A Socio-Economic Study of Livelihood Challenges and Resilience of Para-athletes in Kerala

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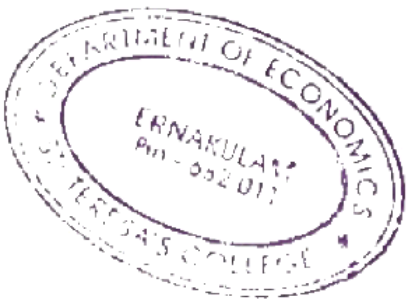
This is to certify that the project titled "**A Socio-Economic Study of Livelihood Challenges and Resilience of Para-athletes in Kerala**" submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Bachelors of Arts in Economics to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam) is a Bonafide record of the work done by the project group under my supervision and guidance.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION.

Sports have been perceived in terms of empowerment, social inclusion and economic growth. A Para- athlete is an individual with a disability that impacts their ability to participate in sports and who competes in Para sports, which the Paralympic Movement governs. The word Para means Parallel, Signifies how the Para athletes compete with other major sports events with the specialized rules and equipment adapted to different types of disabilities.

The schemes include Khelo India Para Games and scholarships, TOPS (Target Olympic Podium)-Para Athlete Inclusion, Assistance to Disabled Sportspersons for Training and Competition Abroad, Pension Scheme for Meritorious Sportspersons, State-Level Cash Rewards and Jobs under Sports Quotas which provides substantial Benefit to Para-athletes. Many states, including Delhi, Haryana, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, offer substantial cash incentives and government jobs to medal-winning Para-athletes.

In recent years, Kerala' s Para- athletes have become a strong representation of resilience and determination. Despite their success in national and international competitions, many face serious socio-economic challenges from home and society. Issues such as lack of accessible infrastructure facilities, proper training, financial support, nutrition, health care, and recognition reflect wider systematic problems that affect all Para athletes in the state.

1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Indian Para-sports, particularly in Kerala, are under-explored even with the increasing

worldwide success of Para-athletes. The structural, financial, and socio-cultural challenges such athletes confront, as well as grassroots strength that keeps them going, are the focus of the below literature and reports.

Rao (2019) highlights the importance of continued policy-level support and intersectoral cooperation to utilize sports as a means of disability empowerment. He reiterates that inclusive growth in Para-sports is not just community driven but also demands long-term investment in infrastructure, coaching, and state-level funding mechanisms.

Pillai & Kurian (2020) points out the deficiency of comprehensive coaching systems within Kerala's Para-sport system. They point out that functions such as physiotherapy, nutrition, and psychological counselling are important for athlete development but are under-addressed. Para-athletes, especially those who have spinal cord injuries, mostly depend on home-based counsel because there are no trained staffs and proper facilities like electronic scales or metabolic monitors.

Singh & Sharma (2021) point out in their country-level research of Para-sporting facilities that there is the scarcity of accessible stadiums, adaptive gyms, and assistive training equipment for players with disabilities. This institutional deficiency highly limits participation and reduces the potential talent pool. Their conclusion is pertinent in Kerala, where such infrastructure mostly remains inaccessible, particularly because of the absence of state-level recognition of Para-sports organizations.

Thomas (2022) gives comparative observations on how other states such as Haryana and Odisha have established strong support systems for Para-athletes, such as crores of incentives to medal winners. This has caused a brain drain of good athletes from Kerala to other states. Para-athletes of Kerala, on the other hand, mostly finance their participation in national and international events themselves, at times investing more than ₹ 2 lakh with delayed or no refund.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 under this act, the Para-athletes of Kerala are still denied institutional recognition. The Kerala Sports Council also fails to recognize the

Physically Challenged All Sports Association of Kerala, keeping them out of public training centres, coaching quotas, and education-linked incentives like grace marks.

The Hindu (15 Dec 2023) article showcases the inspiring tale of Alappuzha's Girija Madhu, who collateralized her personal resources to train and sponsor children with cerebral palsy. Her grassroots movement developed nationally acclaimed teams and showed how community leadership can serve as a replacement for lack of state support in the development of Para-sports.

