sport?
5. Do you think participating in sport helped you learn how to manage your emotions (e.g., nervous, anger, frustration, or excitement)?
6. Did you ever faced with challenging or unexpected situation during your participation in sport? If yes, how did you handle the situation?
7. Were there ever times when your experience in sport participation was stressful? If so, did the situation allowed you to develop the skills needed to manage stress?
8. Do you believe participation in sport allowed you to develop your skills in interact or communicate with other?
9. During your participation in sport, did you ever interact or work as a team with people that you didn't necessarily like?
10. How did you feel when your teammates had successes/perform better than you and when they faced challenges or tough situations?
11. During your time as a student-athlete, did you ever feel a certain level of responsibility towards your teammates or other people?

12. Did you ever had negative experience during your participation in sport as a student-athlete?
13. Who was the influential person in your personal development during your time as a student-athlete? (coach, teammate, or someone else)?Who is the most influenced you and how?
14. Do you believe your experience as a student-athlete had any long term positive effects on your career and your life today? If so, are there any life skills that you believe you learned in sport and now you apply in your life?
15. Reflecting on your experience as a student-athlete at the national sport school, do you have any recommendations or suggestions that could enhance the overall life skills development of its student-athletes?

국 문 초 록

스포츠와 생활 기술 개발:

말레이시아 학생 운동선수의 경험 분석

Nik Marzi Erman Bin Mat

글로벌스포츠매니지먼트 전공

체육교육과

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주요어: 학생 운동 선수, 스포츠 참여, 생활 기술 개발

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