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This book examines athletes' adaptation to retirement and thus analyses the subsisted athletic experiences and the opportunities and challenges among retired athletes in the North-South Rift Regions of Western Kenya. The study was informed by the need to examine in detail and document the impact and lived experiences of athletics among retired athletes in the North-South Rift Regions of Western Kenya. The study was bolstered by Social Constructivism theory and Self-efficacy theory to realise the above. The literature reviewed, global, regional, and local, helped identify the knowledge gap, hence the study's justification. The philosophical paradigm that anchored this study was constructivist philosophy. The study established that subsisted experiences included controlled life and separation from family, travelling across the globe and the subsequent culture shock. Findings indicated double taxation, corruption, poor training facilities and doping as critical challenges. Others lacked the absorption capacity to invest the considerable money gained. The book thus recommends government-improved funding for sports and full implementation of the existing laws and policies. Further,



BENJAMIN K. NG'ETICH
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Slowing Pace and Drying Sweat

Athletes Adaptation into Retirement in the North-South Rift Regions of Western Kenya



I hold a Moi University PhD in History, a Master of Arts degree in History from Kisii University, a Bachelor of Education – B. Ed (Arts) History and Kiswahili from Egerton University, a Diploma in Education (KNEC) and a P1 certificate (KNEC). I strongly believe in working diligently, with authority, and being dedicated and an honest public servant.



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Slowing Pace and Drying Sweat: Athletes Adaptation into Retirement in the North-South Rift Regions of Western Kenya

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Abstract

This book examines athletes' adaptation to retirement and thus analyses the subsisted experiences in athletics and the opportunities and challenges among retired athletes in the North-South Rift Regions of Western Kenya. The study was informed by the need to examine in detail and document the impact and lived experiences of athletics among retired athletes in the North-South Rift Regions of Western Kenya. To realize the above, the study was bolstered by two theories: Social Constructivism theory and Self-efficacy theory. The literature reviewed, global, regional down, and local, helped identify the knowledge gap, hence the study's justification. The philosophical paradigm that anchored this study was constructivist philosophy. The qualitative study applied historical research design, and the sampling procedure entailed using purposive and snowball sampling to arrive at knowledgeable informants. The sample size of 20 informants was determined by saturation. Data collected was from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources entailed archival materials such as artefacts and photographs, while unstructured interview schedules were used to collect oral data. The secondary sources were the books, theses, journals, magazines, and newspapers. Using the qualitative method, the study analyzed data thematically and presented the findings through narration, direct quotes and descriptive texts. Photographs were also used to present the findings. According to the research findings, the study established that subsisted experiences included controlled life and separation from family, travelling across the globe and the subsequent culture shock. Findings

indicated double taxation, corruption, poor training facilities and doping as critical challenges. Others lacked the absorption capacity to invest the considerable money gained. The study thus recommends government-improved funding for sports and full implementation of the existing laws and policies. Further, there is a need for a fall-back support system for athletes.

Keywords: Kenya, North-South Rift Valley, Sports, Subsisted experiences, Athletes, challenges, opportunities, Athletics

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Slowing Pace and Drying Sweat: Athletes Adaptation into Retirement in the North-South Rift Regions of Western Kenya

1.1 Introduction

In this book, the study examined the subsisted experiences in athletics, adaptation into retirement, opportunities and challenges. It analyzed the experiences of athletes, family members of athletes, coaches, and other stakeholders. The book also examines opportunities directly and indirectly connected to athletics. Further, the book evaluated the challenges found in athletics.

Sport is a fundamental global phenomenon. Kofi Annan considers sports a universal language, and Nelson Mandela points out that sports can inspire all towards a common goal, bringing everyone to the same level of interaction. (Byron, K., 2012). Sports are one of the most popular and renowned activities globally. (Bale and Sang 1996). Sporting activities are a cultural phenomenon and thus a part of the larger society of which they are a part. McComb indicates further that: -

Sports are a society's expression or a statement about its interests, history, and character. The Economics, politics, technology, religion, social issues such as gender or race, geography, and ethics can be observed in the rules and realities of sports.” (McComb (2004).

Sports take several forms of physical activities with varying intensities. The level of participation ranges from elite sports to recreational sports. These intensities range from competitive performance to entertainment, exercise and fun. According to McComb (McComb (2002), sports activities are recreational. They

are “mainly for fun, exercise, or relaxation. Athletics has a high degree of training, investment, and coaching, coupled with spectator management, rules, publicity, and institutional control”. Various leaders across Africa have considered sports as a means of promoting unity. Nelson Mandela, the first black president of The Republic of South Africa, in a BBC interview on 10 June 2022, asserted that: -

Sport has the power to change the World. It has the power to inspire. It can unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in the language they understand. Sports can create hope, whereas once, there was only despair. (Nelson Mandela, 10 June, 2022) BBC Interview).

Historically, both the colonial French and British “introduced soccer into Africa, mainly to elite male students in the cities. French Catholic missionaries introduced soccer to give young converts something to do after school.” (McComb 2002). Thus, “Sports competition became enmeshed in the larger competition of the Cold War. After all, on the world stage, the greatest nation would naturally produce the greatest athletes, as the logic implied. It was a way to express the nation’s vitality”. (McComb, 2002). Furthermore, Guha alluded, “Early modern England has been the ‘games-master’ of the World. (Guha, 2014). Among the sports they gave birth to, cricket is the one which the English themselves recognize and uphold as their national game”. In its origins, a rural sport that was once hugely popular in the villages of southern England, cricket was made part of life in the industrial towns in the nineteenth century. The rules of cricket, and still more its ethos, most fully embodied the self-image of the Victorian elite, its aspiration to set moral standards for the rest of humanity.

In 1851, James Pycroft suggested that:-

The game of cricket, philosophically considered, is a standing panegyric on the English character: None but an orderly and sensible race of people who would amuse themselves. It calls into requisition all the

cardinal virtues. As with the old Greek games, the player must be sober and temperate. Patience, fortitude, self-denial, the various bumps of order, obedience, and good humour, with an unruffled temper, are indispensable. Judgment, decision, and the power of concentration are developed for intellectual virtues. There is the unrestricted use of all limbs and every idea. Poor, rickety, and stunted wits will never serve: the most expansive shoulders are of little use without a head upon them: the cricketer wants wits down to his fingers.” (James Pycroft, p. 15).

Studying American sports history provides a critical context for understanding how sporting activities have changed and how various factors have shaped them. The investigation of sports in Native American cultures, the growth of modern sports, gender perspectives on sports, and religious influences on sports- have shown the importance of sports in society. (Guha, 2014).

Sports have been an integral part of traditional African societies for Centuries. (Byron, K & Chepyator-Thomson, J. R. 2012). These activities were a form of entertainment and a means of promoting social cohesion, physical fitness, and mental alertness. (Mazrui, A. A. 1986). Some traditional sports include wrestling, running, stick fighting, archery, and board games. Wrestling was a highly developed sport among the youth, emphasizing discipline and strength development. The young men practised endlessly while the herded cattle in the fields, and competitions were rendered through festivals and ceremonies to determine the strong men. The strong men in the community served as the community defence forces and participated in cattle raids. Wrestlers were efficient runners in their own right. The combination of wrestling and running built resilience in endurance and strength, and each soldier was primed as having the necessary power to be celebrated for the social good. (Byron, K. 2014).

An assessment of the above background has built a foundation on which this study anchors and shows that several sports, particularly athletics, phenomena have received considerable research attention. However, studies dealing with lived experiences among retired athletes are scanty. Therefore, this study sought to address the following questions: what are the athletes' subsisted experiences, challenges and opportunities among the former athletes in North-South Rift regions of Western Kenya?