Cerebral Palsy Football Association of Kerala & Amogha Foundation (2021 & 2023) these grassroot groups are instrumental in utilizing sports-based rehabilitation, skill-building, and empowerment of disabled children. With limited resources and little state support, they are an example of resilience and the power of sports to transform lives of marginalized communities.

Reddit Forums and Media Reports (2025) in public media debates indicate disillusionment with the sports administration of Kerala. Complaints involve unpaid hostel workers, antiquated training gear, low-quality food, and a decline in performance at the National Games– Kerala falling to 14th position for the first time. This speaks to wider institutional complacency, which also influences Para-athletes.

The literature reviewed here pinpoints the various levels of exclusion-structural, financial, infrastructural, and cultural-that Para-athletes in Kerala endure. At the same time, the grassroots and agency demonstrate the compelling story of resilience. Unless the assistance of state-level institutions and holistic policies is forthcoming, the potential for

transformative permanence remains limited.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Para-athletes often remain overlooked in terms of social recognition, economic security, and institutional support, despite their achievements and contributions to sports. In Kerala, where inclusive development is a policy focus, the realities of Para-athletes still an on-going socio-economic inequalities. One of the main research challenges of this study is the scarcity of comprehensive data and understanding regarding the socio-economic background of Para-athletes, including factors such as education, income, family support, and access to basic facilities that impact their livelihoods and athletic careers. Another significant issue is the range of livelihood challenges that Para-athletes face. These challenges include limited job opportunities, financial instability, a lack of sponsorships, inadequate training facilities, and the social stigma associated with disability. Even though various government programs and support systems exist at both the central and state levels to assist people with disabilities and promote Para-sports, there is a gap in research regarding the effectiveness of these programs in reaching Para-athletes in Kerala. Therefore, the study intends to thoroughly assess the awareness, accessibility, and impact of government initiatives on the lives of Para-athletes in Kerala.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyse the socio-economic background of Para-athletes in Kerala
- To identify the key livelihood challenges faced by Para-athletes in Kerala

- To identify the government schemes to support the Para -athletes in Kerala

1.5 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

1.5.1SUSTANABLE LIVELIHOOD FRAME WORK (SLF)

This frame work provides the primary focus for analysing how the Para-athletes in Kerala sustain their livelihoods and what resources they access, and how they survive economically. SLF include five forms of capital, Human Capital, Social Capital, Financial Capital, Physical Capital, and Institutional Structure and Policies. Human capital This refers to the skill, education, and health of Para-athletes, including their training, sport achievements and physical challenges .Social capital this includes the networks, relationship, support systems like sports federation, family, NGO' s, that enable Para-athletes to access resources or opportunities. Financial Capital Focuses on earnings, stipends, sponsorships, and government support schemes that contribute to the financial security of Para-athletes. Physical Capital Includes access to infrastructure like stadiums, gyms, transportation, and adaptive equipment essential for training and participation Institutional Structures and Policies this emphasis is also placed on how existing policies either enable or hinder Para-athletes' participation and livelihood opportunities.

1.5.2. Social model of disability

Social model of disability helps to analyse the lack of infrastructure, discrimination, and poor policy implementation in Kerala. Accessible sports infrastructure providing facilities, equipment, and services that are usable by athletes with impairments. Inclusive sports programs creating opportunities for athletes with impairments to participate in sports and competitions. Supportive attitudes promoting a culture that values and respects athletes with impairments, and recognizes their achievements.

1.5.3. Resilience Theory

Resilience Theory for Para athletes focus on their ability to cope handles the challenges, setbacks, and pressure. It highlights their capacity to overcome obstacles: Para athletes demonstrate resilience by overcoming physical, emotional, and social barriers. Adapt to

adversity: They adapt to changes in their environment, training, or competition, and find ways to succeed despite challenges. Develop coping strategies: Para athletes develop strategies to manage stress, pressure, and setbacks, and maintain their motivation and focus. Build mental toughness: They cultivate mental toughness, confidence, and self-efficacy, which enable them to perform at their best.

