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The career transition process of elite athletes
in Norway – stakeholders and their
contributions

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Abstract

The career transition out of sport is a major life changing process for elite athletes, during which lead many athletes to experience difficulties. In recent decades, many sport organizations in the world have therefore increased their focus on the issue. However, it still remains unclear how various actors should be involved and collaborate to support elite athletes' transition out of sport.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine which stakeholders are involved in the career transition process of elite athletes in Norway, and what their contributions are. The study aims to help create more attention on the career transition process of elite athletes in Norway, and provide recommendations to sport organizations regarding their opportunities to better assist elite athletes through this process.

This study is based on a qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of ten informants, five representatives from five different sport organizations, and with five athletes from three different National Federations. Stakeholder theory and value co-creation were applied as the theoretical framework.

The findings show that elite athletes, Olympiatoppen, Idrettens Karriere Senter and the National Federations are involved in the career transition process in Norway. Athletes mostly prepare for life after sport by studying during their sport career. Elite athletes perceives to have the main responsibility for preparing for life after sport themselves, while sports organizations are responsible for facilitating the athletes throughout this process. Furthermore, the sport organizations focus and contributions to the athletes' career transition process varies from organization to organization. The findings show that Olympiatoppen and Idrettens Karriere Senter contributes to the career transition process by focusing on holistic development, offering various support and assistance system and facilitating the athletes' combination of sport and studies, while the national federation mainly contribute to the process by referring their athletes to the services offered by Olympiatoppen.

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Abbreviations

NBSF: The Norwegian Board Sports Federation

NF: National Federations

NIF: The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports

NRF: The Norwegian Rowing Federation

NSF: The Norwegian Skiing Federation

OLT: Olympiatoppen

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1 Introduction

Today, elite athletes train disciplined over many years, and dedicate most of their time to the sport from a young age. They spend anything from 10 to 20 years or even more with a determined focus on the sport, and then the career suddenly ends. It is only then that many athletes understand that they still have most of their lives ahead of them, but they have limited knowledge about what a civilian life entails. Retirement from elite sports can therefore be a challenging process for many athletes (Anderson & Morris, 2000, p. 60). In the Norwegian sport context, the career transition for elite athletes has received considerable attention in the media in recent years, initiated by statements of previously profiled Norwegian elite athletes such as Emil Hegle Svendsen and Magnus Moan who revealed that they experienced the transition from sport to a whole new career as challenging (Arnesen, 2020).

In modern times, examining elite athletes career transition out of sport has increasingly caught the interest of researchers in the field of sports. From the beginning of research on this issue, it has been shown that the career transition process is for many elite athletes a difficult process, which can bring about various challenges (Lavelle, 2000, p. 22-23). More recent research shows that the vast majority of elite athletes do not prepare well enough for life after sports, which might create a challenging career transition for many athletes. In addition, several academics argue that the elite athletes' sports performances can be affected, if they have insecurities about what they are going to do in the life after sports (Sinclair & Hackfort, 2000, p 132).

Historically, sport organizations have not focused on helping athletes leaving the organizational structure in the same way as they have helped them enter. In other words, sport organizations have not felt a responsibility to help their athletes exiting from sport. However, in response to the increased attention to the transitional difficulties experienced by elite athletes, national sport organizations have started to create and implement career transition programs that are designed to help athletes prepare for the life after sports (Sinclair & Hackfort, 2000, p 132). For example, the Olympic Athlete Career Centre in Canada designed

the first career transition program for elite athletes in the world in 1985 with a goal to help elite athletes prepare for life after sports (Olympic Athlete Career Centre, 1991; Lavellee, 2000, p. 22). According to Sinclair and Hackfort (2000), the career transition program available for elite Canadian athletes has been well received by many athletes in recent decades. However, it is worth recognizing that many Canadian elite athletes did not take advantage of this offer. They either felt that they have good control over their career development and therefore did not see the need to use these services or the offers did not meet their specific needs (Sinclair & Hackfort, 2000, p. 136).

According to previous research, there has been a growing interest from sport organizations to support athletes' career transition process in the last decades. Based on this interest, career transition programs have been developed and emerged in several countries to help athletes deal with various career transition challenges (Lavelle, 2000, p. 22). Following the forementioned media attention on the issue, there has been a growing interest on elite athletes' career transition from Norwegian sports organizations in recent years, and similar to many countries, various measures have been introduced to support elite athletes' transition out of sport.

Although many sports organizations in the world have increased their focus on the importance of the athlete's well-being and holistic development, there are still several challenges for athletes as well as sport organizations regarding the career transition process. While several countries have support and assistance systems in place, it remains unclear which actors are involved in the facilitation of this process and how they collaborate (Knights et al., 2019, p. 518).

Therefore, to address this issue, the purpose of this study is to examine which stakeholders are involved in the career transition process of elite athletes in Norway, and what their contributions are. In addition, I will investigate how sport organizations facilitate elite athletes' preparations for the for life after sport and how the various actors collaborate throughout this process. The objective of the study is to help creating more attention on the career transition process of elite athletes in Norway, and provide recommendations to sports

organizations regarding their opportunities to better assist elite athletes through this life changing process.

In order to increase the understanding of the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway, this study will address the following research questions:

How is the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway facilitated?

- How do various stakeholders contribute to the facilitation of the career transition process?
- How do the stakeholders collaborate in the career transition process?

2 Previous research

Athletes' career transition out of elite sport has been a topic of considerable interest for researchers over the past decades (Alfermann et al., 2004; Torregrosa et al., 2015; Knights et al., 2019, p. 518). Studies regarding the career transition from elite sport to civilian life have primarily focused on the reasons for and the adjustments to retirement from sport (Boothby et al., 1981; Bussmann & Alfermann, 1994; Koukouris, 1991; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993; Alfermann et al., 2004, p. 62). As a result, researchers have discovered various factors (e.g., athletic identity, voluntary control over the decision to retire) to determine the quality of the career transition process for elite athletes (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lally, 2007; Park et al., 2013, p. 22).

Moreover, research has also investigated the combination of sport and education or work. These studies conclude that it is beneficial to help athletes in coping with adversity, protecting against poor mental health or burnout, and maintaining perspectives for athletes (Aquilina, 2013; Cecic Erpic et al., 2004; Ekengren et al., 2018; Pink et al., 2015; Sorkkila et al., 2017; Morris et al., 2021, p. 134-135). In addition, athletes who study or work on the side are often better prepared for retirement and experience a more successful transition from sports compared to retired athletes who solely focus on their sporting ventures (Knights et al., 2016;

Murphy et al., 1996; Park et al., 2013; Petitpas & France, 2010; Stambulova et al., 2012; Torregrossa et al., 2015; Morris et al., 2021, p 135). In light of this research, several European countries have increased their focus on the issue and developed schemes that provide athletes an opportunity to study or work on the side of their sport. Due to this development and the potential benefits of combining sport with studies or work, there has also been increased research on the individual and environmental factors that influence the possibilities of athletes to combine sport with studies or work (Guidotti et al., 2015; Li & Sum, 2017; Stambulova & Wylleman, 2019; Morris et al., 2021, p. 135). The findings of these studies suggest that the willingness of an environment to facilitate for athletes to combine sport with studies or work is a vital factor (Morris et al., 2021, p. 135).

In efforts to develop a better understanding of the career transition for elite athletes, sports scholars have employed various explanatory frameworks in order to shed light on the phenomenon. Specifically, academics have primarily made parallels between career transitions in sport and social gerontological models, thanatological models and transition models (Lavellee, 2000, p. 1). Social gerontological theories of the aging process have been applied to sport in order to compare the career transitions process for elite athletes with retiring from the workforce. Thanatological models have been used to explain the distressful reactions associated with the career termination in sport through theories of death and dying. However, both of these perspectives have been criticized, because they tend to regard career termination as a singular event and overlook the possibility of a new career outside of sport (Lavellee, 2000, p. 22).

Schlossberg's (1981) model of human adaptation to transitions has been used as an alternative theoretical framework to examine career transitions in sports. The model contains three major sets of factors, including individuals' characteristics (e.g., age, gender, socioeconomic status and ethnicity/culture), situations (reasons that initiated a transition, timing, control, evaluation and duration), and pre- and post-environments (support network and support functions) that affect the adjustment to a transition (Schlossberg, 1981; Kuettel et al, 2017, p 28).

However, Schlossberg's models have been criticized for failing to provide a holistic view of the career transition process. According to Taylor and Ogilvie (1994), the theoretical models, which have been applied to examine retirement in sport do not explain which factors lead to negative challenges or lead to a successful career transition. Thus, Taylor & Ogilvie (1998) proposed more comprehensive conceptual models that will help explain the factors related to career transition adjustment (Lavellee, 2000, p. 22-23). Their conceptual models are useful, because they allow to identify the specific challenges in a career transition process and, based on that, to recommend appropriate measures (Lavellee, 2000, pp. 22-23).

Research further shows that many athletes make a positive career transition, while others experience difficulties due to various reasons. Scholars have suggested that athletes who are high in coping resources experience less stress during the transition process than athletes with few coping resources (S. M. Murphy, 1995; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Lavelle, 2000, s.18-19). Coping has been defined as a constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to deal with specific external and/or internal demands that exceed the resources of a person (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lavelle, 2000, p. 19). Thus, it appears likely that the overall adjustment quality to the career transition is affected by the number of coping resources available for elite athletes upon retirement from professional/elite sport (Lavelle, 2000, p. 19). For instance, several studies have reported that many athletes turn to alcohol as a way to cope with their career transition. Other studies have discovered that maintaining a busy lifestyle, exercising and finding a new focus were the best coping strategies to be used by elite athletes during the career transition process (Lavelle, 2000, p. 19).

Furthermore, social support has been identified as an important coping resource for athletes in career transition. Social support is defined as an exchange of resources between at least two individuals, where one person tries to enhance the well-being of the other person (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984; Lavelle, 2000, p. 20). Regarding Schlossberg's (1981) transition model, the adjustment quality of athletes' career transition depends on the available social support to the athletes. In recent years, several other academics have also documented the importance of

the social support from friends, family, teammates, coaches and managers as a key factor for athletes to have a successful career transition process (Lavelle, 2000, p. 20).

Career transition researchers further argue that preretirement planning is an effective coping resource for elite athletes to prepare for the career transition out of sport (Gorbett, 1985; Ogilvil & Taylor, 1993; Lavellee, 2000, p. 20). Various studies suggest that athletes who have other things to focus on besides the sport will experience a healthier career transition. Regardless of the fact that all athletes will someday retire from sport, a recurring issue in the career transition research is that athletes are often reluctant to making plans for and developing a new career after sports (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Wylleman et al., 1993; Lavelle, 2000, s. 20). For example, a study by Haerle (1975) with former professional baseball players in the United States, demonstrated that 75 percent of the athletes surveyed had not thought about or planned a new career path before they retired from the sport (Lavelle, 2000, p. 20). As this result was also revealed in other studies, it has become clear that sport is very time consuming for athletes which leaving them with little time for planning for the future during their active sporting careers. Thus, it appears that further research is needed on how the athletes' preparations for the future is affected by their sports environment (Lavelle, 2000, p. 21).

In a society with constant changes, transitions are inevitable and often unpredictable (George, 1980; Schlossberg, 1984, Schlossberg et al., 1989; Sinclair & Hackfort, 2000, p. 132). Moreover, depending on a person's perception of a situation, every event can potentially become a crisis, a relief, or a combination of both (Sinclair & Hackfort, 2000, p. 132). In the case of elite athletes, a career transition will definitely occur at some point in time. Retirement is a normal result of a career in elite sports, because the duration of the career is much shorter than in most other occupations. Athletes usually retire, voluntarily or involuntarily, between their mid-twenties to late-twenties and hence, much earlier than people in other professions (Sinclair, 1990; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Sinclair & Hackfort, 2000, p. 132). The second career after sport often calls for other skills than those learned and perfected as an athlete. A consequence of this transition at a relatively young age, are often various adjustment

difficulties for elite athletes (Sinclair & Hackfort, 2000, p. 132). In addition, especially, unpredictable transitions, for example due to injury, often lead to a change in identity as well as a feeling of insecurity (Wylleman et al., 2004; Knights et al., p. 518).

Furthermore, researchers have discovered that few athletes prepare well enough for this life change, and many athletes struggle to adjust to retirement from their sport career (Sinclair & Hackfort, 2000, p. 132). As a result, there has been a growing interest in career transition programs for elite athletes in the last decades. Several researchers have called for sporting organizations to provide support to retiring athletes during their career transition process (Lavellee, 2000, p. 22).

Australia developed two programs to assess the career transition needs and awareness of both athletes and coaches. According to Hawkins et al., (1994), only half of the coaches considered preparing for the life after sport to be an essential part of the career transition process for athletes. However, the coaches believed that the athletes themselves have the responsibility to take advantage of the available career transition support and assistance systems (Lavelle, 2000, p. 21). Another study revealed that over 90 percent of athletes who were surveyed, indicated that they themselves were responsible for utilizing the various support and assistance systems offered, but at the same time they were worried that this could have a negative impact on their playing career (Hawkins & Blann, 1993; Lavelle, 2000, p. 21). These findings are supported by the work of A. Petitpas, Danish, Mckelvain & Murphy (1990) with athletes from the United States who participated in workshops organized by the Career Assistance Program for Athletes. This study reported that some athletes believed such offers would affect their athletic performance in a negative way, if they invested time and focus on career development (Lavelle, 2000, p. 21). According to Sinclair and Orlick (1993), athletes believe that coaches and other actors involved in the career transition process should treat retired/retiring athletes with respect, instead of as disposable commodities. A great deal of existing research suggests that some coaches and leaders might fear that encouraging athletes to prepare for life after sport while being pursuing their sporting ventures will distract their athletes from focusing the sport. However, other coaches and leaders might perceive such

preparations as a positive contribution to the athlete's sporting success (Crook & Robertson, 1991; Lavelle, 2000, p. 21). This is consistent with S.M. Murphy's (1995) argument that many athletes believe that preparing for another career will decrease their stress regarding the career transition process, because it allows them to focus fully on their sport (Lavelle, 2000, p. 21).

Most of the existing research on athletes' career transition has focused on the athletes themselves, e.g., the psychological and environmental factors that influence their career transitions, relevant coping strategies for this major life change and the effects of combining sport and studies or work.

However, there is a gap in research regarding the sport organizations' roles in supporting elite athletes in the career transition process for elite athletes. Therefore, the focus of this study is the involvement of both stakeholders and athletes in the career transition process and providing an understanding for their collaboration, thereby making a contribution to an increased understanding of sport organizations' role.

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 The Stakeholder Theory

“Stakeholders are the individuals, groups and/or organizations contributing, voluntarily or involuntary, to a focal organization's activities, and/or who may benefit or bear the risk of these activities” (Byers et al., 2012, p. 162). Over the past decades, researchers have developed the stakeholder theory to examine stakeholder characteristics, describe organizations relationship with stakeholders and understand stakeholder behaviors. A better understanding of these aspects enables organizational managers to be aware of stakeholder activities, and ensure more effective and efficient stakeholder behavior in their future endeavors (Byers et al., 2012, p. 162).

In other words, the purpose of the stakeholder theory is to identify stakeholders and provide an understanding of the extent of influence they have on an organization. Therefore, the

theory is useful in order to explain and predict how an organization functions with regard to its relationships and influences from its environment (Rowley, 1997, p. 887). There are several definitions of the term stakeholder. Freeman (1984) first defined a stakeholder as an individual, group and/or an organization which can affect or be affected by an organization's actions (Byers et al., 2012, p. 162). Although many researchers have argued that this definition is too broad, it is suitable when you need to identify the stakeholders (Parent, 2016). Therefore, this study will follow Freeman's (1984) definition.

According to Freeman (1984), the stakeholder theory is directly linked to an organization's general success, and to the needs, goals and motivations of the actors which the organization interacts with. Furthermore, he states that an organization needs to consider the interest of their stakeholders (Friedman et al., 2004, p 172-173). Clarkson (1995) argues that if an organization satisfies the various and conflicting interests of their stakeholders, it will be able to maintain a good relationship with them, and thus become successful in the long-term perspective (Clarkson, 1995; Friedman et al., 2004, p 173). For example, intercollegiate sports in the United States is more complex than just universities facilitating for college sport matchups against other universities. Because, for a sport program to be regarded as good, it has to satisfy the needs and wishes of the NCAA, the US government, coaches, athletes, teachers and others (Covell, 2002; Putler & Wolfe, 1999; Friedman et al., 2004, p 173).