1.2 Statement of the problem

Athletics has been and continues to be part and parcel of human history. Athletics transcends communities, cultures, religions and regions of the World. Different studies view the concept of athletics development and subsisted experiences from various perspectives. In Kenya, the development and impacts of athletics are primarily measured in terms of improved performance in records and the winning of an increasing number of medals. This pedigree of elite athletes produced annually and representing the country in global championships has brought tremendous international prestige and publicity to the Government. Their earnings and fame have improved Kenya's visibility as a sporting destination. Given the above, there is a need to investigate the subsisted experiences of athletes and adaptation to retirement among the retired athletes in the North-South Rift Regions of Western Kenya.

1.3 Objectives of the study

To examine subsisted experiences, challenges, retirement adaptation, and athletics opportunities among retired athletes in the North-South Rift Regions of Western Kenya.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is engrossed in the role and contributions athletics have made globally, in Kenya and particularly among the retired athletes in the North-South Rift region of Western Kenya. From accrued social and human capital to soft power, athletics is integral to socio-economic and political development. Athletics has increasingly been playing a significant role in providing employment opportunities both directly and indirectly, enabling diverse investments and promotion of education through scholarships. Health and tourism benefits have also been experienced. Further, the corporate World has continued to make good use of athletics by using athletics to link with society and implement their goals. The study also addressed a knowledge gap in the area under study by systematically detailing the lived experiences and adaptation to retirement among the athletes in the North-South Rift Regions of Western Kenya. The study also provides a base for related studies for other sports horizons.

1.5 Experiences

Athletics has its portion of politics. Other than some few athletes who have used the fame of athletics to successfully campaign for political seats, athletics has its internal politics. Firstly, professional athletes have several experiences with tussles with their governing body, Athletics Kenya. Several cases pitting athletes and A.K. have ended up in courts. (Busienei, I, O.I., 10 May 2023 Sugoi, Uasin Gishu). The issues of contention have always revolved around the election of Athletics Kenya Officials, the selection of a Team to represent Kenya in the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games and the issue of doping. On the first issue of the election, athletes have taken issue with the nature of secrecy with

which elections have been conducted. According to athletes, the fight for Athletics Kenya (A.K.) position is a struggle to either access the funds in the A.K. or use the position as a springboard to international bodies' positions like IOC or IAAF, which are considered more lucrative. (Koila, W., O.I., 12 March 2023 at Sergoit Resort).

Managing and developing sports should start from the grassroots up. It is essential to identify and nurture sports from the lower levels. Many sports performances do not register optimum results because talent identification and nurturing are not identified early enough. Purely professional bodies should also manage sports. In Qatar, sports are managed by the military. Strict observance of the rules and terms of engagement is observed. In Kenya, the rules and the regulations governing sports are loosely followed. There is also the challenge of unhealthy competition among officials and between officials managing athletics and athletes. (Sitienei, A., O.I., 10 March 2023 in Eldoret, Uasin Gishu County).

The study recommends that the following can be part of the remedies to address the challenges. Firstly, the identification and nurturing of talents should begin right from primary school. Doing so will help orient an athlete early enough and equally boost performance in athletics. Secondly, the problem of athletic predators is investigated, and those guilty are punished. These include poaching and misuse of young or innocent athletes into exploitative contracts, talent mismanagement, drug and drug abuse and sexual harassment. (Katui, O.I., 24 March 2023 in Eldoret, Uasin Gishu County).

The few good policies available should be cascaded down and implemented fully. The challenge of briefcase and commercial coaches and the many training camps should be subjected to a thorough legal framework. (Terwes, O.I., 27, March, 2023 at Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County).

Despite elaborate rules governing coaching and training, some coaches are not qualified, and some have opted to operate outside the laws governing them. Some have also been found to be outright quacks. Training of athletes is such a serious matter that, when compromised, has far-reaching effects on the athlete. The training and coaching should be very professional to avoid many injuries and the wearing out of athletes of all ages. (Koila, W., O.I., 12 March 2023 at Sergoit Resort, Uasin Gishu County).

Sugut notes that the upbringing of children is a big problem. Children miss parental guidance and love; hence, the probability of deviance is high. The situation becomes even worse when both parents happen to be athletes. In this case, children are taken to boarding schools at a very tender age or left with relatives, guardians or maids. Character development and general social development of the children become compromised. (Sugut, P. K., O.I., 27 December, 2022 at Maili Tisa, Uasin Gishu).

The lack of adequate facilities is a problem that negatively impacts athletics. Poor and inadequate facilities lead to other issues, including low performance, injuries, and low morale in athletes' sports. Lack of exposure has made many athletes fall victim to some coaches or become mismanaged. Some athletes have been conned off their cash through crafty contracts or purely due to their ignorance. (Sirma, S., O.I., 23 March 2023 in Eldoret, Uasin Gishu County).

Athletics has its portion of politics. Other than some few athletes who have used the fame of athletics to catapult themselves to political seats, athletics has its internal politics. Firstly, professional athletes have several experiences with tussles with their governing body, Athletics Kenya. Several cases pitting athletes and A.K. have ended up in courts. The issues of contention have always revolved around the election of Athletics Kenya Officials, the selection of a Team to represent Kenya

in the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games and the issue of doping. (Sing'oei, W., O.I., 20 December 2022, Ng'enyilel, Uasin Gishu County).

On the first issue of the election, athletes have taken issue with the nature of secrecy with which elections have been conducted. According to athletics, the fight for A.K. positions is a struggle to either access the funds in the A.K. or to use the position as a springboard to international bodies' positions like IOC or IAAF, which are considered more lucrative. (Koila, W., O.I, 12 March 2023, Sergoit Resort, Uasin Gishu County).

There are numerous negative impacts on sports. Though there are rules for coaching and training, there exist coaches who are not qualified, and some have opted to operate outside the laws governing them. Some have also been found to be outright quacks. Training of athletes is such a serious matter that, when compromised, has far-reaching effects on the athlete. (Tanui, P., O.I., 27 December 2023 in Sugoi, Uasin Gishu County).

Like all other ventures, there must be an equivalent input for meaningful success or achievement to be realized. David Singoei puts it this way: -

Athletics and the rise of elite athletes where one competes in international competitions is not apparent. You don't wake up one morning, proceed to the competition, and succeed. It involves a lot of sacrifice and investment in time, resources, commitment and perseverance. You must be patient, follow the rules, and, above all, be disciplined. (Singoei, D., O.I., 20 December 2022, Ng'enyilel, Uasin Gishu County).

Koila explains how athletics is a complex activity that engages human beings' physical, mental, and emotional aspects. He asserts that athletics can only

be pretty smooth if one is prepared psycho-socially and physically with all the other external factors constant. Busienei asserts: -

Many people who have joined athletes, thinking it is just something that requires physical giftedness, have not made it. Any achievement in running requires Psycho-social and emotional commitment. It requires your focus and full attention; without that, you cannot expect any good performance. (Busienei, I., O.I., 10 May 2023 in Sugoi, Uasin Gishu County). Katui gives the experience of how he had to stay in a camp for more than a year before being fixed to his first national competition. He posits that every other time he tried, he was told he had not met the minimum required time. Katui observes that such experiences require a lot of patience and focus, without which one can be tempted to drop. (Katui, O.I., 03 April 2023 in Eldoret).