1.5.4. Conflict Theory

Conflict Theory in Para athletics highlights the power struggles and inequalities that exist within the sports context. Conflicts arise from unequal distribution of power, resources, and opportunities among Para athletes, coaches, administrators, and governing bodies. Para athletes may face marginalization, exclusion, or unequal treatment due to their disability, socioeconomic status, or other factors. Conflicts may arise over access to funding, facilities, equipment, and other resources that can impact Para athletes' performance and opportunities. Para athletes may struggle to have their voices heard and their interests represented in decision-making processes.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the ways used for relating and assaying information related to research content. A research study's structure or methodology, known as the research design, attendants the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This study employs a descriptive exploration design to examine the livelihood challenges and resilience of Para-athletes in Kerala from a socio- economic perspective.

1.6.1SOURCES OF DATA

For conducting this study, both primary and secondary data are used.

Primary Data: A structured schedule is used to collect primary data from Para- athletes for understanding their livelihood challenges and resilience from a socio- economic perspective.

Secondary Data: The secondary data for the study consist of government reports such as the reports of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and the Kerala Sports Department, scholarly research journals, media articles like The Hindu, Times of India, and organizational reports from institutions like the Paralympic Committee of India and local non-governmental organizations. Other sources are Census reports, NSSO questionnaires, and performance data from national and international Para-sporting competitions.

1.6.2POPULATION

The population of this study comprises International, national, and state Para-athletes from Kerala.

1.6.3SAMPLE DESIGN

Sample design involves selecting a subset of the population to ensure that the findings are representative and reliable.

1.6.3.1SAMPLE SIZE

A sample size of 30 Para-athletes is chosen for the survey to ensure a diverse range of Para-athlete perspective.

1.6.3.2SAMPLING METHOD

A purposive sampling technique is used, where respondents are selected based on availability and willingness to participate.

1.6.4METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Data collection methods play a crucial role in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of study findings.

Primary Data Collection: A structured schedule is administered online and offline to Para-

athletes to understanding their livelihood challenges and resilience.

Secondary Data Collection: The study relies on secondary data drawn from research articles, government records, newspaper reports, and online media sources. Scholarly studies, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, reports from The Hindu (2023), public

discussions on Reddit (2025), and information from grassroots organisations such as the Cerebral Palsy Football Association of Kerala and the Amogha Foundation were used to understand the challenges faced by Para-athletes in Kerala and the important role played by community-led support systems.

1.6.5Analysis of Data

Primary data collected will be analysed using simple percentages such as pie charts, line chart and bar graph,etc.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The time availability for this study is limited
- The geographical constrains limit the study to few districts due to time constraints.
- The sample size is limited to 30 Para-athletes, which may due to limited time constraints.
- The unavailability of secondary data related to Para-sports and Para-athletes in Kerala.
- Potential respondent bias, where Para-athletes may overstate or underreport their difficulties out of mistrust for researchers or a fear of losing benefits.

CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PARA-SPORTS

2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

From an economic viewpoint, Para- athletes represent a unique intersection between sports, disability and economic inclusion. The Economic framework on Para-athletes analyses the way in which economic factors influence their livelihood, participation, and performance, considering their societal inclusion. It emphasizes how differently abled individuals show their ability to participate in sports that contributes to Human capital development, employment opportunities, and inclusive economic growth.

This study on Para-athletes can be analysed through several related dimensions. First, the Human capital approach highlights that training and skill development of Para-athletes serves as a function of investments that enhance their productivity and income generating potential.

Second, Capability Approach introduced by Indian – American Economist and philosopher Amartya Sen who pointed out the importance of individuals freedoms to achieve their desired functions. In the case of Para-athletes, their participation in sports provides the capability to overcome from social and physical challenges promoting empowerment and confidence in society.

Third, from the viewpoint of Inclusion Economics, its focus lies in removing barriers and restricts participation of persons with disability in economic and social activity. Encouraging Para sports helps take apart several structural obstacles, leaving to full participation of Para-athletes and contributing to a more inclusive economic growth.

Fourth, Public policy plays a vital role through state investment, welfare measures and

sports development schemes that provide financial assistance, infrastructure and institutional support to Para-athletes. Government ensures that Para-sports are integrated within national sports systems.

Finally, Market Economics underscores the growing role of commercialization and innovation in Para-sports. Increased visibility of Para-athletic events stimulates new markets in adaptive sports technologies, sponsorships, and media coverage which collectively contribute to economic growth.