According to Donaldson & Preston (1995) the stakeholder theory has been, and can be, used in various ways that are somewhat clear and require very different methods, types of data, and assessment criteria (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p. 70). Thus, they split stakeholder theory into three different aspects - descriptive/empirical, instrumental, and normative (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p 70-71). The descriptive/empirical approach of stakeholder theory is usually applied to describe, in some cases to explain, the nature of the organization (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p 70). This may include, the nature and type of organization, how key members consider the interests of stakeholders, how managers understand managing, and how organizations actually are managed (Parent, 2016, p 58). Additionally, the aspect seeks to explore and explain past, present and future relations of organizations and their stakeholders

(Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p 71). The instrumental approach is used to identify the level of connection, or lack of connection, between stakeholder management and factors leading to organizational success. The instrumental aspect of the stakeholder theory attempts to connect and provide direction between stakeholders' approaches and common organizational goals (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p 71). The normative aspect is normally used to explore organizations' function, which often includes identifying the moral guidelines for the organizational management (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p 71). In other words, the normative aspect explains the function of organizations and provide them guidance on the premise of some basic moral principles (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p 72).

An organization can be seen as a society where people have joined together to achieve common goals (Argandona, 1998; Friedman et al., 2004, p 173-174). The stakeholder theory considers a corporation as an organizational body where various actors accomplish several objectives (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p. 70). In order to reach these objectives, an organization and its partners need to join into relationships that benefit everyone's self-interest (Freeman & Evan, 1990; Wartick, 1994; Friedman et al., 2004, p 174). Thus, each actor can be considered as a stakeholder in the other stakeholders' systems (Starik, 1994; Rowley, 1997; Friedman et al., 2004, p 174). Consequently, organizations are part of networks, where stakeholders usually are in contractual relationships with each other (Rowley, 1997; Friedman et al., 2004, p 174). Therefore, an organization could be seen as a participant in a larger social system, where the organizations as stakeholders also have their own stakeholder network (Friedman et al., 2004, p 174).

While the origins of the stakeholder theory and analysis relate to organizational governance, it is also applied to projects, policies or the general analysis of complex situations. Hence, stakeholder theory can also be applied to focal issue in order to identify individuals, groups and organizations that can affect or are affected by the issue, assess these actors' interests and relationships and analyze their importance for and involvement in a process (Reed et al., 2009).

Within an organization's environment, the identity of the members is at the core of the stakeholder theory. Although, there are many different definitions of a stakeholder, the stakeholder literature refers to four essential qualifications. The first criterion is that there has to be a connection between an organization and the stakeholder (Starik, 1994; Friedman et al., 2004, p 174), which could be direct (e.g. Olympiatoppen and elite athletes) or indirect (e.g. between family members and national federations). The second criterion is that a stakeholder must represent specific interests (Starik, 1994; Friedman et al., 2004, p 174), for example, football fans who seek benefits related to watching games. The third criterion refers to a stakeholder's existence in an organization's environment, due to their interest in an organization. In other words, a stakeholder is a stakeholder if there is an interest in the organization, no matter if the organization is aware of the stakeholder and its interest and/or willing to take care of it (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Friedman et al., 2004, p 174). Fourth, stakeholders may be connected in different ways (Starik, 1994; Friedman et al., 2004, p 174).

With these descriptions of stakeholders, the literature has identified several features that might help to point out stakeholders and/or place them with other actors to create stakeholder groups. These features may include legitimacy, urgency, impact, power and more (Freeman, 1984; Savage et al., 1991; Deck, 1994; Starik, 1994; Jones, 1995; Clarkson, 1995; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Buchholz & Rosenthal, 1997; Mitchell et al., 1997; Rowley, 1997; Hummels, 1998; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 175). The degree to which stakeholders have one or more of these attributes can significantly affect organizations within a given environment (Friedman et al., 2004, p. 175).

In order for sport managers to understand their organizational environment, identifying stakeholders is not enough. They need to identify and categorize stakeholder interests for the theory to be relevant (Friedman et al., 2004, p 175). Although, scholars argue that no interests are assumed to be more important than others, and all stakeholder entitled to have their multiple and often conflicting interests acknowledged (Collins, 1994; Hummels, 1998; Jones & Wicks, 1999; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 175).

The nature of the interest of actors involved can be defined as the stakeholder's stake, which is a demand on the organization built upon the stakeholder's risk (Phillips, 1999; Friedman et al., 2004, p 175). Thus, an issue that potentially affects a stakeholder, whether voluntary or involuntary, can either create a benefit or a price to bear (Clarkson, 1995; Friedman et al., 2004, p 175).

Voluntary stakeholders choose to make an investment, whether financial or non-financial, in an organization and accept the risks associated with their investment (Deck, 1994; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Clarkson, 1995; Etzioni, 1998; Argandoña, 1998; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 175). On the other hand, involuntary stakeholders have not chosen to make any type of investment in an organization and are therefore unlikely to achieve potential benefits. Nevertheless, they may be at risk (Clarkson, 1995; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 176). Thus, a "stake" can be defined as an investment of time, money or other resources in something that might offer an opportunity for profit in terms of achieving of stakeholder purposes and/or suffering potential risk from the actions of another stakeholder (Clarkson, 1995; Mitchell et al., 1997; Etzioni, 1998; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 176).

According to Reichart (2003), stakeholders may have ethical interests such as religious beliefs, thoughts about justice, views on fair play, organizational integrity and other moral values that help them determine the ethics of organizational activities (Reichart, 2003, p. 64). However, stakeholders may also have other interest that create expectations and influence their behavior. The interest stakeholders might have, can be understood according to Reichart's (2003) five categories; *material, political, affiliative, informational and symbolic interests* (Freeman & Reed, 1983; Reichart, 2003, p. 64).

In light of organizational activities, stakeholders can make two possible judgments based on their interest concerning an organizations behavior. A stakeholder will make a decision on a certain issue based on whether their interests match the organization's interest, for example, whether the organization's behavior is desirable or undesirable, and/or whether the issue is judged to be morally right or wrong (Reichart, 2003, pp. 64-65).

Furthermore, stakeholders' decisions include a broad mixture of interest-based and moral considerations, which often lead to expectational gaps. For instance, a stakeholder could judge an organizational activity to be morally wrong, desirable from a financial view, and undesirable politically (Reichart, 2003, p. 65). Thus, the judgements stakeholders make are sometimes a mix of interest-based decisions regarding organizational behavior (Reichart, 2003, p. 66).

Reichart (2003) distinguishes between three different types of expectational gaps that can occur – factual, conformance and ideals gap. A factual gap involves a difference of opinion regarding the logical context in the facts. A conformance gap can exist when there are inconsistencies in one actor's perception about how another actor should behave in light of their current behavior. At last, an ideals gap entails a difference of opinion between two actors' expectations about what the other actor should do (Wartick & Mahon, 1994; Reichart, 2003, p. 66). The judgments and actions stakeholders take are usually an attempt to reach certain objectives or create changes in organizational behavior. Therefore, stakeholder actions can be explained as a demand or claim on an organization, and can both be beneficial or a risk for the organization (Reichart, 2003, p. 66).

Freeman (1984) argues that the responsibility of organizational managers is to maintain stakeholder relationships by balancing the competing demands and/or claims on the organization (Freeman, 1984; Reichart, 2003, p. 67-68).

Besides identified stakeholders' stakes, it is important to assess their significance. There are different methods to determine stakeholder prioritization. One method created by Freeman (1984) is the distinction between internal stakeholders, who have a direct relation with managers, and external stakeholders, who do not interact with managers. Another one is the distinction between primary and secondary stakeholders. An organization cannot survive without primary stakeholders, while the secondary stakeholders also influence an organization but are not crucial for the survival of the organization (Clarkson, 1995; Friedman et al., 2004, p 176). Other methods focus on some specific features in order to prioritize stakeholders in relation to power, legitimacy and urgency (Friedman et al., 2004, p. 176).

According to Mitchell et al., (1997), power is one party's ability to reach their desired outcomes despite resistance (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 865) . Etzioni (1964) identified three different types of power; coercive, utilitarian and normative. Coercive power refers to the ability to utilize physical means such as a gun or threat with violence. Utilitarian power includes the capability to promise material rewards, such as money, products and services. Normative power consists of the capability to use symbols, such as love and status, in order to control one another (Etzioni, 1964; Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 865). In the context of a relationship between an organization and a stakeholder, one actor has power that can help secure access to coercive, utilitarian and/ or normative means in order to execute its desire upon others (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 865).

Another crucial attribute is the legitimacy of the stakeholder's claim. According to Suchman (1995), legitimacy is a social construct which determines the actions of an organizations as desirable, proper or appropriate within a social constructed system of values, norms, beliefs and definitions (Suchman, 1995; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 177). Therefore, legitimacy can be seen as a socially constructed subject for the organization's interpretation (Friedman et al., 2004, p. 177).

Although comprehending power and legitimacy claims are important to evaluate various stakeholders in general, the salience of a stakeholder in a given situation depends on the stakeholder's urgency, in other words, on a stakeholder's willingness and opportunity to act on a given issue (Savage et al., 1991; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 177). Mitchell et al., (1997) define urgency as a triggering factor that kickstarts actions. Within this definition urgency has two main elements, time-sensitivity and degree of critical impact on the stakeholder's interests, which affect their actions. Time sensitivity refers to the degree to which organizational managers can delay attending to the claim or relationship before it becomes unacceptable to the stakeholder. Criticality concerns, the importance of the claim or relationship to the stakeholder (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 867).

Stakeholders which possess urgency need special monitoring as they are actively trying to achieve positive outcomes on their claims and issues. By building coalitions, political activity

or media efforts, these stakeholders can frame the issue and promote their claim with other stakeholders, thus force the issue upon the organization's "to do list" (Helco, 1976; Mahon & Waddock, 1992; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 177). For organizations to execute effective issue management requires either that non-urgent stakeholders to remain passive or support the specific stakeholder's interest when they become active (Savage et al., 1991; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 177).

At the basic level of the stakeholder theory, the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders is grounded on the benefit that actors in return for what they contribute to another party (Wartick, 1994; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 179). Although a stakeholder's contributions are often monetary, there are also non-monetary stakeholder contributions, as for instance the time and effort of a stakeholder (Deck, 1994; Etzioni, 1998; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 179). If the transaction provides benefits to the stakeholders and satisfies the self-interest of every party involved, the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders will progress (Wartick, 1994; Argandoña, 1998; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 179). However, since there often are alternative actors who could satisfy the interests of a stakeholder, the relationship might end if it no longer provides enough benefits for the organization and/or the stakeholder (Clarkson, 1995; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 179).

Once an organization understands the nature of the relationships with the different stakeholders within its environment, the organization should be better suited to manage the relationship with its stakeholders (Friedman et al., 2004, p. 180). According to Jones (1995), organizations that best manage their relationships with stakeholders will do better in the long-term (Jones, 1995; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 180). However, organizations need to recognize the multiplicity and diversity of stakeholder relationships and that any stakeholder can be critical at any time, with regards to a specific issue or claim (Post et al., 2002; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 180).

3.2 Value Co-Creation

In the last decade various sports economic theories and management models have been discussed and criticized for not sufficiently explaining phenomena in the field of sport management. In order to obtain a greater comprehension of relevant issues and develop fitting strategies, academic minds have called for further development of theories and models being used in the field of sport management (Woratschek et al., 2014, p. 6). The Sport Value Framework (SVF) has been developed to answer this call. It is based on the service-dominant logic (SDL), which promotes an alternative way of thinking compared to the traditional perspective of economic exchange, also called the goods-dominant logic (GDL) (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). SDL provides a broad foundation of value creation that researchers have been asking for (Woratschek et al., 2014, p. 11). In the GDL products and services, also called goods, are regarded as the basis of economic exchange. They are exchanged for money or other goods, and value is only created by producing and selling these goods (Woratschek et al., 2014, p. 7). In contrast, the SDL defines service as the application of competencies for the benefit of another actor or party. Service is at the basis of economic exchange in SDL, and this means that economic exchange can be understood as an exchange of service for service (Woratschek et al., 2014, p. 11).

A central element of SDL is the understanding of value creation. From the perspective of SDL value creation is not limited to the producers. Instead, value is always co-created in a collaborative process between various actors and stakeholders. All actors, such as firms and non-profit organizations participate actively in the value co-creation process by exploiting resources from other service providers with their own personal competencies and by using additional resources. Importantly, value co-creation always requires that the customer, or beneficiary, integrates the providers can only offer value proportions as skills and other resources to derive value. Service providers can only offer value proportions as platforms for potential value creation. As the customer is always an active collaborator in value co-creation, the value created and determined by the customer, is always unique, because it is influenced by the customer's skill and resources. Consequently, the result of the entire process leads to a diverse value creation and a perception referred to as value-in-context (Vargo, 2008;

Woratschek et al., 2014, p. 12). For example, in the context of career transition for elite athletes, sports organizations might offer value propositions in the form of various services that can be exploited by athletes and other organizations to co-create value, but the outcome depends on each individual athletes and the contributions of other stakeholders involved.

In addition, value co-creation is a mutual and reciprocal. In other words, firms or organizations develop a value proposition for customers that can be combined with other resources to create value and in return the customers do the same for the firms or organizations, although this often happens indirectly. For example, one could say that sport organizations provide support for elite athletes' career transition in order to give back to athletes that have given such a big part of their life to the sport and therefore the benefit of the sport organization (service is exchanged for past service) Vargo, 2009; Woratschek et al., 2014, p. 12).

Vargo and Lusch (2011) suggest using the term actor for everyone involved in value co-creation, because the role of firms and consumers are very similar. And as no single actor possesses sufficient resources for value creation, resources are provided through interactions with other actors that are external to the exchange. Thus, providing the resources is not only limited to dyadic relationships between providers and beneficiaries, as key actors also must interact with others to co-create value. SDL therefore advocates for a network-with-network model of value creation that enables the central actors to integrate resources from other actors connected with them (Woratschek et al., 2014, p. 12).

4 Research context

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the Norwegian sport system and the elite sports environment in Norway.

4.1 The Norwegian sport system

Sport plays a significant role in the Norwegian society, and contributes to create a sense of affiliation, pride and a national community (NIF, 2019, p 5). The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF) is an umbrella organization for all organized sports in Norway. NIF consist of 55 national sport federations (NFs), 17 regional confederations, 375 sport councils and 10 787 local sport clubs, and has approximately 2.1 million members (NIF, 2020a). The General Assembly of NIF is the supreme governing body of organized sport in Norway and is held every other year. Apart from the general assembly's NIF's executive board has the highest authority, and their task is to implement the decisions made at the general assembly, as well as other joint tasks nationally and internationally. The NFs task is to organizes and manage the various sports. They are responsible for competition activities and the development of their sport both nationally and internationally (NIF, 2020b). The regional confederations act as collective bodies for sports within each of Norway's regions. The sport councils form a part of NIF's organizational structure, and consist of all sport clubs which are member of NIF in the municipalities. Together with the members, the local sport clubs across the country form the foundations of organized sports in Norway (NIF, 2020a). Figure 1 provides an overview of the organizational structure of sport in Norway.

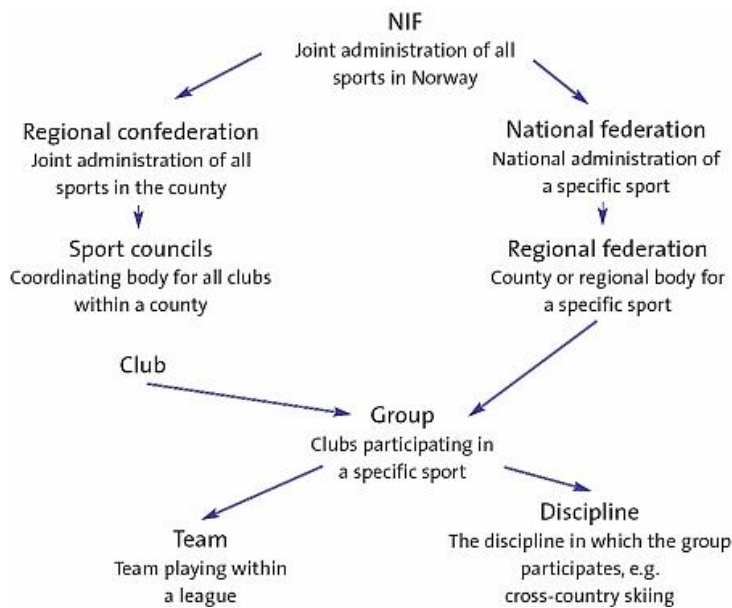


Figure 1: Organizational chart of Norwegian sport (NIF, 2020a)

NIFs vision is “sport joy for all” and their purpose is working for everyone to be able to perform sport based on their needs and wishes (NIF, 2019, p 7). The organization strives to be a positive value creator for individuals and for the Norwegian society in general (NIF, 2020c). NIF has four activity values (*joy, community, health and honesty*) and four organizational values (*volunteerism, democracy, loyalty and equality*) that form the basis of its work (NIF, 2015, p. 5).

4.2 Elite sports in Norway

While NIF has the highest sport policy responsibility for all sport in Norway, Olympiatoppen (OLT), a department in NIF that has been given the operational responsibility and authority to develop Norwegian elite sport, including the overall responsibility for the results in Norwegian elite sport. In addition, the OLT is responsible for Norway’s participation in the Olympic Games and Paralympics (NIF, 2020c).