The experience of manipulation by sports managers and even elite athletes against junior and upcoming athletes is expected. Agents, too, have not been left behind by such practices. This experience appears in several facets. Firstly, during the selection of teams to compete in the Olympics or the Commonwealth Games, Philip Tanui asserts: -

There is always a high stake in the whole process of selecting teams. The process is sometimes marred with manipulations, reduction of athletes, unclear selection and substitutions. It is shrouded by corruption and secrecy. The whole thing is sometimes full of intrigues that occasionally leave athletes disappointed and emotionally disturbed. Many promising athletes are, at times, discouraged. (Tanui, P., O.I., 27 December 2022 in Sugoi).

The other face of the experience of manipulation has to do with preparation and facilitation processes. The acquisition of visas, travel expenses, and accommodation and accommodation allowances are other facts based on their experiences. Cheboiboch asserts that getting a travel visa is sometimes a nightmare for athletes. He posits that: -

The process is long and tiresome. There is too much bureaucracy. This is always expected to be done by the managers and administrators of teams. However, there is a lot of reluctance and a 'don't-care' attitude. Some athletes are occasionally surprised when, at the last minute, they are told that they will not make it because of unprocessed visas. (Cheboiboch, V., O.I, 03 April 2023 in Iten).

Cheboiboch explains that the process of acquiring a visa, especially by athletes, is infiltrated by cartels who take advantage of the issue's urgency to extort money from unsuspecting athletes. He further explains that some are conned and miss the chance to travel for the competition and the cash. (ibid).

On the question of travel and accommodation allowances, athletes face mistreatment. From the budgeting team, a reasonable and fair budget is made, but things change regarding the actual implementation. Numerous complaints have been registered over the years on how teams end up short-changed. The travel expenses and allowances are revised downward. This makes athletes travel in low-standard travel, making them tired and worn out by the time they reach the competition destination. Team managers pocket the rest of the cash at the expense of athletes. (Busienei, I., O.I., 10 May 2023 in Sugoi, Uasin Gishu County). Busienei claims many reported cases of athletes being booked in substandard hotels with poor-quality services. Singoei, thus, puts it:-

“...when it comes to travel and accommodation expenses in general, the budget is over-estimated or over-budgeted and cut down to a small amount during actual spending to allow a good amount of money to remain. The remaining amount allows managers and other non-athlete players to expand the list and add their relatives and other people of their own choice...” (Sing’oei, D., O.I 20 December 2022, Ng’enyilel, Uasin Gishu County).

Singoei affirms that right from team selection, training the selected team and planning for their travel, accommodation, and allowances are not supposed to be complicated, as they have commonly turned out to be full of complaints and favouritism. (Ibid).

Wilson Kipsang narrates how culture variations can bring what is commonly known as culture shock. Kipsang posits that athletes travel all over the World and interact with many different cultures and languages. He narrates his running experience in Italy, Spain, and later Turkey. Kipsang posits: -

When I arrived at the airport in Rome, Italy, the airport attendant spoke to us in Italian. We were two. We looked at each other as if to say, what has she said? I became a bit uneasy since neither of us understood Italian nor knew the sign language. The lady tried to motion to us, and we quickly concluded that she must have been asking where we were going. By signs, I showed her that we were going to run. Another young man was called who took us to another office. In this other office, we found somebody who could speak English. After explaining ourselves, we were led by yet another person to a train about to leave.

Singoei further says that: -

‘.....we got on the train for the first time and reached the destination in about half an hour. Our agent received us, and that became a sign of relief. (Kipsang, W., O.I., 07 April 2023, Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County). Kipsang continued to explain that after the first encounter shock, the next came. This was the issue of food. We were used to Kenyan meals of Ugali and Vegetable plus milk. However, none of the meals was available. He explained that they resorted to rice and meat, the only meal they were familiar with. He says that the long travel and the accompanying shock. (Kipsang, W., O.I., 07 April 2023, Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County).

The story of Katui gives other dimensions of culture shock regarding technological advancement. Katui observes that when he was in Qatar for an athletics competition, he reported a friend who was taken into a hotel and handed over a card, and he was told that that was his key and meal card. However, it was assumed that the athlete knew how to use it. When morning came, the athlete tried to open the door but could not. The athlete was saved hours after the hotel management was informed that somebody lodged in their hotel had not yet surfaced for training in preparation for the mid-day competition. The athlete claimed that the ordeal affected his psycho-social and emotional well-being and must have influenced his performance. (Katui, O.I., 03 April 2023 in Eldoret, Uasin Gishu County).

Travelling long distances and variations in weather is another common experience testified by athletes. Most athletics training in Kenya is carried out in the high-altitude region. Scientifically, when one trains with a high attitude and goes to compete with a low attitude, the performance is likely to be high if all other factors are constant. Physiological changes and acclimatization are experiences which athletes go through. Byron puts it thus: -

‘...When Kenyans go out to compete outside there, the question of weather and altitude play a big role in their overall performance. Further to the West, the lower the performance, while further to the East, the higher the performance. The entire aerobic factor determines oxygen uptake, and the subsequent haemoglobin level is determined by altitude. Training in high altitude, followed by competition in low altitude enhances performance and vice versa...’ (Byron, K., O.I., 22 March 2023, Iten, Uasin Gishu County).

Changes in altitude and weather cause physiological changes. When athletes go to low-altitude areas for competition, their performance is enhanced. Another aspect is that when athletes arrive in a new environment with high variation in altitude and weather, they must first acclimate. If the competition is scheduled immediately, athletes will come, and performance will be compromised.

There is the factor of time difference caused by which side of the World one is in terms of longitude. The fact that some parts of the World are night while some parts are day at the same period affects athletes. For Kenyan athletes, the experience is that when they go to the West, their bodies would seem to feel that they are running at night. The bodies that have gotten used to practising and running during the day are suddenly compelled to run at night as per the earth’s rotation within 24 hours. (Koila, W., O.I., 12 March 2023 at Sergoit Resort, Uasin Gishu County).

Edna Kiplagat, a two-time world champion and gold medalist in women’s marathon, underscores the issue of weather. She posits that diversity in weather conditions in athletics competition venues determines performance. Kiplagat gives the example of the London Marathon, where low temperatures, coupled with mist, hinder good performance for athletes who come from high-temperature places. She posits that: -

During the 2012 London Marathon, I struggled to come to terms with the extreme cold and rainy weather. Despite the conditions, I won the race but had to put in extra-ordinary effort. I am also happy that during the marathon, I received Moral support from my children, who were present and wanted me to win and greet them at the finish line. (Kiplagat, E., O.I., 03 April, 2023 in Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County).

According to Kogo, going out for camp training takes the athlete away from the family. Kogo asserts that serious training can separate an athlete from the family for several months. He also points out that athletes may sometimes go abroad and spend extended periods away from home. Kogo asserts that such separation is not healthy for a couple or family. He points out that children need both parents for proper upbringing. Mothers are often left home to care for children while the father is away for training or scheduled competitions. In such a scenario, children will likely grow up with unbalanced behaviour. (Kogo, O.I, 03 April 2023 in Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County).

Cheboiboch observes that separating families requires a high level of understanding and trust. He notes that athletes' families have broken due to a lack of confidence. Families should have regular communication to reduce the level of family breakages. Breakages of families have long-lasting effects on both the couples and the children. The experience of the separation of the family can also be viewed from a different dimension. Families who are closely attached experience emotional detachment. Susan noted that emotional attachment is healthy for children and parents. (Cheboiboch, O.I, 03 April 2023, Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County).

Every athlete wishes to win and become a champion at the highest level of competition. Winning an international athletic event comes with mixed reactions and responses. Byron explains the scenario by asking the following questions.