From these above mentioned dimensions that form the conceptual framework for understanding Para-athletes from an economic perspective, illustrating how inclusion, investment, and innovation intersect to promote sustainable development and social equity.

2.2 HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

The historical impact of Para-athletes closely linked to the growth of Paralympic movement and also has significant economic and social implication.

2.2.1Origins and Development

The journey of Para-athletes begin with healing, not competition. The Paralympic movement did not begin as a grant sporting event. It begins in a hospital ward. After World War II, thousands of soldiers returned home with several spinal injuries and other disabilities. They were expected to live quietly, often forgotten by society. But one doctor- Sir Ludwig Guttmann- believed that disability did not mean the end of a meaningful life. In 1948, at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in the UK, he introduced sports like Archery and Wheelchair racing as part of rehabilitation. It started as a few patients playing sport to gain confidence and rebuilt their bodies slowly grew into something much bigger. By 1960, these small competitions transformed into the first official

Paralympic games in Rome. The world began to see something powerful: Para-athletes who were stronger than their struggles.

From that point, the participation of Para-Athletes expanded. Today, thousands of athletes from over 160 countries take part in Paralympics. These events are broadcast globally, inspiring millions and proving that disability and excellence are not opposites.

The history of Para-athletes is not just about sports it is about rights, dignity, and equal opportunity.

2.3 ECONOMIC IMPACT

2.3.1Sports industry growth

The rise of Para-athletes has opened doors for many new Economic activities:

- Hosting Paralympic events brings tourism, jobs, and global attention.
- Stadiums, transport, and accessibility infrastructure receive investment.
- Coaches, physiotherapist, sports scientist, and organizers gain employment.

2.3.2Growth of Adaptive Technology

- Economic demand for wheelchairs, prosthetics and assistive devices as lead to technological innovation and economic growth

2.3.3Sponsorship and branding

- Major companies increasingly support Para-athletes, recognizing social and commercial values inclusivity in market.

2.3.4Funding and Economic Challenges

Despite progress many athletes face barriers:

- Lower prize money and sponsorship opportunities when compared to abled body sports.
- Insufficient government funding and training facilities.

- Employment barriers are due to physical limitations or social stigma.

  Countries with strong welfare policies like UK, Japan, and Australia invest more in Disability sports, showing that Economic support is also a reflection towards social attitude.

2.4 OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF PARA-ATHLETES IN EACH LEVEL

Para-athletes have been experiencing a significant growth in International and National achievements in India. Also they receive support from government including schemes like Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) and Khelo India Programme. These initiatives provide fund, training support, coaching, and foreign exposure. Apart from that, Para-athletes also face significant economic disparities when compared to abled body athletes. Even though Government support and sponsorship are improving, especially in India but also challenges still exist at all levels including limited financial support, high equipment cost, and inadequate infrastructure.

2.4.1GLOBAL/INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Para-athletics in India has expanded significantly during the past decade, with rising participation, stronger institutional support and increasing international recognition. While accurate national percentages of Para-athletes at district, state and national levels are not centrally published, available indicators show rapidly growing participation. For example, the 2023 Khelo India Para Games recorded over 1,350 competitors, and the 2025 edition has crossed 1,200 participants, signalling widening grassroots involvement across states.

At the elite level, India fielded 84 Para-athletes at the 2024 Paris Paralympics, the country' s largest contingent to date. National governance structures have also strengthened; the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) now includes 26 state associations and multiple

independent federations, reflecting a broadening competitive base. These patterns together indicate that Para-sport participation is expanding across all levels, even though percentage-based classification is unavailable.

INCREASED GOVERNMENT SUPPORT, SCHEMES AND ALLOWANCES

Government support for Para-athletes has grown steadily, particularly from 2023 onwards. The Union Budget 2025-26 allocated ₹ 3,794.30 crore to the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, an increase of over ₹ 350 crore, with ₹ 1,000 crore earmarked specifically for Khelo India. Within this, the programme *Sports and Games for the Disabled* has been formally strengthened as part of the government' s inclusive sports strategy.