OLT vision is “lead and exercise/train the best in the world”, and their philosophy is “together about the great achievements” (Olympiatoppen, 2020 p. 5). The elite sports culture in Norway is based on NIFs activity values (*joy, community, health and honesty*) and what these core values mean for the athletes and teams. In addition, the core values for elite sports are the foundation for OLT and their work. *Joy* through mastery, *community* through joint development, *health* through a holistic life, and *honesty* through visible attitudes (Olympiatoppen, 2019a).

Elite sport is of great importance in Norway. It creates memorable experiences for the people and provides the sports youth something to identify with. In order for Norway to maintain their position as a leading elite sport nation, continuous development is required (Olympiatoppen, 2019b). According to NIF’s sport policy document (2019-2023), one overall goal is to strengthen elite sport in Norway (NIF, 2019, p. 13). OLT states, that Norway will be a leading elite sport nation with a value-based performance culture that delivers proud sports moments to the Norwegian people (Olympiatoppen, 2020 p. 3). For Norwegian sports to succeed with this ambition, the framework and necessary conditions needs to be strengthened for organizations and elite athletes. NIFs only responsibility throughout this process is to facilitate the NFs, OLT and other stakeholders (NIF, 2019 p. 13).

OLT has three main working goals for elite sport in Norway that is anchored in NIF’s strategic plan (2019-2023). First, Norwegian sports will have world class athletes and teams and the best will get better. Second, Norwegian sports will have more athletes and team with top international results and the best will become more. Third, Norwegian sport will help young athletes through the transition to elite senior level and create development opportunities for future elite athletes. Within the third goal, OLT has three sub-goals. The last of these being; Norwegian sport will focus on developing the whole man/woman by facilitating for elite sports, education and job career (Olympiatoppen, 2020 p. 7). In order to reach these goals, OLT works daily to strengthen the elite sport efforts in three main areas – the daily training quality, the relationships in the various performance teams, and competition preparation and implementation (Olympiatoppen, 2020, p. 11).

According to OLT, the NFs are responsible for their own elite sport. However, OLT's role is to quality check, challenge and support the prioritized NFs elite sport efforts. OLT only contributes to and collaborates with NFs that are serious in their elite sport efforts (Olympiatoppen, 2020 p. 18). This includes NFs that have a clear understanding of the responsibility they have for their own elite sport and have clear strategies to achieve sporting success, specific result goals and a high-level training culture (Olympiatoppen, 2020, p. 9). When the criteria are met, OLT contributes with their resources, competence and knowledge to help the NFs further develop their elite sport efforts. In addition, OLT works continuously towards developing and strengthening the relationship between them and the NFs, and how they interact with each other. The purpose of OLT's working relationship with various national teams is to develop the whole man/woman with a holistic view of the athletes. In other words, they try to create a collaborative environment between national team coach, OLT coaches and OLT subject experts with focus on the athlete in the middle (Olympiatoppen, 2020, p. 18).

OLT recognize that all athletes sport career will at one point in time come to an end and most athletes will make a transition over to another professional life. OLT aims to support athletes through the career transition process from elite sports to a civilian job career, and together with the Norwegian defense university college and veteran services, and other partners they have recently created a transition program for elite athletes and special forces soldiers (Olympiatoppen, 2019c). The program is called Next Step Norway and has the purpose of helping elite athletes and war veterans prepare for life after their active sport or army career. The program aims to make athletes and veterans become more aware of their competences and how these can be utilized in the business community or in other organizations when their active sport or army career is over (Neste steg Norge, 2020).

5 Methodology

In this chapter, I will give a description of the epistemology, the research design, the methodology, a justification for selecting the methods and a description of the analysis.

5.1 Epistemology

This study uses the epistemological approach of constructivism. The perspective of constructivism implies that “meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (Crotty, 1998, p. 43). Constructivism perceives knowledge as constructed by those who participate in particular social contexts (Thagaard, 2018, p. 40). Constructivists argue that multiple realities exist, formed within a particular context and researchers investigate how reality is constructed by the individual within this context (Gratton & Jones, 2010, p. 28-29). Consequently, truths cannot be seen as either objective or subjective, but that both perspectives must be brought together (Crotty, 1998, p. 43). This implies that research results are characterized by the interaction between the researcher and the participant in the field (Thagaard, 2018, p. 41).

In this study I wanted to investigate how various actors perceive their contributions to the facilitation of the career transition process of elite athletes. In addition, the study aims to understand how elite athletes evaluate the contribution of sports organizations in this process. To create better understanding of this, this study needs to integrate the perspectives of multiple actors including sport organizations and elite athletes as well as their actions.

Following this epistemological approach, semi-structured interviews, in which the researcher has the opportunity to interact with the participants, were applied. The interviews cover the perspectives of various actors by investigating how the sport organizations believe to contribute to help athletes prepare for life after sport and how athletes evaluate this process and perceive their own contributions. While individuals’ thoughts and opinions are examined

through the interviews, the perspectives are integrated through the interaction with the researcher to improve the mutual understanding of the actors involved in elite athlete career transition processes in Norway.

5.2 Research design

A research design can be defined as “the overall blueprint that guides the researcher in the data collection stages in terms of what data to collect, from whom, and when” (Gratton & Jones, 2010, p. 287).

In this study I have chosen a qualitative approach. The goal with qualitative research is to obtain an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon. A qualitative approach focusses on developing an understanding of how peoples experiences and their reflections of their own reality (Thagaard, 2018, p. 11). In this research project I have examined the facilitation of the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway. By strategically selecting a sample of ten participants and using qualitative interviews as my data collection method, I have obtained detailed information from elite athletes and sport organization representatives to analyze the research questions in the study. Furthermore, the qualitative approach is suitable for this study because the goal is to collect comprehensive data and generate a better understanding on a topic with little previous research in the Norwegian context and by applying the theoretical perspectives of stakeholder theory and the sport value framework as a theoretical framework (Thagaard, 2018, p. 12). Moreover, I was curious about how athletes experienced the facilitation of the career transition process, and how sport organizations perceived their role and contributions to this process. In order to obtain this knowledge, it required in-depth understanding of individual experienced and perceptions, that can´t be created through standardized measurement instruments as applied in quantitative research (Thagaard, 2018, p. 15-17).

5.3 Methods

This section will provide an overview of the methods I have used in my research as well as information regarding the sampling.

5.3.1 Sample

In order to answer the research questions, I interviewed a variety of sport organizations and former athletes in Norway. In this study I used strategic sampling, where the participants are selected based on the purpose of the study. In strategic sampling, the researcher selects the participants who have the experience and qualification the researcher seeks in order to answer the research question. (Thagaard, 2018, p 54).

My inclusion criteria for the sport organizations were persons who ideally had responsibility and knowledge about the organizations elite sport activities. This means that I usually did not interview the leaders, but instead people that had more knowledge about the organization's contributions to the facilitation of the career transition process. My sampling process for the sport organizations started by approaching OLT because I was aware that the organization has established a position of a career counselor. Afterwards my strategy was to use the OLT representative to identify different sport organization in terms of organizational resources to include a variety of stakeholders in my study. I therefore discussed with the OLT representative which other sport organization might fit in the scope of my study. After further considerations I eventually included one representative from OLT, The Norwegian Skiing Federation (NSF), The Board Sports Federation (NBSF), The Rowing Federation (NRF). The representative from OLT, further suggested to include Idrettens Karriere Senter (IKS), which is an organization create by NISO, Idrettens Helsesenter and the Norwegian Football federation with purpose is to help athletes prepare for life after sports. Three representatives were women and two were men. Their age ranged between 37 and 53, with an average age of 45 years old.

The inclusion criteria for the athletes were that they practice or have practiced sport at an elite level (E.g., competed in the Olympics, World championship or European championship) and either retired or are in the process of retiring from sports. When I had chosen which NFs to include in my study, I sparred with the OLT representative to identify athletes from the respective NFs that could best fit the purpose of the study. My strategy was to try to include one woman and one man from each NFs. Eventually I ended up one female and one male athlete from both the NSF and NRF, and one male athlete from the NBSF were included. The athletes age ranged from 31 to 34, with an average age of 32,5 years old.

Moreover, I found the recruitment process to be quite straightforward. The responses of the contacted informants were positive. The informants identified through the sampling process agreed to participate within a short period after I made contact. I mentioned to all the informants upon contact that I am a recently retired elite athletes, which I think made it easier for them agree to participate in the study. Because I am familiar with the elite sport environment and have personal experience about what it means to be an elite athlete, thus I was able to recruit all my first-choice participants´.

5.3.2 Data collection

I have collected my data by using interviews, which gave me internal data to obtain the opinions and experiences of the stakeholders included in this study. I started my data collection process with OLT, then strategically chose the other stakeholders through discussion with the OLT representative. I gathered my data by interviewing the informants either face-to-face or over the digital platform Zoom.

In this study I used interviews as the method to collect my data. I choose interviews, because I sought out to generate in-depth understanding about how elite athletes and sport organizational representatives experience and perceive the career transition process for elite athlete in Norway. Interviews are an excellent method to gather rich qualitative data and/or seek an explanation of a phenomenon rather than just a description (Gratton & Jones, 2010, p.

155). Through interviews “knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the researcher and the interviewee” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 2).

I specifically conducted semi-structured interviews in my research study. I think semi-structured interviews were a good method for this study, because I wanted to obtain information about the informant’s view, their ideas and experiences regarding the facilitation of the career transition process (Arksey, 1999, p. 96). In addition, semi-structured interviews provide a flexible approach where one can ask follow-up questions and create room for unexpected data to emerge. In other words, the informants can bring up unexpected themes which might be beneficial for the study, that would not been brought up by the use of other methods, such as structured interviews or questionnaires. Thus, the method enables the informant to reveal information about themes that the researcher was not aware of before the interview (Gratton & Jones, 2010, p 156-157).

Furthermore, the interview method provides informants the opportunity to express their own experiences in their own words and allow them to elaborate on issues of importance. This is useful, because athlete’s experience through the career transition process is individual. The information comes from the informant’s perspective, which leads to more insightful data.

Moreover, the method also gives the researcher an opportunity to build a relationship with the informants, which can be crucial for collecting sensitive data. For example, by asking athletes to talk about personal challenges in their career transition process (e.g., identity and mental health).

Interviews allows the informants answers to be set into context, and the researcher may develop a sense of time and history (Gratton & Jones, 2010, p 156-157). In this study the informants’ answers must be seen in context, because athletes are engaged in different sport, with different personal and sporting environment. Therefore, interviews can help to understand how these contextual factors influence the career transition process.

The interview guides (See Appendix A and B) were developed based on the stakeholder theory and the theoretical framework of value co-creation. For example, to gain an

understanding for the participants' perspectives about the relevant stakeholders for elite athletes' career transition processes, the informants were asked *"Which stakeholders are most central in the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway?"*. A central question that addressed value co-creation of the various actors in the facilitating athletes' career transition was *"How does your organization collaborate with other stakeholder with regard to the career transition process?"*.

All the questions included in both the athlete and the sport organization interview guide were thoroughly discussed with my supervisors. The interview guides were customized to both the athletes and the sport organizations. The interview guides included open questions, such as *"Can you tell me about how your organization contributes to preparing athletes for life after sports?"* and *"What are your experiences with the career transition process?"*.

Moreover, the informants were not familiar with the questions before the interview was carried out. Before my first interview I performed a test interview with a friend who is also a former elite athlete to ensure comprehensibility of the interview questions, and to get familiarized with the interview setting as a researcher. The person was informed prior to the interview that this was a test interview beforehand. Based on the test interview the wording of some of the questions was changed to increase clarity. I did not perform a test interview based on the interview guide for the sport organizations, because organizational interview participants are difficult to recruit, and the questions were similar to the athlete interview guide.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions resulting from it, upon contact I gave all the informants the choice to either do the interview face-to-face or over a digital platform (Zoom or Microsoft teams). Out of the ten interviews, I conducted four face-to-face and six interviews over Zoom. Regardless of the interview setting, all the interviews lasted between 35 minutes to one hour. The length of the interviews varied in both stakeholder groups.

During some of the interviews I came under impression that some of informants had more information than they were willing to share. The sport organization representatives spoke on

behalf of the organizations and had to be careful to in their wording to not reveal a point of view that might put the organization in a negative light. In both the athlete and the organizational stakeholder groups some of the informants found it difficult to answer some of the questions, either because they had difficulties understanding the question or had not thought over the issue raised. At some questions during the interviews, I could probably have tried to ask more follow up questions and rephrased the questions better to provide more clarity. However, I still felt that informants answered my questions honestly and in a clear way, which allowed me to collect the data I needed to answer my research questions. At the end of each interview, I asked my participants if they felt there was something I didn't ask about, but was important regarding the theme. Some the informants took advantage of this opportunity. However, most of the informant expressed that I covered the theme thoroughly.

5.3.3 *Data analysis*

After each interview was completed, I transcribed the interview word by word. I did not transcribe in verbatim but applied a cleaned-up method. With this strategy I did not include all the informant's utterances in my transcribed interview (Markula & Silk, 2011, p. 96). After I finalized the transcription of each interview I listened to the recording again, while simultaneously reading the transcripts in order to ensure that I had written down everything the informants had said correctly. I offered to send the finished transcript to all the informants, if they wanted to make sure that I wrote down their statements correctly. However, none of the informants found it necessary to read the transcript.

After the transcription of the interviews, I started to analyze them through coding. According to Corbin & Strauss (2008), "data coding means extracting concepts from raw data and develop them in terms of their properties and dimensions" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 159). Furthermore, data coding is a common approach in qualitative analysis, which involves dividing text and denoting sections with codes. I used the comment function in Microsoft Word as tool to support the coding process. I completed two rounds of coding. First, I applied

open coding where I marked everything that I found relevant and interesting. While in the second round I searched for data specifically related to the theoretical framework in this study. Through this process, the interview guide was very helpful as the guide was created based on the stakeholder theory and value co-creation. As I developed the codes, I wrote small comments that described my reflections of the meaning of the text. These comments helped me to gain a better understanding of the data. They were further useful in the next step where I sorted the codes into different categories.

Through the coding process different categories emerge (Flick, 2009, p. 309-310). In order to create categories from the codes, I deployed a deductive approach. I created the categories based on the terms used by the informants and on the purpose of the research study (Thagaard, 2018, p. 154). Specifically, I used pattern coding to divide the codes that referred to the same theme into more general categories. This strategy helped me connect the different codes into themes and limit the amount of data.

All the interviews were conducted in Norwegian. The quotes from the interviews presented in the result chapter therefore had to be translated into English.

5.4 Trustworthiness of the data

The quality of a qualitative research project I assessed in terms of its trustworthiness.

In this section I will therefore explain how trustworthiness was ensured through credibility and transferability. Hence, it will be outlined how participants and other researchers can evaluate the procedures of the study and the result the researcher has arrived at (Thagaard, 2018, p. 181).

5.4.1 Credibility

The credibility of a qualitative study is considered by assessing reliability and validity. Reliability refers to the methodical transparency in the study, while Validity refers to the theoretical transparency in the study (Thagaard, 2018, p. 188-189).

A qualitative research study is considered to possess credibility if other researcher can find the same result by applying the same methods and theoretical framework (Thagaard, 2018, p. 187-189). However, in qualitative studies the researchers can affect the results, and it is therefore not likely that other researchers would end up with the same results. From a constructivist perspective the credibility of a study can be assessed upon the data collection process (Thagaard, 2018, p. 40).

To ensure that the credibility of the data collection process I made several considerations. The interview guides were based on the theoretical framework, which I discussed with my supervisors. When I conducted the interviews, I tried to remain neutral and not influence the informants' answers. Afterwards, I transcribed the interview carefully and ensured correct wording by comparison of the transcript with the original recording.

Throughout the data analysis, I tried to have an open mind and think about the fact that another researcher should be able to arrive at the same result as me. However, in addition to being a researcher in this study, I am also a former elite athlete who has recently retired from sport. Thus, my experiences with the career transition process and knowledge about the sport environment will most likely have affected my interpretation of the data. Although, this may have led me to have overlook some results, I would argue that my experiences and understanding of the sport environment strengthened the data analysis process, because it was easier for me to comprehend the informants' opinions and relate to their experiences and therefore enabled me to gain a more in-depth understanding.

Furthermore, I also discussed both the data analysis process and findings over with my supervisors to allow for triangulation of various research perspectives.

5.4.2 *Transferability*

Transferability in qualitative studies is connected to the fact that the understanding one develops of a phenomenon in a research project may also be relevant in other contexts (Thagaard, 2018, p. 182). The interpretation of the results provides a basis for transferability in qualitative studies. Moreover, the interpretation derived from one a study should be possible to be tested through similar research and contribute to develop new research (Thagaard, 2018, p. 194).