What does it mean to win, for example, an Olympic competition? What does it mean, especially to the winner? What comes to the mind of the winner? And what does it mean for the country? What does the winner feel, and how does the Government take it to be? (Cheboiboch, O.I, 03 April 2023, Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County).

The above question sums up the whole story of what it is to win an international event such as the Olympic Games and the Commonwealth Games. Firstly, the meaning and impact of winning on the individual are diverse. Susan Cherono says that winning an international medal, especially gold, puts you in a world of its own. (Cherono, S., O.I., 22 March 2023, Iten). She says that: -

‘You feel at the top of the World. It is as if the whole World knows you. It is just great! Everybody and everywhere in the World you are watched on television. It feels so good to be announced before the World that you are the winner and a world champion.’ (Ibid).

Kipsang notes: -

‘It is an emotional moment to be given a flag of your nation and take it around the field when the World is watching. I lack words to explain how great and emotional it is to climb on the podium, have a medal on your neck and then be followed by the country’s national anthem. Just imagine your family and people back at home looking at you. It is just not explainable.’ (Kipsang, W., O.I., 04April 2023, Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County).

Tanui puts it differently. He says participating and winning internationally automatically gives one great publicity. Tanui observes that: -

‘In athletics competitions, when you cross the finish line to win, your name and that of your nation is splashed all over the World. The international press will surround you, take photos here and there, and

each one will try to interview you. You are taken as a great person, and I want to hear even a word from you. It is amazing.’ (Tanui, P., O.I., 03 April 2023 in Sugoi, Uasin Gishu County).

Tanui further posits that the experience of winning brings with it glory and honour. Suddenly, a winner acquires a prominent status and receives high esteem. He further says that regardless of one’s former status, one acquires a new status characterized by fame and respect. He further notes that everybody would wish to associate with you as a winner. Tanui posits that it is not only the athlete but also the family from which the athlete comes. The fame further spreads to the village from which the athlete comes, and the entire family is consequently appropriated to a new high status. (Ibid).

As a demonstration of how success in athletics brings fame and glory to the family and the nation, President Kibaki, through the area member of parliament, said Wanjiru inspired hope for Kenyan youth and that his death was a significant loss to the nation. Athletics Kenya Secretary General David Okeyo described Wanjiru as a determined fellow who left the country at 15 to go to a foreign land and made it. His statement echoes the assertion of self-efficacy theory, which posits that a person’s beliefs about their ability determine success in any activity or venture a person undertakes. (Ngirachu, J. & Kariuki 2011, 12 June., ‘Thousands of Kenyans attend the burial of Olympic Champion Samuel.

Wanjiru’, *Sunday Nation*, p.3).

Ngirachu and Kariuki explained further that a red carpet was rolled, and a high-ranking government squad led by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs was at the Jomo Kenyatta Airport to receive them. Like many others, what is pictorial in this competition is the fact that there is a lot of value and meaning attached to the concept of winning in athletics. In this case of South Africa, the Kenya Administration Police (A.P.) and the Kenya Prisons, who were well represented in the team, wanted their identity to be well captured and

singled out in the honour and glory of the success. Whether abstract or tangible, the value arising from that competition is that no one wants to miss it, hence confirming the social constructivism theory thought. (Ngirachu, J. & Kariuki 2011, 12 June., ‘Thousands of Kenyans attend the burial of Olympic Champion Samuel. Wanjiru’. *Sunday Nation*, p.3).

There is the other element of the press interview. Several athletes lack competency in the second, third, or even fourth language, which may occur in the interview language. Since the athletes may not be competent enough, they develop phobia. The athletes would try to avoid interviews from the media as much as possible. Some try to speak, for example, English but end up making it broken or poorly. (Mbishei, O.I., 27 March 2023, St. Patrick’s High School, Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County). Paul Ruto and his wife, Selina Ruto, contend that media interviews frighten most athletes with weak speaking abilities. This is coupled with the fact that interviews are often done immediately after a race ends.

Ruto thus puts it: -

‘They come to you when you have just finished a race and still breathing heavily. You will, therefore, be struggling to cool down and simultaneously trying to answer the questions. It is a tough situation, especially when you know that the World is listening and looking at you.’ (Ruto, P., O.I., 15 February 2023 Sugoi, Uasin Gishu County).

Kipsang narrates how the night after winning is so celebratory. He states that: -

“...the nights seem to be long, and one long, it is over so that you can fly back home for reception. The reception is another moment of mixed emotions. Landing on the home soil and meeting family members who come to receive you is exciting, and tears of joy drop. It is a moment when your relatives, friends, and family members break in a song, hug you, and call you names of praise. It is a feeling of its own...” (Kipsang, W., O.I., 07 April, 2023, Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County).

Katui talks of a new life where poverty has become a thing of the past. Many athletes go to run to come out of poverty. Katui explains that: -

‘Poverty is a bad thing, and many of us joined athletics and trained hard and patiently to fight poverty and live a better life. So, throughout training and in the actual competition, the issue of poverty is behind the mind. You must do everything to win and open a new chapter in life. On many occasions, athletes go to compete in mind. One, therefore, competes as a matter of life and death. Behind your mind is the fear of not succeeding and how you will feel to remain the same in poverty.’ (Katui, O.I., 24 March 2023, Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County).

Kogo explains that the experience of competing with other equally strong competitors brings a moment of mixed emotions, anxiety and fear. He contends that such emotions cannot be wished away, however intense and prepared an athlete is. In the case of Kenyans, the Ethiopian athletes are their strong traditional rivals in athletics. Kogo asserts that: -

‘It is not an easy moment when you are fixed with Ethiopians. They are strong, and you cannot stop worrying or being anxious about the competition. Their spirit of teamwork has made us do the same. Yes, it is true that for any serious competition with a big prize, anxiety and worry must be there. However, it is different regarding the case of Ethiopians - Not easy at all.’ (Kogo, M., O.I., 03 April 2023, Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County).

1.6 Challenges in Athletics

Athletics is a huge phenomenon and is compounded by several challenges. The challenges are from both within athletics and others from without. The challenges from within include exploitation by managers, coaches, agents and track directors. Athletics competition involves a lot of money and medals won.

Every participant in the chain of athletics processes wishes to get a good pie of the prize won. (Ibid).

Managing and developing sports should start from the grassroots up. It is essential to identify and nurture sports from the lower levels. Many sports performances do not register optimum results because talent identification and nurturing are not identified early enough. Purely professional bodies should also manage sports. In Qatar, sports are managed by the military. Strict observance of the rules and terms of engagement is observed. In Kenya, the rules and the regulations governing sports are loosely followed. There is also the challenge of unhealthy competition among officials and between officials managing athletics and athletes. (Katui, O.I., 24 March 2023, Iten).

1.6.1 Briefcase Coaches and Managers

One of the most significant challenges of athletics recently is the high number of “briefcase” coaches and managers. The cartels have fixed themselves strategically in the structure of sports management. These groups lack the credentials, experience, expertise, or knowledge to handle athletics. During the selection of teams to represent the country, they influence the selection outcome. Some of these cartels have made themselves coaches and managers. The cartels do not have the welfare of athletes at heart, and theirs is to benefit as much as possible at the expense of the athlete. (Katui, O.I, April, 2023).

Related to the above challenge is some form of slavery found in athletics. Many upcoming athletes desire sponsorship or be fixed in a competition where they occasionally find themselves trapped in such schemes. After identifying strong young athletes, scrupulous agents or managers enrol them and hurriedly process their passports. The processing of their flights does not follow the normal process. They are sometimes smuggled out of the country, taken to run and paid very little. The contracts they enter are not transparent. (Ibid).

