

Exploring the Fall-Risk Experience of Masters Athletes Actively Competing in Sport

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Overview

- Background information
- Research question
- Study design
- Emergent themes
- Implications

A Little Inspiration

Grandmother's fall

Background Information

- **1 in 3 falls per year**
 - 3.3 million older adult falls by 2036
- **Bad news: \$2 Billion in direct healthcare costs**
- **Good news: Exercise**
- **Exercise also part of sport**
- **What is a masters athlete?**
- **In 2010, sport participation among Canadian adults aged 55+ years was 17%**

Continued Background

- **Sport benefits balance, muscle strength, bones, and weight**
- **Risk in sport**
 - Risk assessments
- **More people, more injuries**
- **Canadian Community Health Survey 2009/2010 results**
- **Exercise through sport**
 - Parallels to falls prevention

What is the fall-risk experience of masters athletes actively competing in sport?

Study Design

• Data Collection

- Qualitative one-on-one interviews
- Hermeneutic phenomenology
- Participant recruitment

Study Participants

Masters athletes (n=22)		
Gender	Male	68% (n=15)
	Female	32% (n=7)
Average Age	67 years (58-84)	
Marital Status	Married	20
	Single	1
	Divorced	1
Sport History	Continuer	13
	Re-Kindler	6
	Late-Starter	2
	Unknown	1
Retirement	Yes	15
	No	7

Study Design

• Data Analysis

- Interpretive-constructive paradigm
- Reflective journal and weekly meetings
- Inductive content analysis
- Hermeneutic circle

What sentence describes your experience as a masters athlete?

"Being a masters athlete is a journey between the fear of what am I doing and the joy of I can't believe I'm doing this" (Ironman Grandma; age 66; Triathlon, Ironman, and Running)

"As a masters athlete, it gives me a reason to get up in the morning, it gives me a reason to come to competition, and it's social as well" (Mr. Theo; age 74; Track and Field Long Distance Running)

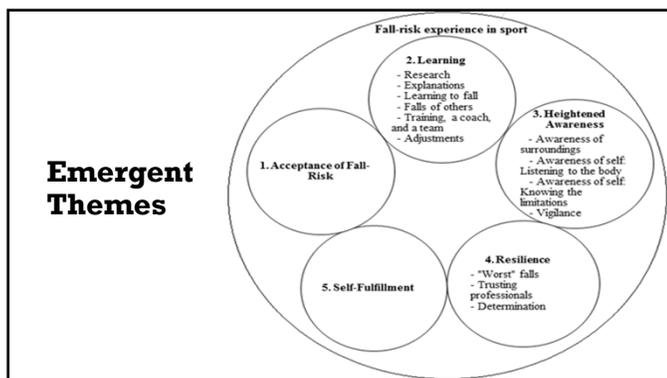
"My experience is extremely rewarding, lifelong social, [and] a great spot to practice something that I love to do." (Mrs. Stanford; age 58; Swimming)

What one word would you use to describe your experience with falls?

Carelessness Non-existent
 No-Problem **Painful** Minimal
 Learning Surprising Avoid
 Acceptable Frightening Yuck
 Inevitable Scary
 Confident Embarrassing
 Shock **Cautious** Lucky
 Daunting Careful

What one word would you use to describe your experience with falls?

Scary No-Problem
 Embarrassing **Cautious**
 Inevitable Careful
 Surprising Confident Lucky
 Yuck Frightening Learning Avoid
 Shock Daunting Non-existent
Painful Acceptable
 Carelessness Minimal



1) Acceptance of fall-risk

“It’s just the nature of the beast! I mean if I’m doing a trail run, I am every once and a while, . . . going to trip on a root or something! . . . even if you’re looking as close as you can, once and a while you’re gonna go down. It’s not the end of the world!” (Mr. Rusty; age 67; Track and Field middle and long distance runner/Road runner)

2) Learning

• Six sub-themes: 1) research; 2) explanations; 3) learning to fall; 4) falls of others; 5) training, a coach, and a team; and 6) adjustments.

“I fell perfectly . . . like I was getting ready to fall and . . . fell on everything that wouldn’t hurt or that hurt the least and rolled . . . and stood up and that was . . . 30 years since my last game! . . . I really think . . . you have some of these memories inbred ‘cause . . . I don’t think it was what you do naturally and in that situation.” (Mr. RW; age 70; Track and Field distance walker)

3) Heightened Awareness

- Four sub-themes: 1) awareness of surroundings; 2) awareness of self: listening to the body; 3) awareness of self: knowing the limitations; and 4) vigilance.

“Whether it’s where your foot is going to impact the ground, whether it’s . . . how fast you’re going on your bike relative to conditions, . . . or you’re on the bike path with a whole bunch of pedestrians . . . you have to pay attention.” (Mr. Cannondale; age 58; Triathlon and Road Runner)

4) Resilience

- Three sub-themes: 1) “worst” falls; 2) trusting professionals; and 3) determination.

“This too shall pass . . . you know you’re going to miss out now but you’ll be back and it’s okay.” (Ms. Backstroke; age 58; Swimming, Volleyball, and Triathlon)

“It’s just like riding a horse . . . you’re gonna get bucked off or you’re not gonna get bucked off. In the end you . . . put it behind you and . . . you just proceed.” (Mr. Pentathlon; age 81; Track and Field sprinter and jumper)

5) Self-fulfillment



Voice of Ironman Grandma; age 66; Triathlon, Ironman, and Road Runner

How does this compare to other research?

- Research on motivations of masters athletes
- Research on risk
- Filling the gap of experience with fall-risk in masters sport

Athlete profiles outside of this study

• Ed Whitlock



Athlete profiles outside of this study

• Olga Kotelko



Quick Recap



• Five Themes:

- Acceptance
- Learning
- Awareness
- Resilience
- Self-Fulfillment

What can you do with this knowledge?



With this information in mind:

- How can you apply this to your job?
- What is missing in older adult exercise classes?

Implications

- **Future research ideas**
- **Community fall prevention programs**
 - **Missing aspect**
 - **Goals and motivations**
 - **Gains and risks**
- **Building an independent, self-fulfilled society**

Thank you