I believe this research project can be considered transferable to other actors in the Norwegian (e.g., other NFs) as the sport organizations and the athletes included in the sample can help create an understanding of how the career transition process is facilitated for elite athletes in Norway. The sample consists of a variety of sport organization, which can help create an understanding of how different sport organization contribute to the facilitation of career transition process. For example, I specifically chose three different NFs with regard to their size and resources to ensure a good representation of the various federations in Norway. Thus, I chose the NSF to represent the biggest federations in Norway with considerable financial resources. The NBSF was selected to represent the medium-sized federations with average financial resources, whilst the NRF was selected to represent the smaller federations with little financial resources. The sample also consists of a variety of elite athletes, which can help create an understanding of how elite athletes experience and evaluate the facilitation of the career transition process in Norway. For example, I chose to include both women and men from the different sports in order to get perspectives from both genders. I also included four retired athletes and one athlete that is in the process of retiring from sport to see if there has been a development or change in the experiences.

5.5 Ethical considerations

When doing research, one has to be aware of several ethical considerations. Specifically, the researcher must ensure that participation in the study is voluntarily. Furthermore, confidentiality of the participants' statements need to be ensured, and mutual trust between the researcher and the participants must be established (Silverman, 2014, p 148-149).

In order to ensure voluntary participation, in the consent forms (See Appendix C and D), which all my participants had to sign before moving forward with the research. I included a statement that it was voluntary to participate in the study and that the participants could withdraw from the study at any time without providing a specific reason.

To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, only me and my supervisors had access to the data. Information collected from the participants were saved on a memory stick that was stored in a different location than my transcribed interview and sound files. I did not include any names in the study, however, all the participants were informed about and agreed to the risk that they could be identified due to their role in the organization or as a former elite athlete. Because the elite sport environment in Norway is relatively small, and thus people who are familiar with elite athletes and the people working in Norwegian sport organizations might be able to recognize some of the participants. The research was approved by the "Norwegian Centre for Research Data" before starting the data collection process (See Appendix E).

When using interview as a method, there are some ethical issues that must be considered. Interviews might entail personal questions that might lead the informant to share sensitive information that he/she will regret afterwards (Thagaard, 2018, p. 113). All of the informants were positive throughout the interview and answered my questions without hesitation.

When analyzing qualitative data, one should take measures to minimize bias to influence the findings (Flick, 2007, p. 16). Therefore, I did my best to avoid influencing the informants with my body language and facial expression, but I might have reacted to some of the informant's answers unintentionally. However, most of the question I asked the informant related to the athletes' and sport organizations individual perception of and experiences with

the facilitation of the career transition process. Thus, I do not believe my reactions influenced the informant's answers greatly.

The main reason for my interest in the research question was the fact that I knew I was personally going to retire from elite sport in the middle of this research project. I thought this was an interesting opportunity for me to gain a better understanding how the career transition process unfolds in Norway. Because of my previously mentioned experience and knowledge about the sporting environment in Norway, I had several expectations about findings. It is therefore highly likely that my own predetermined thoughts and opinions on the issue have influenced the findings in this study to some degree. However, I believe my background and understanding of the environment strengthened my connection and trust with the informants and, hence, my ability to collect in-depth data. Furthermore, the interpretation of the data was enriched because of my own insight and experience.

6 Results

The aim of the result section is to present the finding in order to answer questions:

How is the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway facilitated?

How do various stakeholders contribute to the facilitation of the career transition process?

How do the stakeholders collaborate in the career transition process?

In this chapter I will present the results of the interview analysis. First, the perspectives of the diverse stakeholders involved in the career transition process will be described. Second, the sport organizations' focus and contributions to the facilitation of the career transition process will be explained. And third, the athlete's evaluation of the facilitation of the career transition process will be described.

6.1 Stakeholder perspectives on the career transition for elite athletes

In this section I will present the stakeholders' perspectives on the career transition for elite athletes. Specifically, I will describe the various sport organizations' views on the career transition for elite athletes in Norway. In addition, to the athlete's experiences with their own career transition process are outlined.

The interview data revealed that the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway is a major life change that occurs over a period of time. It may lead athletes to experience various difficulties, such as *social*, mental, financial and physical. Both athletes and the sport organizations agree on this as, the following quotes of an athlete 4 and the IKS representative illustrates.

"Athletes have had their sport as the main priority for many years and are used to be in their own little sports bubble. But when athletes retire from elite sports things change and many things needs to be processed, which often could lead to a difficult period" (Athlete 4 - TFG)

"Elite sport requires a lot of time and dedication from athletes, and for many the sport becomes a big part of their life. The sport is not just a profession, but more like a lifestyle for them. Because elite athletes have to think about everything they do, all the time in order to perform on the highest level. For many athletes it becomes a part of their identity. Therefore, going from being an athlete to not being an athlete anymore is a major life change". (IKS representative)

However, each career transition process is different, because it depends on multiple individual factors, such as personality, level in the sport, the level of preparedness and other influencing factors, such as injuries, athlete identity, network and environment around the athlete. The ensuing quotes of the OLT and NSF representative illustrate how various individual factors can influence the career transition process for elite athletes.

“My experience is that the career transition of elite athlete is challenging process and a demanding time for the athletes. The sport is something they’ve done for bigger parts of their life until they retire. However, there are some factors that affect how challenging the process becomes. Of course, if your forced to retire due to injuries it can be difficult, but it also depends on the number of preparations one has done and factors such as, athlete identity, what network and relationships the athletes have and what support they have in the environments. Thus, there are many things that decides how the transition process unfolds, but my experiences are that it is challenging for most athletes to some extent” (OLT representative).

“The quality of the athlete’s career transition depends a bit on who you are and how good you have been. I think a lot of athletes who have a very well-known name or/and had a very good sports career have an opportunity to use their name and position to get into a new career than an ordinary Ola Normann”. (NSF representative)

In addition, many athletes find the feeling of going from being the best at something to being average at something else to be challenging process and this might lead elite athletes to experience various difficulties. Athlete 3 expressed these feeling and challenges as follows:

“I think it can be very challenging for many athletes to go from being among the best in their sport to be among the absolute worst in a job. It’s like you are at the top of the mountain and then you fall down. (...). When you start to climb up the career ladder from the bottom of the mountain, the climb does not exactly go fast. It might take a really long time, because you need to learn a lot of banal things and I remember feeling like, oh my god want an idiot I am. I think that feeling is tough and slightly difficult to handle for former elite athletes”. (Athletes 3 – AS)

6.2 Stakeholder contributions

In this section I will present the sport organizations focus and contribution to the facilitation of the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway. First, I will describe the sport organizations focus on holistic development and the career transition process. Afterwards, the sport organizations contributions will be described.

6.2.1 Awareness for athletes' holistic development

The interview data show that the sport organizations create awareness by focusing on holistic development and the career transition process to elite athletes in Norway. The main finding reveals that OLT and IKS have a similar focus, whilst the focus on the theme varies between the federations.

The interview analysis showed that all the sport organizations included in this study are concerned with the well-being of the athletes and seeing the whole human. The following quote of the NBSF representative illustrates the sport organizations focus on the athletes.

"We see the whole human and we're careful to putting pressure on our athletes. We set health in focus and everyone's well-being". (NBSF representative)

However, the degree of focus from the sport organizations on holistic development and facilitating the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway varies from organization to organization. The interview data reveal that OLT and IKS have a similar focus on holistic development and the career transition process for elite athletes. Specifically, these organizations focus on the individual athletes needs and want them to experience a holistic development throughout their sporting career. In other words, their goal is that athletes experience a balance between elite sport and their life on the side throughout their active sports career. This focus has become more important for the organizations in recent years compared to approximately ten years ago for the organizations.

Interestingly, OLT and IKS work slightly differently with their approach to raise awareness of the importance of holistic development. OLT works towards raising awareness in the whole Olympic sport environment. This means, OLT focusses on educating both elite athletes, coaches, sports leaders and NFs about holistic development. The OLT representative expressed the organizations focus as follows:

“We have a goal, an ambition and a desire that elite athletes to experience a holistic development throughout their top sports career. Although, we may have succeeded in getting the message across to all the sports in a varying degree so far, it’s something we work towards”. (OLT representative)

In contrast to OLT, IKS solely concentrates on helping the athletes.

“We work towards the athletes, because they are the ones we want to help, and it seems easier to work with them”. (IKS representative)

In general, the federations expressed that they would like their athletes to experience a balance between the sport and their daily life and have something to fall back on after sport. Despite that, the data revealed that the all the federations have a slightly different focus on holistic development and the career transition process of the elite athletes. For example, the NRF is forced to have a focus on holistic development and facilitate the athletes career transition process due limited resources and because they want their elite athletes to row until they are in their mid-thirties.

“it’s not possible to support oneself solely by rowing. (...). There are a few of our elite athlete who focus a 100 percent on the sport, but most of the rowers either study or work on the side in order to live and pursue their sporting goals. We are therefore forced to take action”. (RF representative)

In contrast, the NSF has little focus on holistic development and preparing their athletes for the life after sport. The results divulge that the athletes are paid as professionals, and the NSF wants their athletes to focus a 100 % percent on becoming the best skiers in the world.

“We would like to say that we have a focus on holistic development. And we should of course help the elite athletes with their career choices and preparations for the future more. (...). We want our athletes to pursue their professional skiing career full time, because it’s their job. The athletes get a salary from the federation”. (NSF representative)

Both OLT and IKS expressed their impression that the various federations in Norway have little to no focus on holistic development and career transition, especially in many winter sports, which is illustrated in the following quote of the OLT representative.

“There one lays all eggs in the basket called elite sports”. (OLT representative)

Many of the sport organizations included in this study express that they think there will be a bigger focus going forward and mentioned a scandal involving a well-known former elite athlete in the fall 2020 as a trigger. OLT and IKS argue that sport organizations should focus on holistic development, not just sport specific development. The representatives from both OLT and IKS state that sport organizations have a certain responsibility for elite athletes live a good life after sport. Furthermore, the focus may have started to increase the last year. Both OLT and IKS report that more athletes are interested in studying or working on the side today than a few years ago. The following quote of the IKS representative illustrates this development.

“IKS explains that we are at a crossroad, where young athletes today are more concerned with education and preparing for the future than previous generations. Before 2000 it was pretty common for athletes to do something else beside the sport, but due to of the commercialization and professionalization of sport in the beginning of the 2000s things changed. More money flowed into sport, and a culture where athletes thought about their sport 24 hours a day in order to be competitive emerged. In other words, a culture where athletes didn’t do anything else beside the sport, because if athletes did something else, they didn’t use enough time and energy to

become the best in their sport. However, it might be about to turn around again, because it's not a sustainable model for anyone really". (IKS representative)

In addition, the OLT representative explains that there has been a positive development from sport leaders and coaches in the various NFs on the issue, but it has not reached all the sport environments yet. This development is clearly illustrated in the following quote of the OLT representative.

"I have experienced that there is a growing interest from the federation on the theme. More coaches and sport leaders are more interested, curious and positive about holistic development now than before. However, some are still a bit skeptical because they are afraid that it will take away the athletes' focus from the sport, that they will spend their time on something other than training, sleep and food, right. A bit old-fashion, traditional, conservative mindset on this ". (OLT representative)

6.2.2 Career planning and advice

The data show that OLT and IKS contribute to the facilitation of the career transition process by acting as a sparring partner and offering various support and assistance systems to the elite athletes. Furthermore, the interviews reveal that the federations mainly contribute to the process by referring their athletes to the services offered by OLT.

Through the interview analysis this study has identified OLT and IKS as the stakeholders who contribute most to the facilitation of the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway. The data show that these organizations have taken up a responsibility to help and assist elite athlete in Norway to prepare for the life after sport by offering various support and assistance systems. Both organizations have a goal to help athletes succeed in their active sporting career and in the life after. The following quote of the IKS representative illustrates the organizational goal and mission regarding their contribution to the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway.

“Our goal is to help as many athletes as possible to participate in sport for a long time and succeed in their future life”. (IKS representative)

The interview reveals that OLT and IKS mainly have an advisory role for the elite athletes in Norway during, through and after the career transition process. In other words, both the organizations help elite athletes see opportunities and plan for the future by being a sparring partner for elite athlete through this process. The organization’s primary role for athletes throughout the career transition process is illustrated in the following quote of the OLT representative.

“OLT shall have an offer, primarily as a sparring partner for the athlete though this process” (OLT representative)

Specifically, the organizations support and assist elite athletes by offering individual career counseling (conversations, mapping of occupations and personality testing), trainee programs and career courses (e.g., Next Step), webinars, planning and facilitation of sport and studies, etc. The ensuing quotes from the IKS and OLT representatives illustrate these contributions.

“We offer career counseling, individually and through courses. (...). For example, we have just launched a trainee program that will grow for the athletes”. (IKS representative)

“(…). The last years we have also established a career transition program together with the Norwegian Armed Forces called Next step for elite athlete and elite soldiers”. (OLT representative)

Furthermore, the representatives state that the organizations support, and assistance systems are voluntary for the elite athletes. No one forces the elite athletes to take advantage of their offers. However, OLT and IKS both explain that they are responsible for communicating clear information to the athlete about what they can get help and support with and create a low threshold for them to make contact. This is clearly illustrated in the following quote of the OLT representative.

“Help and support from OLT is a voluntary offer to the athletes, but there is nothing we are force athletes to take advantage of. For instance, I would never go to an athlete and say; Hi, I think you should talk to me now because we´re a little worried about how the transition to civilian life will be for you. It´s an offer that the athlete must take advantage of themselves. Then it´s our responsibility to make the offer known to the athletes”. (OLT representative)

Moreover, the data reveal that the federations contributions to the facilitation of the career transition process for elite athletes is generally limited. Primarily, the federations included in this study reported that they contribute through OLT or various actors. More specifically they see their role in setting the athletes in contact with the OLT career counselor or other partners and stakeholders and in sharing relevant information about various opportunities and schemes that are available for athletes to help them prepare for life after sport while being active. The ensuing quotes from the NRF and NSF representatives illustrate the federations primary contributions to the facilitation of the career transition process.

“We do not have our own program for this, but we have a great relationship with OLT that has support systems that can help the athletes. (...). Most of our elite athletes have meet the OLT´s career counselor in one context or another”. (RF representative)

“We´ve had contact with OLT on the theme. The career counselor has been permitted to inform our junior and recruits about their choices. And our partner Equinor has offered to help us with younger athletes who need for example, help with their homework”. (NSF representative)

However, the data reveal that the federations try to take care of the athletes during and after retirement from sport in the best possible way. Interestingly, the NBSF is the only federation in this study that also contributes by offering the athletes another role in the organization as a coach or ambassador. The NBSF representative explains that federations are responsible for being there for the athletes during and after their elite sport career, because the athletes have been a resource for them for so many years.

“We try to help our athletes get a successful transition to the civilian life, with whatever it might be. For instance, we can set them in contact with OLT’s career counselor to get help and support. (...). We try to take care of and help find a role for every athlete who’s about to retire from competitive sport. For instance, we have an ambassador team of snowboarders that we offer to join to all the retiring elite athletes”. (NBSF representative)

In addition, the data showed that some federations might look towards what other federations do to contribute to the facilitation of the career transition process for elite athletes. This is illustrated in the following quote of the NBSF representative.

“I pay attention to what the skiing federation and those who are near do” (NBSF representative)

6.2.3 Facilitating the combination of sport and studies

Another important contribution that sport organizations make to the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway is the facilitation of sport and studies. The data show that all the sport organizations included in this research project try to facilitate the elite athletes who want to study on the side during their sporting career. However, the degree of their efforts and contribution varies from organization to organization.

The interviews reveal that OLT and IKS contribute most to facilitate sport and studies for the elite athletes. Both the organizations contribute by providing flexible career counseling regarding their educational path. This includes, help and assistance for the athlete to find a suitable study program and plan the inclusion of their studies in their sporting life’s when they are ready and motivated to start. This is clearly illustrated by the IKS representative.

“I’ve worked with athletes who have been very stressed about starting to study for various reasons. (...). I have then asked the athletes, should you drop studying for six

months and only focus on the sport (e.g., to establish themselves in a new team). Then after six months I have contacted them again and asks if they would like to start studying. Because we want to help athletes find the best balance in their daily life”.
(IKS representative)

Moreover, the data reveal that the organizations collaborate with various educational institutions in order to help the athletes to combine sport and studies. Both OLT and IKS explain that educational institutions play an important role in the career transition process for elite athletes, because they give them the opportunity to prepare for life after sports by getting an educational degree. Interestingly, OLT is the only sport organization that has created formal agreements with several universities and colleges around the country regarding facilitation of studies for elite athletes.