1.6.2 Love Affairs and Family Issues

Family disputes, especially property ownership and love affairs, have become a significant problem among athletes. Family break-ups arising out of property disputes have seen many athletes in court. Fighting, separation, or even killing on the end have become common challenges among athletes. Lack of basic requirements while in the training camp is another challenge. Many parents believe that training camps provide all the needs of athletes. Many only appear when their son or daughter has won a prize or medal. (Kogo, M., O.I., 03 April 2023, Iten).

Challenges that arise from outside athletics include non-compliance by the Government in implementing laws and policies governing athletes. For example, the Government is supposed to set aside funds and construct infrastructure to support athletics and sports in general, as well as support and appreciate athletes and coaches. Still, all these are swept under the carpet. During the training and organization of athletes from the grassroots level, the Government stays away and only comes at the tail end when teams are being selected for international competition. (Ibid). There is also the problem of conmanship and cartels that have infiltrated the sports fraternity. Some crafty men and women pretend to be coaches, managers or agents. They promise to organize scholarships and plan for international races or sponsorships. Ultimately, scrupulous people can mislead athletes, especially the upcoming young ones. Another challenge is the insurance. The Government takes no trouble in insuring their athletes; if they do, it's done only for that competition session. (Ibid).

1.6.3 The Issue of Taxation

On the issue of taxation, double taxation stands out as prominent. Singoei observes that, on average, an athlete is taxed 40% in the host country while another tax is collected upon arrival back in the country. Coaches and managers also take

their shares. He says that this leaves the athlete with less than 40% of the total amount won in the competition. (Singoei, D., O.I., 20 December 2022).

1.6.4 Doping as a Challenge

In sports, doping is administering drugs to an athlete, racehorse or greyhound to enhance or inhibit sporting performance. There are four methods of doping: Blood doping, pharmacological doping, chemical and physical manipulation. The most common drugs or substances abused in sports are Anabolic Steroids and stimulants. There are many other types of drugs and substances used by athletes to enhance their performance. In the recent past, Kenya has experienced a rise in doping cases, some of which have tested positive while others have come out to be negative. These cases are instituted out of malice. (Singoei, D., O.I., 20 December 2022).

In Kenya, the body that deals with issues of doping is the Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya (ADAK). It is a devolved branch of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). It was commissioned in Kenya on 10 November 1999 following the 'declaration of the World Anti-Doping Agency in Laussane in 1999. ADAK is a State Corporation established under an Act of Parliament, Anti-Doping Agency Act No. 5 of 2016. The agency is mandated to fight against doping in sports while promoting 'clean sports' through anti-doping value-based education, sensitization and awareness campaigns. ADAK also effectively tests all athletes in Kenya while upholding the sport's integrity. Further, ADAK is tasked with investigating and managing the violation of the anti-doping rule. (Ibid).

How, then, does doping become a challenge to athletes? The natural methods and procedures involved in doping seem unfriendly and too conditional to athletes. There are several laborious and cumbersome steps to be followed to complete doping. The first step in the doping test is the Sample collection. In sample collection, an athlete must have their urine and blood taken for testing

anytime, anywhere by any Anti-Doping organization – with the absolute testing authority vested in the organization. (The Constitution; Sports Act 2023, accessed 10 March 2023, *Kenya Law: <http://kenyalaw.org.2019pdf>*). Testing can be conducted in competition, out of competition and without notice. The criteria for selection are random and can be at the race finish, before or after. (Ibid).

Eleven stages are followed in the process of sample collection and testing. The eleven stages are what make doping an unpopular activity among athletes. Step one is athlete selection – an athlete is selected at any time and any place; notification stage – a Doping Control Officer (DCO) or chaperone will notify the athlete of the selection and outline their rights and responsibilities, reporting to the Doping Control Station – the reporting is immediate with exceptional arrangement for the delay. Step four is sample collection – an athlete is provided with three or more individually sealed collection equipment; step five – an athlete provides a sample witnessed by a DCO or chaperone; and sixth is the measurement of the volume of Urine, which should be a minimum of 90ml and step seven is splitting the sample into two, A and B (done by the athlete). (Ibid).

Steps eight and nine are sealing the sample and measuring the specific gravity of the urine (to ensure it is not too dilute for analysis). Step ten requires the athlete to complete the doping control form, which should be filled with care and a copy retained by an athlete. The last step is the laboratory tests, in which samples are sent to WADA-accredited laboratories. The above rigorous procedures and the many rules and regulations associated with doping prohibit an athlete from being associated with doping in any way – be it direct or indirect or whichever other way. It is even made worse that an athlete has to wait for two years, full of anxiety, to get the results of the test. If the athlete has won a cash prize, they will have to wait until the end of the two years to receive the cash. (Kipsang, W., O.I., 07 April, 2023 in Iten).

According to Kipsang, some athletes have fallen prey and become victims of malicious designs. Kipsang contends that: -

“.... athletics is a competition with high stakes—the hostility of whatever cause can get an innocent athlete into a doping problem. Drugs can be introduced into food or drinks without the knowledge of the athlete to destroy the career of a competitor or “enemy maliciously”. When a doping test is done on such an athlete and the result is positive, it can be very disastrous. It can lead to depression and other psychosocial-social problems ...” (Kogo, M., 03 April 2023 in Iten).

Kogo points out that there are cases where managers and agents have been suspected or found to be responsible for doping their athletes for financial gain. Kogo further says disagreements between athletes and managers or agents may cause such actions. For example, when a coach gets wind of an athlete who wants to shift to another coach yet has invested a lot in the athlete, he can be tempted to resort to such measures. Other causes of such malicious schemes are differences among athletes or love affair-gone-sour issues.

Koila notes that due to the nature of doping test procedures, some athletes may miss tests, not intentionally, but still will bear the brand of doping. That explains the cruel side of the doping rules. Additionally, some athletes deliberately use drugs to try their luck, but when they are got, they deny it to the end. Such athletes opt to live in denial, a move not healthy nor ethically acceptable. (Koila, W., O.I., 12 March 2023, Sergoit Resort).

Sing’oei observes that Kenyan athletes ought not to use drugs for they are naturally able. Sing’oei says that doping only taints Kenyan athletes’ names and risks elite athletes’ careers. He asserts that some are dubbed into it knowingly while others have to do with malicious intentions. He says that even in some cases,

coaches and managers are responsible for getting a share of the cash won. Singoei conjures with Koila that doping has occasioned long delays in payment of cash won since doping tests must be done and take even two years. (Singoei, D., O.I., 20 December 2023, Ng'enyilel).

Still on the issue of athletics challenges, corruption in management and administration, rivalry among officials and bodies managing sports such as the A.K., Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, NOCK, IOC and IAAF. Boit posits that the issue of corruption revolves mainly around controlling finances around athletics. He says coaches, managers, agents and mainstream ministry officials fight to enrich themselves at the expense of the success and performance of athletes. He notes that scandal after scandal has become the norm in Kenya's athletics sphere. (Boit, T., O.I., 22 March 2023, Eldoret).

Despite the success story, athletics has encountered several challenges all along. The challenges include poor training, the lack of adequate support from the Government, and briefcase coaches with no qualifications. The mismatch of the athletics calendar between Kenya and the global is a problem that has denied athletes, especially those in schools and colleges, an opportunity to participate in the international competition series. He also says corruption is an issue when selecting teams to represent Kenya. (Mbishei, O.I., 27 March 2023 in Iten).

1.6.5 Sports Infrastructure and Training

Cherono explains that the challenges affecting athletics are lack of proper training, lack of sports infrastructure, lack of mentorship and lack of adequate knowledge of the importance of sports. She says athletes ran for the sake of running. However, she was quick to say that there were no cases of drugs or corruption in team selection. Cherono posits that corruption in team selection and the entire management and administration of sports is rampant today. She says that bribery is related to financial matters. (Cherono, S., O.I., 22 March 2023, Eldoret).