A central component of elite support is the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), which now covers Para-athletes comprehensively with funding for international training, equipment, travel and coaching. TOPS core Para-athletes also receive a monthly out-of-pocket allowance of ₹ 50,000 to enable full-time training. Alongside this, the Khelo India Athlete (KIA) scheme provides financial support of up to ₹ 5 lakh per year for training in accredited academies, plus a monthly stipend of ₹ 10,000. Parliamentary reports also confirm that 83 Para-athletes receive an annual support package of ₹ 6.28 lakh under Khelo India, ensuring coverage of diet, competition exposure, kits, and accommodation.

Further, the Sports Authority of India has established Para-specific centres, such as the National Centre of Excellence for Para Sports in Gandhinagar, which provides structured

training in athletics, swimming, powerlifting and table tennis. Together, these schemes have made financial and infrastructural support more systematic and predictable for Para-athletes.

CHALLENGES

Despite significant improvements, Para-athletes in India continue to face major challenges that limit socio-economic security and sporting resilience. Funding allocations for Para-sports, though increasing, remain modest compared to mainstream sports, and certain initiatives such as the Khelo India Para Games still operate under constrained budgets. Infrastructure gaps are among the most persistent problems: many districts lack accessible stadiums, adaptive equipment, physiotherapy support and trained coaches, which leaves athletes outside major urban centres at a disadvantage.

Financial vulnerability remains widespread among non-elite Para-athletes, who often depend on irregular earnings, family support or part-time work due to insufficient stipends. Social stigma and attitudinal barriers toward disability continue to influence educational opportunities, employment access and gender inclusion, disproportionately affecting female Para-athletes. Administrative bottlenecks, such as delays in processing benefits, limited awareness of available schemes, and complex application procedures, also reduce the effective reach of government programmes. Consequently, even though policy frameworks have expanded, real-world access and implementation gaps continue to shape the livelihoods and resilience of Para-athletes across India.

2.4.2KERALA LEVEL

The story of Para sports in Kerala reflects a wider transformation in the state' s sporting culture. Over the past decade, disability sports have shifted from being viewed

as welfare activities to becoming an integral part of Kerala' s competitive sports ecosystem. A state known for social progress is now extending that progress to athletes with disabilities.

Despite their achievements and rising visibility, Para athletes in Kerala continue to face financial, infrastructural and administrative challenges-making their journey one of both promise and struggle.

A GROWING SPORTS ECONOMY-AND PARA SPORTS FINDING THEIR SPACE

Kerala' s sports economy has expanded rapidly in recent years, supported by increased government spending and improved performances at national and international levels. Para sports are gradually becoming part of this growth.

Their inclusion in the Kerala Sports Policy and increased attention from the Department of Sports mark a shift toward greater accessibility. Hosting national Para athletics meets, wheelchair basketball camps, and powerlifting championships has enhanced the state' s visibility and encouraged sports tourism linked to disability events.

These events also support local industries by creating opportunities for physiotherapists, trainers, volunteers, and equipment suppliers. Kerala' s strong healthcare sector-including physiotherapy centres, prosthetic providers, and rehabilitation facilities-continues to play an important role in supporting athletes. These developments suggest that Para sports are slowly becoming part of Kerala' s mainstream sports conversation.

FUNDING AND EXECUTION: PERSISTENT GAPS

Funding remains the biggest obstacle for Para athletes. Government assistance exists but is often irregular and insufficient. Many athletes must personally finance expensive adaptive equipment such as sports wheelchairs and racing prosthetics, making

competitive sports difficult for those from low-income backgrounds.

Execution of existing schemes is slow, and repayment for travel or competition expenses is frequently delayed. Long-term training programs are rare, and Kerala still lacks enough

certified Para-sports coaches to guide athletes effectively. These shortcomings limit consistent training and hinder the performance of even the most talented athletes.

ACHIEVEMENTS THAT INSPIRE BEYOND MEDALS

In spite of these challenges, Kerala' s Para athletes have delivered outstanding performances in athletics, powerlifting, wheelchair basketball, badminton, and swimming— earning national medals and representing India abroad.

They have excelled in sprinting, shot put, long jump, discus throw, and powerlifting. Kerala' s wheelchair basketball teams have performed strongly in regional tournaments, and swimmers have won medals despite limited access to inclusive pools. These achievements are powerful reminders of resilience and determination, inspiring young people across the state.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND TALENT IDENTIFICATION: SLOWLY IMPROVING

Infrastructure remains a major challenge. Many stadiums lack essential accessibility features such as ramps, tactile pathways, and disabled-friendly washrooms. Accessible swimming pools are especially limited, preventing many athletes from training.