“We have a very good relationship with universities and colleges. I think we have deals with 18 or 19 various universities and colleges from the north to the south with regard to facilitation of studies”. (OLT representative)

Furthermore, OLT contributes by communicating relevant information about the available collaboration schemes with universities and colleges to athletes who would like to study on the side. Specifically, the organization makes sure the information reaches the elite athlete environments and help the athletes get facilitated studies. The OLT representative explains that not all athletes wish to study on the side, but they should know that they can get help and support from OLT in order to create a good balance between sport and life on the side during their active sporting career.

“Our role is to make sure that athletes that would like to study on the side know about the agreements we have with universities and colleges and that they receive good facilitation of their studies and that this information reaches all the athlete environments we work with and get the best possible facilitation of the studies from their sporting environment”. (OLT representative)

Moreover, the data show that the federations efforts and contributions to facilitate sport and studies are limited. Generally, the federations give permission and try to facilitate all the athletes who want to study during their sports career by referring the athletes to OLT.

“OLT has created schemes with various educational institutions and has a career counselor that can advise athletes with education” (NBSF representative)

Furthermore, the interviews reveal that the NRF encourage their athletes to study on the side of the sporting career and facilitate this process by for example, facilitating exams abroad or contacting educational institutions on behalf of the athletes. The NBSF contributes in a similar manner, but the organization encourages and facilitate for sport and studies first when the athletes are mature and able to simultaneously pursue sport and studies. The NSF representative explains that they facilitate athletes who want to study by, for example, writing recommendation letters to the educational institutions to obtain elite athlete status at the university or college, which usually allows for an easier combination of sport and studies. However, the NSF and especially their national team coaches expect the sport to be the athletes’ first priority at all times, which often makes it a challenging combination. In addition, the view on the importance of holistic development varies from coach to coach which also affects the organizational focus and contributions to facilitate sport and studies.

6.3 Elite athlete’s evaluation of the career transition process

In the following section I will present the elite athlete’s evaluation of the various involved stakeholders’ focus and contributions to the facilitation of the career transition process. First, I will present the athletes evaluation of the sport organizations focus and contributions to the facilitation of the career transition process. Afterwards I will describe the athlete’s evaluation of their own contribution to the career transition process.

6.3.1 Evaluation of the sport organizations focus on the career transition

The interviews reveal that the athletes perceive and experience OLT as the sport organization that focusses the most on facilitating the career transition process for athletes in Norway. Furthermore, the data show that federations with few resources contribute more to facilitate their athletes' preparations than federations with a lot of resources. In addition, the federations focus, and contributions depend on the sport leader's and national coaches' opinion on combining sport with something else on the side.

Several of the athletes reported that there has been a minimal focus on the theme and limited help from sport organization in the past. This is clearly illustrated in the following quote.

"It's been the athlete's sole responsibility to secure an education and career, both during and after the sports career in the past". (Athlete 3).

However, in recent years it has been well-documented that it is wise for athletes to do something else on the side in order to perform well in their sporting career over time. Furthermore, the combination of sport and studies or work is seen as important in order to build identities on several arenas. The following quote illustrates this recent development.

"It has almost become politically incorrect for sport organizations to be against athletes combining the sport with studies or a job while being an active elite athlete". (Athlete 1).

Thus, some sport organizations have started to focus more on the issue and taken action to help athletes prepare for life after sport. The athletes reported that OLT is the sport organization that makes the greatest effort to facilitate the elite athletes career transition process during the last decade. They especially mentioned the position of the career counselor that created at OLT, the person's competence about the topic and effort to facilitate athletes with career advice and help them plan for the future. One athlete explains the OLT career counselor's effort as follows:

“Olympiatoppens career counselor deserves a lot of credit, because she has jumped into a very conservative system from both the educational institutions, employers and the sport itself. Although it’s been an uphill battle for her, much has happened the last years. Agreements and schemes with various universities and colleges that had been very old fashioned and difficult to deal with in the past have been developed. In addition, a career transition course for elite athletes together with the Norwegian army, called Next Step was created” (Athlete 3).

Some of the athletes interviewed stated that they think most sport organizations would like to focus and contribute more to the issue, but many federations do not have the necessary resources to make an effort. However, another athlete expresses that it does not require a huge amount of effort from the federations to make an impact. Because just focusing on the issue and facilitating the athletes by challenging them to study or work on the side and showing them the various opportunities can make an impact on the athlete’s career transition process. The following quote of an athlete illustrates the elite athlete’s general opinion on the federations’ focus and contributions to the theme.

“The federations have a lot of influence, but they may not have the resources to make a big effort here. However, I don’t think it requires much either. (...). They can do a lot by encouraging the athletes to study or work and show them what is possible. Then they can refer the athletes to OLT where one can get help and facilitate the athlete by providing time for studies or jobs. (...). I think it’s easier for some conservative coaches and organization to set the sport first on all areas, which makes it difficult to be flexible regarding other things on the side. I therefore think it’s very important for NFs and OLT to encourage athletes to prepare”. (Athlete 3)

However, the data shows that federations with little resources facilitates their athlete’s preparations for the future more than federations with more favorable economic conditions. They argue that the resourceful federation have created conditions that makes it possible for the athletes to solely focus on their sporting career. This is clearly illustrated in the ensuing quote of an athlete.

“It is less acceptable for elite athletes to study on the side in sports with good financial resources, where the athlete could live on the sport. Because the athletes are not dependent on the student loans and therefore federations don’t see the need for athlete to study”. (Athlete 1)

Interestingly, the sport organizations focus and contribution to facilitating the athletes career transition process also depend on the sport leaders and national coaches being interested in changing their way of thinking about elite athletes studying besides the sport. However, the two athletes from NSF experienced that this often depends on the coach’s level of education. The following quote of an athlete illustrate these differences.

“If the coaches aren’t very educated, they don’t see the point of athletes studying while being an active elite athlete, while coaches with a high educational degree have a greater understanding of the value that combining studies with the sport creates. Furthermore, Norwegian sports have a big focus on teamwork and at the same time providing flexibility to athletes who need to train differently. However, in relation to athletes building a life on the side, some federations place their elite athletes into the same template. In some sports everyone shall become an engineer, whilst in other sports the athlete should not do anything. It is weird, because all humans are different”
(Athlete 1)

6.3.2 Evaluation of the sport organizations contributions

The data analysis shows that the elite athletes perceive and experience OLT as the most central stakeholder in the career transition process. The results reveal that the athletes perceive that OLT contributes in several ways to facilitate the elite athletes in their preparations for the future. Moreover, the data displayed that the federations’ contributions and the athletes’ experience with their federation varied between the federations and the athletes.

All the athletes interviewed for this study reported that OLT is generally the most central sport organization to the facilitation of the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway. The athletes explained that OLT contributes the most to elite athlete's career transition process, because the organization provides career advice and guidance, help plan and facilitate study programs that can be combined with the sport and offer trainee programs and a career course called Next Step.

"Generally, I think Olympiatoppen is the most central. Because, they have a career counselor and extensive competence on the theme or a specific person that works with it, has a lot of contacts and can give great advice". (Athlete 2)

Although, IKS contributes in a similar way to the facilitation of the athletes' career transition process as OLT, the athletes included in this study have only heard about IKS but have no relationship with them.

"No, I have no relation to IKS. (...). But I know other athletes that have received good help from them. And I see that they help many, especially women football players but other than that". (Athlete 3)

Furthermore, the data reveal that besides OLT the most important stakeholders to the facilitation of the career transition process for the athletes included in this study varied slightly from athlete to athlete. Primarily, the athletes reported OLT, but also athletes' close contacts (e.g., family, friends, coach and teammates) and their federation as being most central during and after their sports career.

The athletes expressed that they all had a positive experience with OLT and that the career counselor contributed primarily by being a sparring partner for them to discuss the issue both during and after their sport career. In addition, they appreciated the advice and support, help with school and job applications, as well as the trainee and career programs that were offered to them. Athletes 2 and 3 express these positive experiences with OLT as follows:

“She has given me great advice about what to think about and help me see which jobs might be relevant to combine while active and after the sporting career. And she helped with applications regarding that process”. (Athlete 3)

“I got the opportunity to participate in OLT’s and the Norwegian Armed Forces career transition course – Next step. (...). I thought that was very good. It gave me a lot of motivation and provided me with comfort”. (Athlete 2)

Moreover, the data revealed that the federations’ contribution to facilitate the career transition process for elite athletes varies from federation to federation. The federations in this study primarily contributed to the athletes by allowing and facilitating the combination of sport and studies, offering roles in the federation and connecting the athletes with OLT and other partners. One athlete in particular appreciated that the NBSF provided him with an ambassador role for snowboarding.

“They gave me a role as an ambassador for snowboard which I think made my transition from the sport and into the working life much easier”. (Athlete 5)

The two rowers explained that the federation made it possible for them to combine elite sport with studies or work and made sure they were aware how OLT could help them with. One athlete expressed the NSF helped by providing him with trainee days at the federation’s sponsor which in turn gave him an insight into how various companies work and created an opportunity to expand his network. However, another athlete interviewed expressed very different experiences with her federation. She explained that she fought a lot with the federation about education, where at one point the federation countered and encouraged her to set the studies aside. The following quote illustrates these challenges.

“The federation set some demands which I was had to accept. It was in many ways unfair that I got punished financially for taking education. I accepted the fine only on the conditions that they would find better solutions for the future, but I have not been presented with better solutions so far”. (Athlete 1)

The data shows data that almost all the athletes were satisfied with the contributions their federation and OLT made to their career transition process. The ensuing quote of Athlete 4 illustrates the athlete's experiences with the sport organizations contributions.

"I received the help I needed from both my federation and Olympiatoppen in order to prepare myself for life after sports". (Athlete 4)

The athletes also mention national federations and educational institutions as central stakeholder for athletes in general throughout this process. The following quote illustrates why the NFs are central stakeholders for athletes in the career transition process.

"The federations are central because they have a lot of influence on the elite athletes focus and priorities during their sport career". (Athlete 3)

The athletes expressed that the educational institutions are central for many athletes because they give them the opportunity to get an education during their sport career. Additionally, the athletes explain that some educational institutions try to facilitate the studies for athletes, but a lot of universities and colleges are very conservative and old fashion. However, the athletes state that close contacts, such as family, friends, coaches and teammates have the biggest influence on elite athletes focus to prepare for life after sport. For example, one athlete states that parents are often the ones who urge the athletes to pursue an education.

6.3.3 Athletes' evaluation of their own contribution

The data reveal that the athletes perceive that in the first place they themselves are responsible for preparing for life after sport, but sport organizations should facilitate athletes through this major life change. Furthermore, the data show that the majority of the athletes included in this study prepared for life after sport by studying during their sports career.

6.3.3.1 *The athletes' responsibilities in the career transition*

The data from the athletes interviewed for this study shows that the elite athletes perceive that they themselves have the main responsibility to prepare for life after sport in Norway. However, several of the athletes also indicate that preparing for life is a shared responsibility between elite athletes and sport organizations. Athletes are responsible for thinking about and preparing for the future, but sport organizations are responsible for facilitating athletes through this process. This is clearly illustrated in the ensuing quotes of two athletes.

"I think it's the athlete's responsibility to prepare for life after sport, but the stakeholders around the athlete should facilitate. However, it doesn't make sense that others tell you what to do". (Athlete 1)

"I get a little apprehensive when I hear about elite athletes who does not think for a second about what to do later in life. But at the same time, one might think it a sort of shared responsibility. I think the athletes are responsible for checking various opportunities and see what is possible to combine with the sport. And yes, think that there is a life after sport, because there is, and it can arrive quicker than expected. However, at the same time I think both the NFs and OLT have a responsibility to show athletes the possibilities that exist and inform about what they can help and facilitate with". (Athlete 3).

The data collected from the interviews with the organizational representatives reveal similar results.

"I think athletes should be informed and offered the various possibilities for facilitation, and then it's up to each of them to consider what they would like to do. They need to show some interest if they would like help and support. But at the same time athletes should be informed early about the possibilities. It's a mutual responsibility for both parts" (BF representative)

Although elite athletes have the main responsibility to prepare for life after sport, not all athletes are interested to prepare for the future. Therefore, the focus on holistic development and preparing for life after sport varies from athletes to athlete. One athlete explains the differences as follows:

“All elite athletes have the sport as their main focus, and I think that’s the way it should be. (...) But elite athletes are very different, and each has an idea of what’s best for them. Some athletes choose to focus 100 percent on the sport, whilst other like to do something else on the side while being active. I think it’s very individual how athletes prepare for life after sport”. (Athlete 5)

6.3.3.2 The athlete’s own preparations for the life after sport

The majority of the athletes interviewed in this study highlights the importance of preparing for the career transition process. The interview data revealed that four out of the five athletes included in this study made significant preparations for the life after sport during their sporting career, whilst one athlete chose to focus 100 percent on the sport throughout his/her career. The data revealed that most of the athletes thought thoroughly about what they wanted to do after sport and made necessary preparations on their own initiative.

Interestingly, the athletes chose to study during their career for various reasons. For example, one athlete chose to study because she needed something else to think about in order to achieve good sporting result.

“I’ve used education as a tool to perform better in my sport, because I experienced that my sporting results were worse when I didn’t do anything on the side” (Athlete 1)

Another athlete mentions that he studied in order to finance his sporting ventures and because he has great ambitions in the new career after sports.

“I started early to combine studies and sport. Because yes, I thought it was important to prepare for my career after sports. And I have always had ambitions outside of sport as well. But I also started to study in order to receive the student loans actually”.
(Athlete 3)

On the other hand, some athletes also mention that they chose studies based on what was best for their sporting career and would not have studied while being active if they thought studying would have a negative effect on the sports career. These priorities are illustrated in the following quote.

“I chose studies that I knew were possible to complete with my sporting career”.
(Athlete 4)

Moreover, the data showed that several athletes felt that studying may have prolonged their sporting career and given them a sense of purpose. The following quotes illustrate these experiences.

“By studying on the side might have prolonged my career” (Athlete 1)

“I felt like I was working towards the life I was supposed to have after my sports career”. (Athlete 2)

However, the data also shows that several of the athletes utilized various other help and assistance systems to prepare for the life after sport, such as career counseling as well as trainee programs and a career transition course.

When asked for their reflections on their own preparations for the career transition process, there was two athletes expressed that they wouldn't have done anything differently. However, the three other athletes wished they had made different choices. Most importantly, they wished they had understood the importance and advantages of doing something else on the side for their sporting career earlier. One athlete expressed these thought as follows:

“It would have been great to have my studies finished during my sporting career. I think I would have found more peace if I already had that education when I was active. And maybe I could have benefit from it”. (Athlete 2)

Nevertheless, the results show that although some of the athletes may have done a few things differently a second time around, almost all the athletes made preparations for life after sport and had a rather successful career transition. Only two athletes highlighted that the transition was tough, because there was a void that need to be filled with something else and this took time.

6.4 Athlete power and influence

In the following section I will present the evaluation of elite athlete’s power and influence on the facilitation of the career transition process. I will present the data from both the athletes and sport organizations perspectives.

The interview data highlights that athletes have some power and influence over the sport organizations. Specifically, athlete’s groups and profiled athletes have power and influence to affect the sport organizations focus on the career transition process moving forward. In addition, elite athletes can affect the organizations’ efforts regarding the issue compared to their own situation. The ensuing quotes of the OLT and NRF representative, and one athlete illustrate the elite athletes’ power and influence on the sport organizations regarding the career transition process.

“The athletes do not have power over the sport organization. But they have some influence to affect the sport organizations focus regarding the theme. However, this depends on the issue and situation”. (OLT representative)

“I feel the elite athletes have power and influence. At least in my world the athletes have pretty much influence over their own situation. (...). I believe the rowers have

influencing power over their own situation and over the federation's activities". (NRF representative)

"Elite athletes have defining power in many situations. If we want something on the agenda, we will get it. (...). And if many athletes want a change and a bigger focus on the issue, I think we can make a difference". (Athlete 1)

Although, elite athletes have some power and influence on certain issues and situations, most elite athletes do not utilize this power and influence while being an active athlete, because active athletes main focus is the sport, and the career transition issue is not an important for them as long as they are in the sport bubble. The following quotes of the IKS representative and one athlete illustrate the athlete's lacking use of their influencing power.

"As long as you're an active athlete, this issue is not the most important thing for you. I therefore think it's difficult for athletes to use this potential power and influence on this theme. Many athletes are usually not interested in the career transition process until they are in the process themselves". (IKS representative)

"The athletes who have thought about it and made up an opinion on the issue usually already get the help they need. And when athletes have retired the train has left and their influencing power is gone". (Athlete 4)

However, there are exceptions where athlete have tried to use their position to affect the sport organizations' focus and contributions to the career transition process in Norway. Two athletes express their effort to influence sport organizations as follows:

"I really feel like I've done quite a lot, or I tried the best I could with regards to my capacity and the opportunities I received. In a way, I had a number of opportunities to influence. At least I got to raise my voice and present my opinions, but it's hard to say what effect that had for the organization's contribution". (Athlete 1)

"I have talked warm about being able to study on the side when one is an athlete. I have fronted it and said, I think it should be possible. It's of course individual what

one wants but do athletes want it and make that combination work, then I want it to be possible". (Athlete 2)

Furthermore, most of the interviewed athletes agree that in the future athletes generally should talk more about the issue amongst each other and stand together in order to make a real influence on the sport organizations focus on the career transition process. This is expressed by one athlete as follows:

"Athletes should stand a little bit more together. (...) Maybe set more focus on it by using social media. Maybe by seeing a collective voice about the importance of studies and career during and after sports" (Athlete 3).