Biwott contends that politics play a part in athletics. He says the politics ranges from the local level to the international level. Biwott recalls that in 1972, athletes, including Kenyan, became victims of the Israel-Arab conflict. He says they were in a hotel when suddenly armed Palestinians ambushed them and captured several athletes in an adjacent unit. They escaped, but those captured were taken to an aeroplane parked nearby. (Biwott, A., O.I., 22 March 2023, Eldoret). The Palestinian soldiers, realizing that the French soldiers had come to rescue the athletes, decided to explode the aeroplane, and all the people aboard, the majority of which were athletes, perished. He recounts that the foreign affairs ministry visited them through the Kenyan ambassador to Israel. The then-president, Jomo Kenyatta, talked to the athletes on the phone and encouraged them. (Biwott, A., O.I., 22 March 2023, Eldoret).

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1.6.6 Huge Amounts of Money

Success in athletics is short-lived since good track performance takes a relatively shorter time in a person's life. The money and fame received from winning athletics can be very tempting. When one keeps winning big prizes and cash, the money may seem to continue being available. This is one of the most significant challenges affecting athletics. It is, therefore, important that athletics go for capacity building. Many gifted athletes have been ruined by vast sums of money won in athletics competitions. If well managed, the cash turns around one's life. A good example is how I managed to put up a school, Salaba Academy, near Iten town because of having acquired a Diploma in Business Administration when he was training in Australia. (Cheboiboch, V., O.I., 03 April, 2023, Iten).

Students who participate and excel in elite athletics at a very tender age get diverted by the exposure to a new culture and vast sums of money won. The minds become diverted; at times, coaches play some roles in discouraging young athletes from pursuing their education or even taking it seriously. The young athletes end up dropping out of school. Vast sums of money occasion this won. This also happens because they lack guidance from experts. (Katui, O.I., 24 March 2023, Eldoret).

1.6.7 Lack of Government Support and Enforcement of Policies

Yet another challenge is the lack of government support. The issues range from failure by the Government to provide a clear legal framework to the provision of the actual infrastructure and training equipment. The current school curriculum in Kenya and the mindset of those administering and managing education is inclined towards academics. The "mean score" has become a hindering factor in athletics and sports. (Terwes, O.I., 27 March 2023, St. Patrick's High School, Iten).

1.6.8 Gender-Related Issues

Cherono contends that there are some challenges in sports. She points out that the change of coaches is one of the factors that compromises performance among athletes. She also says that there are no women coaches and that this is discriminatory and not good for sports development. Cherono posits that: -

‘Women have their unique issues, which female coaches can better handle. We are not made the same way as men; our strengths and abilities vary. Look, for example, sometimes you can find two ladies among many men who, at times, are forced to practice with men. In the event of an injury or accident, a woman coach would be free and in an unconditional situation to help. We feel discriminated against. Women still face more challenges like bullying and sexual harassment by coaches and team managers.’ (Cherono, S., O.I., 22 March 2023, Iten).

Several women athletes have been victims of gender violence and murder at the extreme. Women elite athletes who have earned good fortune from athletics have fallen prey to men who come around as potential coaches or husbands. Ultimately, the athletes are defrauded of their hard-earned money and left without help. Many cases of murder have also been reported, such as that of Agnes Jebet Tirop and Damaris Muthee. Many others have undergone domestic violence. (Getty Images: Agness Tirop: *Husband arrested in Kenya after athletes’ death, 15 October 2015*).

Media representation of athletics performance has been biased. To a large extent, success in athletics is explained in masculine terms. According to Byron, the chauvinistic approach the media adopts stems from the society’s culture. Most African cultures have appropriated success and projected success and glory to be masculine. Society, through the press, can, therefore, be said to be biased against lady athletes. (Byron, K., O.I., 20 August 2023, Iten).

The lack of insurance coverage for athletes is yet another challenge. Most athlete ladies are not in the formal sector and depend on their spouses or survive

independently. It should be realized that the contributions of athletes, be they women or men, have a significant overall developmental impact, which ought to be motivated through insurance coverage, among other incentives. (Ibid).

1.6.9 Lack of Retirement Support System

One of the athletes' most significant joint problems is the lack of a retirement support system. As observed earlier, preparing for retirement is a challenge among sportsmen and women. Like in many other developing countries, the problem worsens in Kenya due to the lack of a post-athletics support system. There is only a small number of opportunities that can keep retired athletes enjoying a productive life. The only few examples of those who escaped the challenge were athletes who were able to take other career paths. Such career paths become a fall-back when active sportsmanship sets in. (Mike, B., O.I., 24 December 2022, Kabiyeet). The rest, who in many instances lacked the knowledge on how to invest their hard-earned money, lead a poor life coupled with many other challenges.

Cheboiboch contends that a career in athletics is short-lived with a sleeper finishing.

He asserts that: -

‘Athletics require meticulous planning because its prime period is short. You need to look at the future and plan well. There are many examples of exceptionally talented athletes who earned a lot of money from athletics during their active period but now lead a pathetic life. Ben Jipcho, who at one time was a world star and the most talked about athlete in the World, ended up being a grounds-man at the Moi International Sports Centre, Kasarani, before retiring to a poor village life in Trans-Nzoia County. Nobody thinks of an athlete after retiring, not even fellow athletes.’ (Cheboiboch, V., O.I., 03April 2023, Iten).

It is often said that a sports star will die twice, the first time at retirement. Retirement from high-performance athletics is a tricky transition with significant physical and mental health and social and professional development implications. It is tricky because of two main reasons: firstly, in most developing nations, Kenya included, there is no post-athletics policy or arrangement to help cushion athletes as they retire; secondly, retirement in athletics takes place at a prime age in the life of an athlete. (Mike, B., O.I., 24 December 2022, Kibiyet).

Elite athletes train extensively for years, in many cases, consuming the majority of their young lives, often making extensive personal sacrifices to pursue their dreams of glory. These may include making huge financial sacrifices, moving away from family to train full-time in academics, calling time on their academic studies and sacrificing personal or romantic relationships. (Brother Colm, O.I., 20 March 2023, Iten).

For many athletes, retirement is a concept they do not wish to consider in great detail. However, whether they have achieved Olympic glory or failed to

reach the pinnacle in the sport they aspired to, all athletes' careers will eventually come to a close, whether through age, injury or exhaustion. (Mike, B., O.I, 24 December 2022, Iten).

However, what happens to these athletes once they leave the days filled with rigorous training, the extensive time spent travelling and the buzz and adrenaline of competing? This is the time in their lives when they may be susceptible to depression. For example, Olympic Champion cyclist Victoria Pendleton expressed her extreme relief at retirement after the London Games, citing that she couldn't wait to go on to new ventures and was much happier that the pressure of competing was no longer a burden. However, not all athletes will enter retirement with such ease and willingness; many will struggle with adapting to a 'regular life' where they are no longer in the limelight and, perhaps in their eyes, become forgotten members of society. (Ibid).

In a survey conducted by BBC SPORT 2018, it was established that half of retired sports people have concerns over mental and emotional well-being. The data was released to the BBC as part of a state of sports investigation into life after sport. The survey covered some sports activities, including athletics. The survey findings pointed out several concerns by sportspeople regarding their life after sports. (BBC SPORT. 2020, 10 October. *State of Sport 2018: Half of Retired sports people have concerns over mental and emotional well-being*). Among the fundamental problems was that many former sports people experience a loss of identity after retiring. This is occasioned by the athletes' lives being dedicated to tight training schedules and travelling to places to participate in events. When the active life of an athlete suddenly ends, all other social and economic aspects of life stop. Those you associate with, train together, and attention accorded by the state, media and fans disappear in a moment. Loss, regret and devastation set in. (Ibid).