Talent identification is also limited, as most scouting occurs during district-level disability events. Stronger coordination between sports councils, local bodies, schools, and disability organizations could uncover many more promising athletes. Encouraging steps-such as inclusive playground projects and district-level Para sports councils-show that progress is underway, although slowly.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A MORE INCLUSIVE SPORTING FUTURE

The journey of Kerala' s Para athletes is marked by talent, perseverance, and determination. While the state has made meaningful progress toward building an inclusive sporting culture, challenges in funding, infrastructure, and long-term development still need attention.

With stronger policies, sustained investment, and a commitment to accessibility, Kerala can emerge as a national leader in Para sports. Ultimately, the future of Para athletics in the state depends on collective support and recognition of the remarkable abilities of these athletes.

CHAPTER 3:

Analysis and Interpretation of Livelihood Challenges and Resilience of Para-athletes in Kerala

Introduction

A distinct and resilient group of people, Para-athletes overcome physical constraints while also overcoming institutional, social, and economic obstacles. Even though Para-sports are becoming more well-known in Kerala and participation at all levels is rising, Para-athletes still have to deal with serious issues like unstable income, few job opportunities, poor training facilities, and a lack of institutional support. To evaluate their athletic experiences as well as their more general socioeconomic circumstances, it is crucial to comprehend these difficulties. Based on primary survey data, this chapter provides a thorough analysis of the socioeconomic profile, financial difficulties, and resiliency of Para-athletes in Kerala. In addition to economic factors like household income, employment status, access to financial resources, and income from sports, the analysis covers important demographic traits like age, gender, education, marital status, and family background. The chapter also looks at topics like government assistance, knowledge of and use of welfare programs, training facilities, managing financial stress, and the drive to play sports in spite of on-going obstacles. The chapter seeks to illustrate the challenges faced by Para-athletes and the shortcomings in the current support networks by methodically looking at these aspects. The results highlight the need for inclusive policies, efficient government program implementation, and increased institutional support to support sustainable development in Para-sports by offering insightful information about the economic vulnerability, coping strategies, and motivational elements that influence the sporting journeys of Para-athletes in Kerala.

3.1 AGE GROUP OF RESPONDENTS

Figure 3.1: Age group of respondents



Source: Primary data

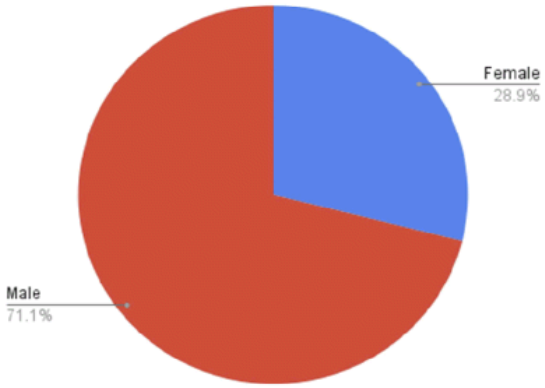
Figure 3.1 illustrates the age-wise distribution of the Para-athletes included in the study. The findings reveal that the respondents represent a broad spectrum of age groups, reflecting inclusiveness across different stages of life. A noticeable concentration is observed among younger and early adult age groups, indicating that many individuals are introduced to Para-sports at an early age. Early involvement in sports can contribute to physical rehabilitation, skill development, confidence building, and social integration.

At the same time, the presence of respondents in middle and higher age groups highlights sustained participation in sports despite physical limitations, social barriers, and economic challenges. This continued engagement demonstrates the resilience, determination, and long-term commitment of Para-athletes. Overall, the age distribution suggests that Para-sports in Kerala attract participants not only at a young age but also retain athletes into adulthood, underscoring the role of sports as a lifelong pursuit for

persons with disabilities.