6.5 Mutual expectations of the stakeholders

In the following section I will present the expectations of the stakeholders. Specifically, I will present the athletes' expectations to the sport organizations contributions to the facilitation of the career transition process. In addition, I will describe the sport organizations' expectations to the athletes throughout this process.

The interview data mainly show that elite athletes expect little help and support from the sport organization to facilitate their career transition process. Moreover, the data show that the sport organizations should facilitate the athlete's career transition but they expect the athletes to show interest.

Through the data analysis this study has discovered that elite athletes generally do not expect much help and support from sport organizations regarding the facilitation of the career transition process. The following quote of one athlete illustrates the expectations.

"I don't think athletes expect any help. Not the way things are now. I think it's been so much in the public dialog about how difficult it is, that it's almost like the athletes think the opposite". (Athlete 1)

Similarly, most of the athletes included in this study perceived the process as their own responsibility and therefore, didn't expect much help from the sports organizations to facilitate them in preparing for life after sport. This view is illustrated in the ensuing quote of one athlete.

"The transition is something one has to deal with on their own. I experience that it is a moving train, then we choose to jump off the train" (Athlete 2)

However, another athlete explain that not many athletes do not expect any help because they do not know what the sport organizations could contribute with.

"Few athletes know what sport organizations can contribute with" (Athlete 3)

Another athlete believes that athletes from big federations might expect more help and support than athletes form smaller federations.

"Snowboarders do not expect anything after the career. (...). Athletes from bigger federations might expect more help and support. Athletes that haven't done much on their own through their sport career". (Athlete 5)

However, the athletes who took advantage of the sport organization help and support system, explain that the facilitation met their expectations and was well received. For example, some athletes stated that the help from OLT met their expectations on the theme. The following quote of one athlete illustrates these experiences.

"If you want help from OLT on this area, you will receive help. It's not difficult to get in" (Athlete 1)

Moreover, the majority of the sport organizations expect the athletes to show interest. The OLT representative explains that the organization offer help and support to facilitate the elite athletes career transition process, but the athletes have to show some interest.

"I expect the athletes to do their part, when I do my part". (OLT representative)

Similarly, the NBSF representative explain that the athletes need to show some interest for them to assist the athletes. In other words, the federations need to know that the athlete requires help.

The representative from NSF brought up that the expectation to the athletes vary from coach to coach.

“There are different angles regarding what we should contribute with”. (NSF representative)

Furthermore, the IKS and NRF representative states that the athletes should expect to get help to prepare for life after sport if they need it.

“Just like in a company take responsibility for preparing employees that quit voluntary or involuntary. The athletes should expect a similar offer from the sport”. (IKS representative)

7 Discussion

In this chapter I will discuss the findings with regards to previous research and the theoretical framework. The overall research question *“How is the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway facilitated?”* will be discussed in light of the underling question *“How do various stakeholders contribute to the facilitation of the career transition process?”* and *“How do the stakeholders collaborate in the career transition process?”*.

In the first section I will discuss how the various stakeholders are involved in the career transition process in order to get an understanding of how and why the various stakeholders contribute to the facilitation of the career transition process.

Afterwards I will discuss how stakeholders co-create value for the career transition process to answer how stakeholders collaborate on this issue. Following, I will discuss the various

stakeholders awareness about the importance of holistic development to comprehend why the various stakeholders collaborate and contribute to the career transition process.

Finally, I will derive the implications for the further development of a supportive structure for Norwegian elite athletes' career transition process.

7.1 Stakeholders involvement in the career transition process

In this section I will discuss how stakeholders are involved in the career transition process. To do so, stakeholder's salience based on their legitimacy, power and urgency will be considered.

The findings presented in the previous chapter reveal that there are various stakeholders involved in the career transition process in Norway. Elite athletes, the OLT, IKS, the NFs (e.g., NSF, NBSF, NRF) and educational institutions affect and/or affected by the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway and according to Freeman's (1984) definition, they are therefore stakeholders (Byers et al., 2012, p. 162). In order to gain an understanding of how these stakeholders affect and/or are affected by the facilitation of the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway, Friedman et al., (2004) suggest categorizing stakeholders' interest (p. 175). The nature of the interest of the actors involved in the facilitation of the career transition process can be seen as their stake in this process (Phillips, 1999; Friedman et al., 2004, p 175). In order to provide insight into the various stakeholders' salience and, hence, their influence on and participation in elite athletes' career transition process, I will discuss the actors included in this study upon the attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency.

The legitimacy of the stakeholder's claim is a crucial attribute in order to determine the salience of the stakeholder included in this study. Therefore, I will discuss how desirable, proper or appropriate (Suchman, 1995; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 177) the actions of the stakeholders are regarding the facilitation of elite athletes' career transition process. According to Mitchell et al., (1997), power is one actor's ability to reach their desired

outcomes despite resistance. In the context of the relationships between the various stakeholders included in the career transition process, an actor has relatively more power when it can shape the process to fit their ideal independent of whether this aligns with the desires of other actors (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 865). Although comprehending power and legitimacy claims are important attributes to evaluate the stakeholders involved in the career transition process, the salience of the stakeholders in a given situation further depends on the stakeholder's urgency. This refers to the stakeholder's willingness and opportunity to undertake actions regarding the career transition process, which as will be shown, can vary over time (Savage et al., 1991; Friedman et al., 2004, p. 177).

7.1.1 The elite athletes' attributes as a stakeholder in the career transition process

The findings suggest that the athletes possess legitimacy, power and urgency as a stakeholder in the career transition process. One could therefore argue that the athletes are salient stakeholders in this process. First of all, the athletes are legitimate stakeholders. The career transition process is about them, because they are the ones who go through this major life change and must handle the changes that follow the retirement from sport. This is consistent with both previous research on the topic (e.g., Anderson & Morris, 2000; Sinclair & Hackfort, 2000), and the expressed views of the athletes themselves and the sport organizations included in the study. In addition, the sport organizations' representatives expressed that their contributions to the facilitation of the career transition process are made for the athletes.

The athletes are clearly aware of their legitimacy, as all of them expressed that they themselves have the main responsibility for thinking about and preparing for the future, whereas they see the sport organizations' role as facilitators of this process. This is confirmed by the views of the sport organizations, who expressed that the athletes have the main responsibility to prepare for the future, but if the athletes show that they are interested in preparing for civilian life, the sport organizations should help and support them through this process.

The findings further suggest that athletes possess some power as stakeholders in the career transition process. This is confirmed by both the athletes and the sport organizations' representatives. The sport organizations are aware that some athletes have considerable influence to affect their own situation and the sport organizations efforts on the career transition process. The athletes mainly perceived themselves to be powerful, when they act as a group and raise attention on the issue. This limited awareness of athletes of their power as a stakeholder on the issue might explain why only few athletes use their power.

In contrast to legitimacy and power, urgency is more situational. Athletes' possession of urgency in the career transition process depends on their current stage in their career, especially how close they are to making decisions that are related to their life after the active sport career. Athletes who feel far from retiring from sport, one can claim that the athletes do not possess urgency, but when the athletes are approaching retirement from sport, their possession of urgency as a stakeholder is increasing. However, some decisions about the life after the sport career are made much earlier, for example when an athlete considers combining sport and studies. Hence, urgency may reach peaks even long before the active sports careers' termination. One can therefore argue that the athlete's possession of urgency varies over time.

7.1.2 Sport organizations' salience in the career transition process

OLT

In the context of Norwegian Sports, OLT has a central role in NIF. Specifically, OLT has the overall responsibility and the highest authority for elite sport in Norway (NIF, 2020c). In addition, OLT has a role to challenge and support the NFs elite sport efforts (Olympiatoppen, 2020, p. 18). Based on their position in NIF and their responsibility for Norwegian elite sport one can argue that OLT possesses legitimacy as a stakeholder in this process and is therefore a highly salient stakeholder in the career transition process for elite athletes.

OLT's perception of their legitimacy as a stakeholder is reflected in their strategic plan in which the goal of developing the whole man/woman by facilitating for elite athletes' education and job career is emphasized (Olympiatoppens, 2020 p. 7). As presented in the findings, OLT sees its contributions to the facilitation of this process by focusing on holistic development, offering various support and assistance systems and helping athletes with the facilitation of sport and studies. The claims of OLT are clearly confirmed through the experiences and views from the athletes and federations. For instance, the athletes expressed that OLT is an important stakeholder in the career transition process because they have a specific person that is responsible for the issue. The athletes also explained that they all had a positive experience with the help they have received from OLT. In addition, the federations mention that they primarily contribute to this process through OLT's offers. Since all actors involved in the career transition process, including the athletes, recognize that OLT has a central role in the process, one could argue that OLT possesses a considerable power as a stakeholder in the career transition process. However, the findings also show that OLT does not force the athletes to take advantage of their offers. This claim is backed-up by a statement from an athlete, who explains that if athletes are interested in preparing for life after sport and seek help from OLT, they will receive it. Hence, OLT does not use their power to influence the process according to their desires, but respects that the athletes are the primary stakeholder, that should have the main influence on their own career transition process.

The findings of this study show that OLT has increased their focus on the facilitation of the career transition process during the last decade. It could therefore be argued, that OLT's urgency as a stakeholder has increased over time. In addition, the scandal involving a famous former elite athlete in fall 2020 kick-started a sense of urgency for OLT to increase their effort on the issue (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 867). Hence, when time sensitive or critical issues arise regarding the topic, OLT can experience a sense of urgency to take action. Nevertheless, I would argue that OLT generally does not possess high urgency as a stakeholder in the career transition process.

IKS

Although IKS is not a part of NIF, the findings suggest that the organization is a salient stakeholder involved in the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway. IKS claims to contribute to the facilitation of the career transition process in a similar way as OLT. Although, the athletes included in this study have not had a relationship with IKS, they have heard about the work they have done with other athletes. Therefore, one might argue that IKS possesses legitimacy as a stakeholder in the career transition process. Although IKS does not have the same position in the Norwegian sport system as OLT, the organization has similar goals and offers similar support and assistance systems to elite athletes in Norway. Thus, one can suggest that IKS generally possesses power as a stakeholder in this process, because their offers can have a lot of impact on athlete's experience of the process. However, similar to OLT, they do not use this power because their services are offers that that the athletes can take advantage of to prepare for life after sport, but they don't need to.

The federations

One could argue the NFs (The NSF, -NBSF and -NRF) included in this study possess legitimacy and power in the career transition process on the grounds that they have a central role in NIF. OLT has the overall responsibility for Norwegian elite sport (NIF, 2020c), while the NFs are responsible for their own elite sport activities and such are a main contact for elite athletes during their career (NIF, 2020b). Therefore, it is natural to assume that the NFs also play a central role as an important contact point for elite athletes as a stakeholder in the career transition process. This suggests that the NFs possess legitimacy in this process and therefore have a certain salience as a stakeholder. The federations express that they are concerned with the well-being of their athletes and try to help them with whatever they might need to prepare for life after sports. Hence, they seem to be aware that they are a legitimate stakeholder of elite athletes' career transition process. However, most often the federations contribute by

referring athletes to OLT, and by allowing them and facilitating the combination of sport and studies. In doing so, they do not use power to influence the career transition process.

However, the findings further reveal that the federations focus on and contribute to the career transition process in different ways and to varying degrees. The NSF has little focus on preparing their athletes for life after sport. However, they claim to contribute in various ways. For example, the representative of NSF states that they contribute to the facilitation of the process through OLT and other partners. This is confirmed by one athlete included in the study who expressed that the NSF helped to provide him/her with trainee days at the federation's sponsor. As a gatekeeper to connect elite athletes with other partners, the NSF possesses power to shape the career transition process.

Furthermore, the NSF also claims to allow and facilitate athlete who want to study. However, one athlete expressed that they experienced difficulties with the NSF to study during their active career, where he/she was encouraged to set the studies a side. In addition, the findings reveal that even a coach's view on holistic development affect whether the athletes are allowed to study on the side or not. Hence, the NSF's power to influence the career transition process is partly also grounded on their payment of salary to their elite athletes to pursue their sporting ventures.

Additionally, I would argue that it is fair to assume that the NSF as one of the largest federations in NIF has some general influencing power on the ways the actors collaborate in the facilitation of the career transition process, because they have a role model function. This assessment becomes clear as the NBSF representative stated that the NBSF uses the NSF as a point of reference to learn how they can support athletes to prepare for life after sport.

Furthermore, the NRF claims to encourage their athletes to study on the side of the sporting career and facilitates this process by, for example, facilitating exams abroad or contacting educational institutions on behalf of the athletes. In addition, they refer athletes to OLT for more support. This is confirmed by the two rowers included in this study, who expressed that the NRF made it possible for them to combine elite sport with studies or work and made sure

they were aware how OLT could help them with it. The NBSF explains that they to help their athletes during and after retirement from sport by, for example, offering the athletes another role in the organization as a coach or ambassador. The NRF do not offer anything specific support to the athletes throughout the process themselves. However, both the NBSF and NRF representatives expressed that they see their main contribution through OLT by setting the athletes in contact with the OLT career counselor. Thus, one can argue that both of the federations possess less power than the NSF in the career transition process.

As expressed in the results, the federations included in the study think there will be more focus on elite athletes' career transition process in the years to come, for example, because of the forementioned scandal involving a famous former elite athlete, for whom the career transition process turned out to be very challenging. One could argue that this case kick started the increased attention on the issue by sport organizations in Norway. In other words, the case created a general sense of urgency for the federations to take action on the issue.

As the findings show there is no focal organization steering the actions of the career transition process and the involved stakeholders. Hence, the stakeholders' contributions are directly related to the career transition process rather than to a focal organization. However, the salience of the stakeholder varies. Besides the athletes, OLT and the NFs are highly salient stakeholders of the career transition process, whereas IKS' salience depends on the athletes interest in their help.

7.2 Value co-creation in the career transition process

The findings highlight how the stakeholders are involved in the facilitation of the career transition process for elite athletes. In this section, I will discuss how the stakeholders co-create value in the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway.

With regards to the topic, value is co-created in collaborative process between the various actors, such as between the athletes and sport organization or between sport organizations and

other actors (e.g., educational institutions). For example, OLT and IKS are both involved in offering support and assistance system that the athlete can take advantage of to co-create value (Vargo, 2008; Woratschek et al., 2014, p. 12).

In the following, three areas of interest that emerged around the athletes' career transition process will be discussed in more detail to illustrate how the various actors, including the athletes, co-create value in the career transition process.

7.2.1 Awareness for the importance of holistic development

The findings highlight that OLT and IKS are the organizational stakeholders that contribute most to the facilitation of the career transition process for elite athletes in Norway. Both OLT and IKS focus on creating awareness around the importance on holistic development and the career transition for elite athletes in Norway. The results reveal that OLT works toward creating awareness for the importance on holistic development in the whole elite sport system (e.g., athletes, coaches, sports leaders and NFs). For example, OLT provides information about various help and support systems created to help facilitate athletes in their career transition process, which the NFs can take advantage of by communicating this information to their athletes. This is confirmed by the NBSF who expressed that they contribute to the career transition process by sharing relevant information and by referring the athletes to the OLT career counselor.

Although, the focus on holistic development of athletes, which includes the career transition process has not reached all the Norwegian sport environments yet, one could argue that OLT co-creates value with the athletes and NFs that have understood the importance of the issue. In addition, OLT also promotes the importance of issue to those the actors in the Norwegian sport system, that are not involved yet. Thus, one could argue that OLT also co-creates value with these, currently less engaged actors, by engaging in increasing the awareness among them.

However, one athlete expressed that few athletes know what OLT offers. This might imply that the collaboration between the actors isn't as good as one could expect. This poses a challenge for the value co-creation process for OLT, the NFs and the athletes on the issue, because none of the stakeholders benefit from this situation.

Furthermore, the federations engage in co-creation in the career transition process by communicating relevant information about OLT's offers to their athletes. However, the findings show that the federations with little resources contribute more to facilitate their athletes' preparations than federations with more resources. For example, the NRF has a greater focus on the holistic development of their athletes, than the NSF that wants their athletes to focus solely on their sport career. The NRF's argument is that the athletes will stay longer in the sport because they feel are better prepared for life after sport, thus suggesting that the NRF and their athletes are more engaged in co-creating value than the NSF is in the career transition process. In addition, the NRF understands that it is beneficial for them to focus on holistic development, because it is not possible for their athletes to financially survive solely based on the rowing career.