The BBC SPORT noted that another problem athletes experience is finding a new purpose in life. This leads to more problems such as depression, self-harm addiction and financial issues. When the active and busy sports life comes to a sudden end without prior preparation for the following purpose, the athlete lands in a near end-of-life situation. The survey pointed out that even the best-prepared athletes struggle with retirement. Athletes find public life difficult because, unlike during active athletes' lives, nobody is in charge. (Ibid). The athletics system that governs and takes care of athletes' life programs goes, and a new free-style public life arrives with its challenges. As such, transitioning from a professional sport can be a daunting prospect. This literature sheds light on the impact of athletics on athletes' lives. As such, it will be informative for the current study. (Ibid).

When a sports career ends, it causes dramatic changes in athletes' personal, social and occupational lives. This can, in turn, affect individuals' cognitive capacity and an athlete's emotional and behavioural status. (Taylor, J. S. & Ogilvie, B. C., 1994). The social and professional changes triggered by retirement from sport can cause distressful reactions. More often than not, retired athletes express a feeling of hollowness in their lives, and one of the main measures of this transition is to reconstruct and adjust to the new lifestyle. (Ibid).

Keino compares success in the business world with games on the playing field, which ordinarily offers few guarantees for anyone when the limelight dims. There is a linear relationship between performance and acclamation. Performance begets accolades; no performance, no accolades. Many athletes in retirement find this very phenomenon a bitter pill to swallow. Additionally, the emotional trauma of retirement denial, depression, physical injuries, loss of structure and lack of purpose sets in. Keino adds that loss of confidence in life, frustration at no longer having a special status as an athlete, fear of being left behind in the career world, and having to catch up with the new life are challenges. (Keino, M., 2011, June 12. *Before you jump into retirement from sports, plan for the transition*. Sunday Nation, p.45).

Keino posits that frustrations brought by the loss of entitlements or even anger issues, if unchecked, often hinder an athlete from moving forward with the next phase of their life. He says that other than seeking expert counsel and coaching for their inevitable date with retirement, elite sports experiences can help former athletes develop core traits that the corporate World values. They could also leverage their athletic brand and competencies, which fueled their success as elite athletes on the track and road. (Ibid). There are some professional athletes who, after enjoying careers of unparalleled brightness, never have to worry about money or status again. Their money-making ability is linked to their name and their continued athletic prowess. (Taylor, J. S. & Ogilvie, B. C., 1994).

The transition that is made by professional athletes from a full-time athletic career to retirement has attracted a significant measure of comments in the sports media; however, it is only in the recent past that it has taken a formal and academic trajectory. Taylor & Ogilvie posit that the transition is often difficult because of the sudden cessation of intense demands of elite athletic performance, compounded by the sudden loss of the athlete's fierce devotion to professional athletic competition and its attendant rewards. (Ibid).

What exactly is it that often leads retired professional athletes to sink into depression once they leave the days filled with rigorous training, the pressure of competition and the glorious days behind them? One of the leading causes is loss of identity. An individual's identity may contain numerous dimensions. However, one in particular can become dominant or preferred and a lens through which the others are viewed. Athletic identity is the degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete's role and looks to others to acknowledge that role. (Ibid). The neglect or atrophy of other roles due to the ascendancy of a single role may expose the individual to subsequent identity issues.

Several hypotheses explain that the loss of a preferred or dominant role may subsequently affect a person's overall self-concept. (Stryker, S., 1978., *Status Inconsistency and Role Conflict*. Annual Review of Sociology. Vol. 4. 57-90). Athletes with a high athletic identity at the time of retirement are more likely to experience a higher degree of emotional adjustment difficulties. Bill Cole, a world-renowned peak performance coach who had worked with many athletes who have struggled to come to terms with their retirement, noted that an important factor was this profound loss of identity in their lives. An athlete may experience the problem after putting aside their competing days behind them. (Stryker, S., (1978: 54-90).

Another cause for depression is the 'Tunnel Vision Syndrome'. A 'tunnel vision syndrome' is a situation where athletes concentrate and spend too much time thinking only of training, competition and results. It affects many elite athletes to varying degrees at some stage. It is often the case that coaches, parents, professional sports agents and general managers can see it. As a result, athletes are left ill-prepared for the balanced perspective required of "real world" career opportunities. (Byron, K., O, I., 20 June 2023, Iten).

Brother Colm opines thus: -

Athletes suffer from depression after retiring from sport because they aren't sure where to apply that focus they had when training, awaiting competition and the actual competition. There is a lot of focus and a lot of selfishness in athletes. Athletes often cannot see their lives taking other career pathways. As soon as the inevitable retirement comes, it brings a void that the comfort of a training routine, once filled and suddenly gone, cannot fill. (Brother Colm, O.I., 20 March 2023, Iten).

He further underscores the importance of biological factors in an athlete struggling with looming retirement. He notes that athletes who have had regular doses of serotonin for many years, and this suddenly decreases or stops, see a

massive upset in the body's chemistry. (Brother Colm, O.I., 20 March 2023, Iten). Several researchers have explored a causal link between an imbalance in serotonin levels and depression; however, more research on retired athletes posits exploration. (Kochan, S. Dundar A, Ondeci M, Yilmaz Y, 2021 07 June;429 (4): 383-388).

Athletes, by nature, are mentally tough individuals and are often perceived by the public to be fitter, healthier and happier than others. This attitude and stereotyping can make it more difficult for them to approach someone for help. Therefore, close family, friends, teammates and coaches need to understand that depression cannot always be seen, and the athlete may indeed never admit to how they feel for fear of shame and embarrassment. The most important take-home message is to understand that despite their incredible success in their hard-fought and dedicated careers, the process of retirement is a difficult one, and it is at this time that social support and communication are of vital importance if the athlete is to avoid the dreaded post-retirement blues. (Koila, O.I, 20 March 2023).

There are several measures athletes can put in place to curb depression. Some measures athletes can take to reduce the chances of depression after retirement from the sport include Talking to their family, coaches or support staff, someone an athlete, can trust to share the challenge with reducing exclusive identification with sporting roles and expand their self-identity to other pursuits. (Gringell, S. 2018). An athlete can also reach out to a professional medical expert to help manage the stress and sources of depression. Discovering interests and competencies for other activities beyond sport (perhaps considering coaching or the mentoring of other athletes) and acquiring stress management and time management skills are also important. (Ibid).

Other measures include encouraging strong relationships with coaches, family, friends and managers who care about athletes' sporting success as well as the personal growth of the athlete. Being supported by significant others to

consider other avenues in life will help you keep an open mind and diversify your identity. It also includes consulting sports psychologists to help explore further avenues and adaptation techniques. (Kogo, O.I, 03 April 2023).

1.6.10 Poaching of Athletes

Poaching of athletes is another common problem among managers, coaches and athletes. Occasionally, managers poach promising athletes and organize for them races without the consent of the coach training the athletes. At times, competing interests between the coach and athletes cause conflict. For example, athletes are sometimes over-ambitious and demand to be booked for races against the coach's understanding that the athlete is not yet ready to enter a competition. This is also the reason why some athletes hip-hop from one camp to another training camp. (Katui, O.I, 24 March 2023).

1.7 Opportunities in Athletics

The impact brought by athletics is immense and diverse. It can be categorized into social, economic and political. On the social impact of athletics, scholarships for athletes to pursue education were the greatest in the 1970s and 1980s. During this period, many athletic talents got an opportunity to join secondary, college and university under scholarship programmes. St. Patrick's Iten, Kapsabet Boys, Kabianga, Sing'ore Girls, and Kapkenda Girls were among the High Schools that offered scholarships. (Boit, O.I, 22 March 2023, Eldoret).

The scholarships given were either partial or complete - provided relief for fee payment. The students to be picked for scholarships were identified at primary schools, and those to join university and college were picked from High Schools. The scholarships became a significant opportunity for needy but talented youths to acquire higher learning and have careers. Many who completed their career courses were employed in various sectors, and consequently, their standard of living with their families improved. (Mike, B., O.I., 24 December 2023, Kibiyet).

Boit asserts that athletics brought a lot of opportunities to the Kalenjin. Firstly, he points out that athletics has had a significant impact on the sector of education. Since athletics in Kenya became an international event, many Kalenjin youths in primary and high school have received scholarships to further their studies. The scholarships are both local and international. Local comprises scholarships offered by individuals to outstanding student-athletes, scholarships offered by schools and other institutions of learning, and scholarships offered by corporate bodies like banks and companies. (Ibid).

Boit gives examples such as St. Patrick's High School Iten, Kapsabet Boys High School, Lelmokwo High School, Sing'ore Girls, Kapkenda Girls, Cheptil High School and Kabianga Boys High School among others. He says these scholarships end up opening life opportunities for athletes. On the other hand, Boit asserts that international scholarships are offered by foreign nations and institutions. It mainly comprises athletes proceeding for higher education. He singles out his case, where Mike Boit organized his scholarship to America in 1972. He asserts that there are many other scholarships to various nations, institutions and companies. Boit says that the scholarship has brought a Kalenjin diaspora, America being the leading. This is followed by a lot of remittances back home which spur the community and nation's economy. (Boit, T., O.I, 22 March 2023, Eldoret).

The impact of athletics among the Kalenjin is also witnessed in other sectors; public and private. All along, from the onset of independence, athletics has been one of the avenues through which Kalenjin youth got employment in the police service, the military and other disciplined forces. Others have been able to join parastatals and private companies. Others have received opportunities to be trained as coaches. Other impacts include diverse development in farming, residential apartments, hotels and other social amenities. (Cheboiboch, V., O.I, 03 April 2023, Iten).

Athletics is a talent and treasure in the Kalenjin community. David Sing'oei posits that he began participating in athletics at the primary level in Nandi County. Having been influenced by an elder athlete brother, when Sing'oei joined form one at Kapsabet Boys in 1980, he continued his athletics talent. Sing'oei later joined St. Patrick's Iten High School where athletics was a serious component of the co-curricular activities. It is at St. Patrick's Iten that he got a scholarship courtesy of athletics to join Louisiana University in the United States. Sing'oei asserts that athletics exposed and opened doors of fortunes and as such, attributes his achievements to athletics. (Singoei, D., O. I., 27 December 2022, Ng'enyilel). It is a resource that can't be depleted or copied. Singoei reckons that athletics can be one of Kenya's largest service exports. He affirms: -

'If athletics is well organized and managed, nurturing done from an early age and sincere commitment put by those in charge, athletics can make Kenya and the Kalenjin community, in particular, realize marvellous economic achievements. The example of St. Patrick's Iten High School in the 1980s and early 1990s under the stewardship of Brother O'Column, was able to produce a larger elite athlete community than the Athletics Kenya and Kenya as a Nation at large combined. The athletes were not only produced for the track but were also linked to scholarships and later job opportunities abroad. If by sheer lack, without skill development and training, many athletics have made it to the National and International scene, how much more would we, have achieved if our athletes received proper training and management?' (Ibid).

Sing'oei asserts that athletics has moved many ordinary village boys to the heights of great economy. He points out that the impact of a training camp alone is immense. It provides employment both directly, coaches, physicians, and managers; and indirectly - Hotel services, accommodation and shop services.

Sing'oei further asserts that athletics has a great impact on education. He says many scholarships have ended up changing the lives of many initially poor athletes. He cites his example as a testimony to how education can lift life from poverty to riches. (Sing'oei, D., O.I., 27 December 2022, Ng'enyilel).

Biwott points out that many of the Kalenjin athletes were given scholarships to study abroad. The majority of them went to the U.S. while others went to other European countries. Apart from the education sector, many athletes were recruited to join the security forces; the police, prisons, Army and wildlife rangers. Biwott says others ended up joining the then-government parastatals for example; Posta, Railways, and Telkom among others. Biwott further notes that Eldoret Town is full of investments done by elite athletes. (Biwott, A., O.I., 22 March 2023, Eldoret).

To most athletes, the arrival of the base compensation money is the start of a long line of payments. It may as well be the beginning of the first and last sports contract. At times, a huge sum could overwhelm and confuse the athlete. Therefore, a good manager with the athlete's interest at heart is needed to help the athlete stabilize fast and progress in their career. (Sirma, S., O.I., 22 March 2023, Eldoret). As opposed to Gold-labelled elite athletes (world champions and record holders) who often get individual contracts, the majority of Kenyan athletes are on group (team) contracts. These contracts have similar benefits to individual contracts, with the team manager deciding how much each athlete gets. (Brother Colm. O.I., 20 March 2023, Eldoret).

Most team athletes train in sponsored camps and receive all-rounded training and logistical support. To make more money, they must compete and win in multiple events to get both appearance fees and performance bonuses. Although the training and logistics support is good, the athlete's welfare is always at stake in the event of injury or poor performance in competitions. Athletes in both group and individual apparel contracts should, therefore, focus their sights on other

product endorsement opportunities. They could borrow from Eliud Kipchoge and Isuzu; Julius Yego and Orange/Telkom; David Rudisha and Kiwi/Blue Band to broaden their financial prospects. (Tanser, T., 2008).

Over the years, contracted athletes have always performed better than freelancers. This has attracted the attention of World Athletics who, some years ago rolled out the Shoe Availability Scheme aimed at levelling the competition field as far as shoe technology is concerned. The scheme had the intention (and still has), to ensure that approved shoes are made available before an international competition for distribution to any un-contracted elite athlete. This has provided a glimmer of hope for many athletes who without access to the exclusive and cutting-edge shoes would never dream of a podium finish. (Ibid).

1.8 Conclusion

This book is premised on lived experiences, challenges and opportunities in athletics. The objective of the study was to explore experiences encountered in athletics, challenges in athletics and opportunities available. The study underscored how athletics demand values of perseverance, discipline, commitment and sacrifices to realize success. It pointed out that athletics is not only a physical activity, but one that also engages psycho-social, emotional and mental capacities. Life experiences such as manipulation and exploitation of athletes by officials, culture shock and the difficulties brought by environmental and time variations in destinations of competition. The book demonstrated the experiences athletes go through while away from family and home. The study further noted that the emotional nature of preparing for, winning or losing a competition is an emotionally weighty issue.

The book examined the question of doping as one of the major challenges. It noted that the rules, regulations and processes of handling doping cases are long and complex making it a challenge to athletes who have been listed. Further, the

study observed that there were both genuine cases and wrongly implicated cases of doping. It was also manifested in the study that lack of adequate training facilities, corruption, and lack of retirement support system are challenges athletes go through. Additionally, the study indicated that gender bias against female athletes has been witnessed. It was also demonstrated that a lack of entrepreneurial knowledge has negatively impacted many athletes' finances and other resources.

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