In contrast to OLT, IKS solely focusses on creating awareness among the athletes. IKS shares information with the athletes about what they can help them with and why it is important to prepare for the future, which implies that IKS mostly co-create value with the athletes who are interested in preparing for life after sport. The athlete receives knowledge and help, while IKS achieves their goal to help athletes prepare for life after sport.

The findings show that having a focus on holistic develop and preparing for the career transition process might lead athletes to perform better in their sport over time. For example, one athlete experienced that he/she performed worse when he/she did not do anything besides the sport. Hence, sport organizations' engagement in athletes' career transition process is not only directly beneficial for the athletes, but also for OLT, the NFs (the NSF, -NBSF, -NRF) and IKS, because it might lead to more medals and trophies.

7.2.2 Supporting, planning, and organizing the combination of sport and studies

As the findings show, OLT and IKS are the stakeholders involved in the career transition process that contribute most to facilitate sport and studies for the elite athletes. Both OLT and IKS contribute by providing flexible career counseling regarding athletes' educational path, which includes, help and assistance for the athlete to find a suitable study program and plan the inclusion of their studies in their sporting life when they are ready and motivated to start. For example, the IKS representative expressed that they want to help athletes find the best balance between sport and studies. Thus, IKS offers and provides flexible career counseling for all athletes that are in need of guidance. This suggests that OLT and IKS co-create value with the athletes, because the athletes receive help and support while OLT and IKS fulfill their goals of helping athletes participate in sport for a long time and succeed in their post-sporting career endeavors.

Moreover, the findings reveal that the OLT and IKS collaborate with various educational institutions in order to help the athletes to combine sport and studies. However, OLT is the only sport organization that has created formal agreements with several universities and colleges around the country regarding facilitation of studies for elite athletes. This is confirmed by one athlete who expresses that the OLT career counselor deserves a lot of credit, because he/she has collaborated with various educational institutions and developed schemes with various universities and colleges concerning facilitating sport and studies for elite athletes. The findings suggest that many athletes take advantage of this offer, which implies that OLT co-creates value with the athletes in this process.

The federations' efforts and contributions to facilitate sport and studies for athletes are limited. Generally, the federations give permission and try to facilitate all the athletes who want to study during their sports career by referring the athletes to OLT. This suggest that OLT co-creates value with the NFs by communicating relevant information about the available collaboration schemes with universities and colleges to athletes who would like to study on the side.

In addition, if athletes take advantage of this information from the NFs, the NFs co-create value with the athletes. For example, the two rowers expressed that the federation made it possible for them to combine sport with studies and/or work and made sure they were aware of how OLT could help them. This suggests that the NRF co-creates value with their athletes by offering flexibility regarding sport and studies, and by communicating relevant information about what OLT can help them with. While the federations mostly do not contribute directly to the organization and planning of the athlete's combination of sport and studies, they contribute indirectly by giving permission and support, which can be a critical contribution. This can be illustrated by the examples of one athlete from the NSF, who expressed that he/she was at one point forced to set his/her studies aside by the NSF, which he/she believes affected his/her sporting performances in a negative way. Hence, the federations' permission and support to combine sport and studies can be critical for the athletes.

7.2.3 Offering support and assistance activities

The findings show that OLT and IKS mainly have a role as a sparring partner for elite athletes throughout the career transition process. Specifically, OLT and IKS co-create value with the athletes in this process by offering various career-related activities, including individual career counseling (conversations, mapping of occupations and personality testing), trainee programs and career courses (e.g., Next Step) or webinars. This is confirmed as the athletes included in this study have utilized several of OLT's offers. For example, OLT and the Norwegian Armed Forces co-created a career transition program called Next Step, which aims to prepare elite athletes and elite soldiers for a civilian career. The athletes confirm that this is beneficial for them, as one athlete included in the study expressed that it was a valuable experience and provided him/her with comfort for the road ahead. For OLT the collaboration with the Norwegian Armed Forces is beneficial as well, because it helps to achieve their goal to ensure that athletes land on their feet in the civilian life.

Some federations do also directly co-create value with their athletes by offering support and assistance activities. NFs try to take care of their athletes during and after retirement from sport. For example, the NBSF offers their athletes who are in the process of retiring from the sport a role in the organization as a coach or ambassador. The NSF offers trainee days through collaboration with some of their sponsors. One athlete from each of the NBSF and NSF expressed that they took advantage of the forementioned offers from the respective NFs. The athlete from the NBSF expressed that the ambassador role for snowboarding made his/her retirement from professional sport much easier, while the athletes from the NSF stated that the trainee days provided him/her with valuable knowledge about the working life.

7.3 Implications

In this section I will present some practical implications that can be derived from the findings in the study.

The finding shows that the athletes, individually and as group, have some power and influence over the sport organizations. However, few athletes utilize this influencing power while being an active athlete. Therefore, the athletes should focus and collaborate more on the issue to develop a shared opinion. They should further use their common voice and power as a group to influence the sport organizations in Norway to increase their focus on holistic development and facilitating the athletes' career transition process. Furthermore, preparing for life after sport may prolong and improve the athletes' sporting results. This suggests that it is beneficial for athletes to do something besides the sport. Therefore, athletes who do not yet prepare should start thinking about the future. Clearly, this is first of all the athletes' responsibility. They need to show interest to get support from the sport organizations. In addition, the athlete should understand that they are the focal stakeholder in the career transition process.

However, the lack of awareness among many athletes about the importance of the career transition process, does also require action from the sport organizations. They should put more efforts into raising awareness among athletes about the benefits of starting the preparations for the life after sport early and providing them with information about the various existing support systems. The findings show that OLT focusses on creating awareness on the importance of holistic development and the career transition process for the entire Norwegian sport system. However, the message has not reached all the sporting environments, yet. This suggests that OLT should move their focus to especially integrating the NFs which are still not engaged in this process. One could also argue that OLT should use their influencing position in NIF to develop a policy about the career transition process in order to ensure that the issue will be a focus for the entire Norwegian elite sport system. Moreover, the various support and assistance OLT offers to the athletes is something the organization should continue with, as athletes perceive this to be valuable for their preparations for life after sport.

The findings further suggest that few athletes and NFs know about IKS contributions to the career transition process for elite athletes. Thus, IKS should focus on becoming more visible in the elite sport environment in the future. In addition, IKS solely concentrates on creating awareness and helping the athletes. However, one can suggest that IKS should try to collaborate more with other sport organizations, not only increase the awareness about their offers, but more generally to become a more effective stakeholder in this process.

The findings show that the NSF has limited focus on the career transition process for athletes, because they see their athletes as paid professionals. In addition, the focus on the importance of holistic development varies within the NSF. Therefore, the NSF should first come to an internal agreement on the organizations attitude towards the career transition process. For example, they could create guidelines for the coaches on the issue. In order to ensure that the athletes experience a balance in their daily life and succeeds in their sporting career as well as in the life after, the NSF might need to consider their overall goal with regard to holistic development and the career transition process.

Although the findings reveal that the NBSF tries to facilitate their athletes with the combination of sport and studies when the athletes are mature for it, one could suggest that the BSF should put more effort in encouraging their athletes to think about and prepare for the future at an earlier stage of their sporting career.

For the NRF, the findings show that they focus on and contribute to their athletes' career transition process the best they can with their limited resources. They should therefore continue with their current endeavors, but also keep open to more intensified collaborations with the other organizations in the Norwegian sport system.

8 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine which stakeholders are involved in the career transition process of elite athletes in Norway, and what their contributions are. In addition, the study aims to investigate how sport organizations facilitate elite athletes' preparations for the life after sport and how these various actors collaborate throughout this process.

8.1 Summary of the main findings

The findings suggest that the stakeholders included in the study are aware that the career transition process for elite athletes is a major life change that occurs over time and may lead many athletes to experience various difficulties.

Over the last years, both the athletes' focus on preparing for life after sports and the awareness of sport organizations for their responsibility to facilitate athletes' career transition has increased.

The findings show that elite athletes have the primary responsibility to prepare for life after sport, whilst the sport organizations are responsible for facilitating athletes through this

process. However, athletes expect little help and support from the sport organization to facilitate this process. A reason for this might be that few athletes have knowledge about the help offered by the various sport organizations. This suggests that although many sport organizations contribute to the facilitation of athletes' career transition process by offering various support and assistance systems, the organizational stakeholders involved in this process need to improve their communication.

The findings show that OLT and IKS focus on holistic development and the career transition process for elite athletes. However, OLT works toward on raising awareness in the entire Olympic sport environment by communicating relevant information about the issue, while IKS solely focuses on helping the athletes. Nevertheless, both OLT and IKS contribute to the facilitation of the process by primarily acting as a sparring partner and offering various support and assistance systems to elite athletes. The findings also show that OLT and IKS provide flexible career counseling regarding athletes who want to combine studies with their active sporting career. In addition, OLT has created schemes with various educational institutions regarding facilitation of studies for elite athletes.

The findings further show that the federations primarily contribute to the career transition process by referring their athletes to the services offered by OLT. However, the focus on holistic development and the career transition process as well as their contributions to facilitate athletes' combination of sport and studies vary among the NFs (the NSF, -NBSF, -NRF). The focus on athletes' holistic development and supporting measures, for example to facilitate the combination of sport and studies, seems to be higher among the smaller federations.

However, the findings of this study suggest that the importance of holistic development and facilitating the career transition process for elite athletes has not yet reached the entire Norwegian sport environment. Some NFs, coaches and sport leaders in Norway remain skeptical about holistic development because they are afraid that it will take away the athletes' focus from the sport and decrease their sporting performance. A lack of a holistic perspective on athletes is clearly problematic for athletes, who might experience difficulties in

life after sport due to an inferior preparation. However, it might also negatively affect the NFs, their leaders and coaches because athletes' sporting performances may suffer because of insecurities about their future career.

Whether the NFs are aware of it or not and whether they want it or not, they have considerable influence on athletes' career transition process. They are one of the main contact points for the athletes, and through their approach and understanding of the importance of athletes' holistic development, they affect athletes' career transition process, either positively or negatively. Therefore, it is vital, that the NFs become aware of their influence and develop strategies to actively contribute to the facilitation of the career transition process.

8.2 Limitations and further research

A limitation of this study is the inclusion of athletes and representatives from three out of the 55 Norwegian NFs. More interviews could have been completed in order to obtain a greater understanding of the how the career transition process is facilitated in Norway and to cover a greater variety of the elite sport environments in Norway. However, the sample in this study represented a variety of athletes and sport organizations in Norway and due to the time limitation of the study, it would have been difficult to carry out more interviews. In addition, this study does not include athletes or NF representatives from team sports, which is a limitation because it does not take into account potential differences between individual and team sports regarding the career transition process.

Another limitation is that interviews were the only method applied in this study. For example, questionnaires could have been applied to obtain data from a larger sample and thus, to get insight from more athletes and sport organizations in the Norwegian sport system. However, since the I wanted to obtain an in-depth understanding of how athletes and sport organizations perceives and experiences the facilitation of the career transition process, interviews were suitable as the method for this study. Nevertheless, conducting a quantitative study could be

useful in future research to obtain an understanding of the broader Norwegian elite sport environment.

Furthermore, a limitation might be my background as a former elite athlete. Although I believe my personal experience and knowledge about the elite sport environment strengthened my ability to interpret the experience and opinions of the informant on the issue, the data analysis might have been affected by my own expectations and insider knowledge. Thus, there is a chance that I may have overlooked some information and/or interpreted the informants' opinions incorrectly.

Another limitation is my limited experience as an interviewer, which may have affected my ability to ask follow-up questions at the appropriate places during the interview process. Thus, with more experience as an interviewer, I might have obtained even more relevant information from the informants on the issue. In addition, I experienced that the way I asked some of the question to the informants during the interviews could have been improved, because some informants provided answers that were not related to my questions. However, a reason for this might also be that the informant just did not know what to answer and was hiding his/her insecurity by talking about something else.

As this study has investigated athletes and NFs that practice individual sports, further research should include actors practicing team sports in order to be able to understand how the career transition process is facilitated in the entire Norwegian sport system. Furthermore, on the grounds of this study, future research could investigate differences between individual team sports in Norway concerning how various actors contribute and collaborate in the career transition process.

As this study show that the focus on holistic development can vary from coach to coach in the Norwegian sporting environment, another suggestion is to investigate coach's opinion and understanding of holistic development in the Norwegian elite sport system in order to identify potential measures that can be made to educate coaches.

Finally, future research should compare how the career transition process is facilitated for elite athletes in Norway with other Scandinavian or European countries. This could be interesting in order to see the differences, and for countries to learn from each other about useful strategies and structures to support elite athletes to successfully transition out of sport.

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Table of figures

Figure 1: Organizational chart of Norwegian sport (NIF, 2020a)

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview guide: Elite athletes

Intervju guide – Idrettsutøvere

Innledende

1. Hva er din alder?
2. Hvilken idrett driver du med eller har du drevet med?
3. Hvor lenge har du drevet med eller drev du med idretten din?
 - a. Hvor mange år var du elite utøver/ på landslaget?
4. Hvilket nivå konkurrerte/ konkurrerte du på?
 - a. Hva er den største konkurransen du har konkurrert i?

Dine erfaringer og elite utøvers rolle

5. Hva er dine erfaringer med karriereovergang prosessen?
 - a. Under og etter karriere slutt
6. Hva er dine erfaringer med idrettsorganisasjoners rolle i forbindelse med karriereovergang for eliteutøvere i Norge?
 - a. Under og etter karriere slutt
7. Hva mener du er elite utøvers rolle i for å forberede seg på livet etter idretten?
 - a. Deres eller andre sitt ansvar?
 - b. Under og etter karriereslutt.
8. Kan du fortelle om hva du gjorde/har gjort i din karriere som elite utøver for å forberede deg på livet etter idretten?
 - a. Er du noe du tenker du burde ha gjort annerledes?

Andre interessenter/ aktører (Stakeholdere): Personer, gruppe(r) og/eller organisasjoner

9. Hvilke **interessenter/ aktører**: Hvem mener du er mest sentrale i karriereovergangs prosessen til elite utøvere i Norge? (enkelt personer, gruppe(r) og/eller organisasjoner).
 - a. Generelt?
 - b. For deg? Hvem samarbeidet/samarbeider du med?
 - c. Hvem er direkte involvert/ hvem blir påvirket av prosessen?
10. Hva mener du de mest sentrale personene, gruppene, organisasjonen bidrar med for karriereovergangs prosessen til elite utøvere?
 - a. Generelt?

- b. For deg?
- 11. Hva er ditt forhold til de involverte i prosessen; (Relasjon: Bra eller dårlig)
 - a. Ditt særforbund?
 - a. Olympiatoppen?
 - b. Idrettens karrieresenter?
 - c. Andre? (familie, venner, trener)
- 12. Hvordan samarbeidet/samarbeider du med ditt særforbund, Olympiatoppen, andre?
 - a. Hvorfor samarbeidet du med disse?
- 13. Hvilke forventninger mener du elite utøvere har til idretts organisasjoner (evt andre personer/gruppers) bidrag til karriereovergangs prosessen?
 - a. Generelt?
 - b. Under og etter karriere slutt
- 14. Hva var dine forventninger til idrettsorganisasjoners (evt andre personer eller gruppers) bidrag i denne prosessen?
 - a. Generelt?
 - b. Under og etter karriere slutt
- 15. Har elite utøvere makt og/eller innflytelse til å påvirke idrettsorganisasjoner eller andre personer/grupper fokus på karriereovergangs prosessen til elite utøvere?
 - a. På hvilken måte? Hvorfor ikke?
 - b. Hvis ja, hvordan utnytter elite utøvere deres makt og innflytelse til å påvirke hva idrettsorganisasjoner (evt andre aktuelle personer/grupper) gjør for å forberede utøvere på livet etter idretten?
 - i. Generelt?
 - ii. På hvilken måte?
 - iii. Er det noe elite utøvere bør gjøre annerledes? Hva, hvorfor?
- 16. Hvordan tror du elite utøvere blir påvirket av idrettsorganisasjoner eller andre personer/grupper?
 - a. Altså, tror du de krever disse å få noe igjen for å hjelpe utøvere gjennom karriereovergangs prosessen?
 - i. Hva, hvorfor?
- 17. Har du brukt din posisjon som elite utøver til å påvirke de aktuelle idrettsorganisasjoner fokus og bidrag til karriereovergangs prosessen din?
 - a. Under og etter karriere slutt
 - b. På hvilken måte?
 - c. Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?
 - d. Er det noe du tenker du burde ha gjort annerledes?

Utfordringer og muligheter

- 18. Hva mener du, som elite utøver, er spesielt med karriereovergang for elite utøvere *sammenliknet med andre overganger/endringer?*
- 19. Hvilke utfordringer ser du med å forberede elite utøvere i Norge på livet etter idretten?
 - a. Generelt?

- b. For ditt særforbund?
 - c. For Olympiatoppen?
 - d. For idrettens karrieresenter?
20. Hvilke muligheter ser du med å forberede elite utøvere i Norge på livet etter idretten?
- a. Generelt?
 - b. For ditt særforbund?
 - c. For Olympiatoppen?
 - d. For idrettens karrieresenter?

Utvikling

21. Hvordan ser du for deg at idrettsorganisasjoner i Norge vil bidra til å forberede elite utøvere på livet etter idretten?
- a. Hvorfor/ hvorfor ikke?
22. I en perfekt verden, hvordan kunne du tenke deg at karriereovergangs prosessen var for elite utøvere i Norge?

Appendix B: Interview guide: Sport organizations

Intervju guide – Organisasjoner

Innledende spørsmål

1. Hva er din rolle i organisasjonen du jobber i?
 - a. Hva innebærer rollen?
2. Hvor lenge har du jobbet i organisasjonen?
3. Hva er din alder?

Om organisasjonen

4. Kan du beskrive organisasjonens visjon, mål og verdier?
5. Kan du fortelle om organisasjonens overordnede fokus områder?/Kan du fortelle om organisasjonens prioriterings områder?
6. Kan du fortelle om hva organisasjons forhold til elite utøvere?
 - a. Syn/funksjon?
 - b. Har dere et fokus på helhetsmennesket, 24 – timersutøveren?

Din rolle og organisasjonens rolle med å forberede elite utøvere på livet etter idretten

7. Hva er din organisasjons rolle i forbindelse med karriereovergangsprosessen til elite utøvere i Norge?
 - a. Under og etter karriere slutt.
 - b. Hva er dine erfaringer med karriereovergangs prosessen til elite utøvere?
 - i. Under og etter karriere slutt
8. Hva er din organisasjons forhold til karriereovergang for elite utøvere?
 - a. Hva er din rolle?
 - i. Under og etter karriere slutt
9. Kan du fortelle om hvordan din organisasjon bidrar med til å forberede utøvere på livet etter idretten?

Andre interessenter (organisasjoner, personer og/eller grupper)

10. Hvilke *interessenter* (organisasjoner, personer og/eller grupper er mest sentrale i karriereovergangs prosessen til elite utøvere i Norge?
 - a. Generelt?
 - b. For din organisasjon? Hvem samarbeider dere mest med?
 - c. På hvilken måte er disse sentrale?

- d. Hvem er direkte involvert/ blir påvirket av prosessen?
- 11. Hva mener du de sentrale organisasjonene (evt andre personer/grupper) bidra med til karriereovergangs prosessen for elite utøver?

 - a. Generelt?
 - b. For din organisasjon?

- 12. Hva er din organisasjons forhold til de andre organisasjonene, personene og/eller gruppene? (relasjon)
- 13. Hvordan samarbeider dere med de andre organisasjonene?

 - e. Hvorfor?

- 14. Hvilke erfaringer har dere med å samarbeide andre organisasjoner (evt personer/grupper)?

 - a. Fungerer bra/ fungerer ikke

- 15. Hvor viktig er det for din organisasjon å samarbeide med andre organisasjoner (evt personer/grupper)?

 - a. Generelt?
 - b. I forhold til karriereovergangs prosess for elite utøvere i Norge?

- 16. Bør din organisasjons samhandling med andre interessenter bli bedre?

 - a. Generelt. På hvilken måte?
 - b. Karriereovergangsprosessen. På hvilken måte?

Elite utøvers sin rolle

- 17. Opptrer din organisasjon annerledes rundt elite utøvere karriereovergang enn andre aktiviteter/områder?

 - a. På hvilken måte?
 - b. Hvorfor tror du det er sånn?

- 18. Føler du at andre organisasjoner (evt personer/grupper) opptrer annerledes rundt elite utøvers karriereovergang enn andre aktiviteter/ områder?

 - a. På hvilken måte?
 - b. Hvorfor tror du det er sånn?

- 19. Hva mener din organisasjon er utøvernes rolle i karriereovergangs prosessen?

 - a. Hva mener du?

- 20. Hvilke forventninger har din organisasjon til elite utøverne i denne prosessen?

 - a. Hva er dine forventninger?

- 21. Er det elite utøvers ansvar å påvirke din organisasjons fokus på karriereovergangs prosessen?

 - a. Hvorfor/ hvorfor ikke?

- 22. Hva er din organisasjons erfaring med elite utøvernes rolle i karriereovergangs prosessen?

 - a. Hva er din erfaring?

- 23. Hvilken makt og innflytelse mener du at elite utøverne har over din organisasjon?
- 24. Hvilken makt og innflytelse mener du at elite utøvere har over andre organisasjoner?

25. I forhold til elite utøveres (makt og innflytelse); Hvordan bør de oppføre seg mot din organisasjon og andre organisasjoner?
- Bør de forvente å få noe tilbake ettersom de har gir/har gitt så mye til idretten?
 - Bør de kreve mer av din organisasjon og andre organisasjoner?

Utfordringer og muligheter

26. Hva mener du, er spesielt med karriereovergangen til elite utøver *sammenliknet med andre aktiviteter/ områder?*
27. Hvilke utfordringer ser du med å forberede elite utøvere i Norge på livet etter idretten?
- For din organisasjon? (ressurser?)
 - Generelt?
28. Hvilke muligheter ser du med å forberede elite utøvere på livet etter idretten?
- For din organisasjon?
 - Generelt?

Utvikling

29. Hvordan ser din organisasjon for seg å videre bidra til å forberede elite utøvere på livet etter idretten?
- Hvorfor vil dere bidra? Hvorfor ikke?
30. I en perfekt verden, hvordan kan din organisasjon tenke deg at karriereovergangsprosessen var for elite utøvere i Norge?
- Hvordan kunne du tenke deg at karriereovergangsprosessen var for elite utøvere i Norge?

Appendix C: Written informed consent form – Elite athletes

Informasjonsskriv og samtykkeskjema – Utøver

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjekt

“The career transition process of elite athletes in Norway – stakeholders and their contributions”

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta I et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke karriereovergangs prosessen til elite utøvere i Norge og hvordan ulike interessenter er involvert i denne prosessen. Dette skrivet inneholder informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Denne studien er et masterprosjekt i idrettsvitenskap ved Norges Idrettshøgskole i Oslo.

Studien skal undersøke hvilke interessenter som er involvert i karriereovergangs prosessen til elite utøvere i Norge og hva de bidrar med. Samt, se nærmere på hvordan samarbeider idrettsorganisasjoner for å forberede elite utøver på livet etter idretten og hvordan elite utøvere opplever og erfarer denne prosessen.

Tidligere forskning viser at idrettskarriere slutt for mange toppidrettsutøvere er en utfordrende prosess. I norske medier har dette vært et aktuelt tema det siste året, hvor tidligere profilerte norske toppidrettsutøvere har uttalt at de synes det var en utfordrende overgang å forlate idretten og starte på en helt ny karriere.

Historisk sett har ikke idrettsorganisasjoner følt et ansvar eller fokusert på å hjelpe elite utøvere forberede seg på livet etter idretten. Men på grunn av nyere forskning, har flere nasjonale idrettsorganisasjoner verden rundt reagert med å tilby hjelp, veiledning og karriereovergangs programmer som skal bidra til at deres elite utøvere får en bedre karriereovergang.

Vi er så langt ikke kjent med studier som har undersøkt karriereovergang prosessen til elite utøvere i Norge.

På bakgrunn av dette ønsker vi å undersøke karriereovergangs prosessen til elite utøvere i Norge og hvordan ulike interessenter er involvert i denne prosessen.

Dette vil forhåpentligvis være nyttig informasjon for som kan bidra til å skape et større fokus på karriereovergang for elite utøvere i Norge og bedre dagens forhold.

Følgende problemstillinger er formulert for å undersøke temaet:

- Hvilke interessenter er involvert i karriereovergangs prosessen for elite utøvere i Norge og hva bidrar de med?
- Hvordan samarbeider idrettsorganisasjoner i karriereovergangs prosessen for elite utøvere i Norge?
- Hvordan opplever og erfarer elite utøvere i Norge dette samarbeidet?

Problemstillingene vil bli undersøkt gjennom semi-strukturerte intervjuer.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Stian Skjerahaug (masterstudent) er ansvarlig for prosjektet under veiledning av/fra førsteamanuensis Chris Horbel og førsteamanuensis Anna-Maria Strittmatter ved Norges Idrettshøgskole (NIH).

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Forespørselen om delta er basert på din karriere som elite utøver. Din deltakelse vil være som representant for elite utøvere innenfor din idrett, og for å svare på spørsmål relatert til din karriereovergang.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet vil innebære et semi-strukturert intervju på ca. 1 time. Spørsmålene intervjuet vil omhandle hvordan interessentene er involvert i karriereovergangs prosessen for elite utøvere i Norge og hva de bidrar med i denne prosessen. Intervjuet vil gjennomføres ansikt til ansikt eller over videosamtale for å ta hensyn til eventuelle koronarestriksjoner. I tillegg, vil intervjuet bli innhentet ved hjelp av lydbånd, som deretter blir transkribert. Informantene vil bli gjort kjent med studien i forkant av intervjuet.

Jeg vil også be norske idrettsorganisasjoner om opplysninger gjennom et intervju. Det vil være opplysninger om tematikken beskrevet ovenfor.

Det er frivillig å delta?

Deltakelse i prosjektet er frivillig. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykke tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle opplysninger om deg vil da bli anonymisert. Det vil ikke ha noen konsekvenser for deg dersom du ikke velger å delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – Hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålet beskrevet i dette skrevet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket til NSD (Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata).

Det er kun masterstudenten og ansvarlige veiledere som vil ha tilgang til personvernopplysningene, og all data vil bli lagret i passordsbeskyttende filer. Lydopptakene fra intervjuet(ene) vil bli transkribert i etterkant, og vil deretter bli umiddelbart slettet.

Som deltaker i masterprosjektet vil du bli referert til som ansatt/utøver i organisasjonen, og det er mulig at du vil kunne bli identifisert gjennom din posisjon i organisasjonen (eller utøver i organisasjonen).

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- Innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg
- Å få rettet personopplysninger om deg
- Å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- Å få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger (dataportabilitet)
- Å sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke. På oppdrag fra Norges Idrettshøgskole (NIH) har NSD vurdert behandling av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne mer informasjon?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

Masterstudent Stian Skjerahaug

Tlf: 92 41 90 19

E-post: sskjerahaug@gmail.com

Førsteamanuensis Chris Horbel

Tlf: 23 26 24 40

E-post: chrish@nih.no

Førsteamanuensis Anna-Maria Strittmatter

Tlf: 23 26 24 17

E-post: annamarias@nih.no

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata

Tlf: 55 58 21 17

E-post: personverntjenester@nsd.no

Med vennlig hilsen,

Stian Skjerahaug

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjonen om prosjektet *‘The career transition process of elite athletes in Norway – stakeholders and their contributions’*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål.

Jeg samtykker til å delta i intervju.

Jeg samtykker til at opplysninger om meg publiseres slik at jeg kan gjenkjennes på grunn av min rolle som utøver i organisasjonen.

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet.

Ca. Juni 2020.

(Signert av deltaker, dato)

Appendix D: Written informed consent form – Sport organizations

Informasjonsskriv og samtykkeskjema - Organisasjon

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjekt

“The career transition process of elite athletes in Norway – stakeholders and their contributions”

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta I et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke karriereovergangs prosessen til elite utøvere i Norge og hvordan ulike interessenter er involvert i denne prosessen. Dette skrivet inneholder informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Denne studien er et masterprosjekt i idrettsvitenskap ved Norges Idrettshøgskole i Oslo.

Studien skal undersøke hvilke interessenter som er involvert i karriereovergangs prosessen til elite utøvere i Norge og hva de bidrar med. Samt, se nærmere på hvordan samarbeider idrettsorganisasjoner for å forberede elite utøver på livet etter idretten og hvordan elite utøvere denne prosessen.

Tidligere forskning viser at idrettskarriere slutt for mange toppidrettsutøvere er en utfordrende prosess. I norske medier har dette vært et aktuelt tema det siste året, hvor tidligere profilerte norske toppidrettsutøvere har uttalt at de synes det var en utfordrende overgang å forlate idretten og starte på en helt ny karriere.

Historisk sett har ikke idrettsorganisasjoner følt et ansvar eller fokusert på å hjelpe elite utøvere forberede seg på livet etter idretten. Men på grunn av nyere forskning, har flere nasjonale idrettsorganisasjoner verden rundt reagert med å tilby hjelp, veiledning og karriereovergangs programmer som skal bidra til at deres elite utøvere får en bedre karriereovergang.

Vi er så langt ikke kjent med studier som har undersøkt karriereovergang prosessen til elite utøvere i Norge.

På bakgrunn av dette ønsker vi å undersøke karriereovergangs prosessen til elite utøvere i Norge og hvordan ulike interessenter er involvert i denne prosessen.

Dette vil forhåpentligvis være nyttig informasjon for som kan bidra til å skape et større fokus på karriereovergang for elite utøvere i Norge og bedre dagens forhold.

Følgende problemstillinger er formulert for å undersøke temaet:

- Hvilke interessenter er involvert i karriereovergangs prosessen for elite utøvere i Norge og hva bidrar de med?
- Hvordan samarbeider idrettsorganisasjoner i karriereovergangs prosessen for elite utøvere i Norge?
- Hvordan opplever og erfarer elite utøvere i Norge dette samarbeidet?

Problemstillingene vil bli undersøkt gjennom semi-strukturerte intervjuer.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Stian Skjerahaug (masterstudent) er ansvarlig for prosjektet under veiledning av/fra førsteamanuensis Chris Horbel og førsteamanuensis Anna-Maria Strittmatter ved Norges Idrettshøgskole (NIH).

Hvorfor får du/jeg spørsmål om å delta?

Forespørselen om delta er basert på din posisjon i idrettsorganisasjonen du jobber for. Din deltakelse vil være som representant for organisasjonen, og for å svare på spørsmål relatert til organisasjonen.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet vil innebære et semi-strukturert intervju på ca. 1 time. Spørsmålene intervjuet vil omhandle hvordan interessentene er involvert i karriereovergangs prosessen for elite utøvere i Norge og hva de bidrar med i denne prosessen. Intervjuet vil

gjennomføres ansikt til ansikt eller over videosamtale for å ta hensyn til eventuelle koronarestriksjoner. I tillegg, vil intervjuet bli innhentet ved hjelp av lydbånd, som deretter blir transkribert. Informantene vil bli gjort kjent med studien i forkant av intervjuet.

Jeg vil også be nåværende og tidligere elite utøver om opplysninger gjennom et intervju. Det vil være opplysninger om tematikken beskrevet ovenfor.

Det er frivillig å delta?

Deltakelse i prosjektet er frivillig. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykke tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle opplysninger om deg vil da bli anonymisert. Det vil ikke ha noen konsekvenser for deg dersom du ikke velger å delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

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Som deltaker i masterprosjektet vil du kun bli referert til som ansatt i organisasjonen, og det er mulig at du vil kunne bli identifisert gjennom din rolle i organisasjonen. Alle navn vil kamoufleres.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er i Juni 2020. Ved forskningsprosjekt slutt vil råmaterialet bli slettet.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

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- Å få rettet personopplysninger om deg
- Å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
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Hvor kan jeg finne mer informasjon?

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Tlf: 23 26 24 17

E-post: annamarias@nih.no

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata

Tlf: 55 58 21 17

E-post: personverntjenester@nsd.no

NIH, Personvernombud

E-post: personvern@nih.no

Med vennlig hilsen,

Stian Skjerahaug

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjonen om prosjektet '*The career transition process of elite athletes in Norway – stakeholders and their contributions*', og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål.

Jeg samtykker til å delta i intervju.

Jeg samtykker til at opplysninger om meg publiseres slik at jeg kan gjenkjennes på grunn av min rolle i organisasjonen.

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet.

Ca. Juni 2020.

(Signert av deltaker, dato)

Appendix E: Norwegian Centre for Research Data approval

Det innsendte meldeskjemaet med referansekode 437576 er nå vurdert av NSD.

Følgende vurdering er gitt: Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg den 16.12.2020, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte.

DEL PROSJEKTET MED PROSJEKTANSVARLIG

Det er obligatorisk for studenter å dele meldeskjemaet med prosjektansvarlig (veileder). Det gjøres ved å trykke på “Del prosjekt” i meldeskjemaet.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde:

nsd.no/personverntjenester/fyll-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema

Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 30.06.2021.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER NSD

vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen

- formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke behandles til nye, uforenlige formål
- dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
- lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20).

NSD vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER NSD

legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

Microsoft Teams, Zoom og Dropbox er databehandlere i prosjektet. NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29. For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og/eller rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET NSD

vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet. Lykke til med prosjektet!

Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)