3.2 GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

Figure 3.2: Gender of respondents



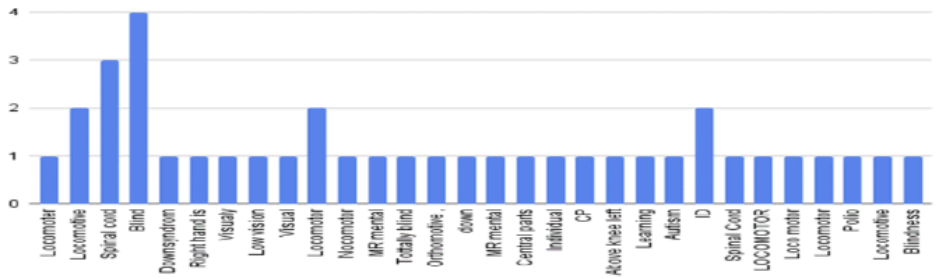
Source: Primary data

Figure 3.2 presents the gender composition of the respondents, showing that males constitute the majority (71.1%), while females account for 28.9% of the total sample. This disparity points to a gender imbalance in Para-sports participation.

The predominance of male participants may be influenced by prevailing social norms, safety concerns, restricted mobility, limited sporting opportunities, and inadequate encouragement for women with disabilities to engage in competitive sports. Cultural expectations and family responsibilities may further discourage female participation. Nevertheless, the participation of a considerable proportion of female Para-athletes indicates gradual progress toward gender inclusion. This trend reflects increasing awareness, improved access to sports platforms, and changing attitudes toward women with disabilities in the sporting domain.

3.3 TYPE OF DISABILITY

Figure 3.3: Type of disability



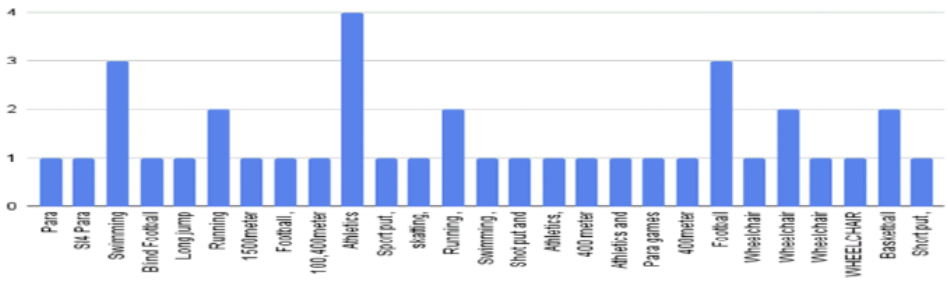
Source: Primary data

Figure 3.3 depicts the distribution of respondents based on the type of disability. The study includes individuals with diverse disabilities such as locomotors disability, visual impairment, mental retardation, spinal cord injury, Down syndrome, and polio.

Among these categories, locomotors disability and spinal cord injury are more prominently represented. This higher participation may be attributed to better availability of adaptive sports, relatively easier classification processes, and greater infrastructural accessibility for these groups. The presence of athletes with varied disabilities highlights the inclusive nature of Para-sports in Kerala. However, it also draws attention to the need for specialized training facilities, customized equipment, and professional coaching tailored to the specific needs of different disability groups.

3.4 SPORTS EVENT PARTICIPATION

Figure 3.4: Sports event participation

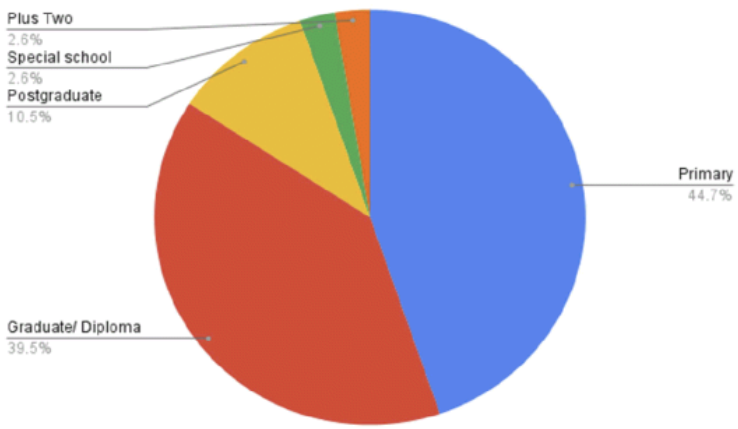


Source: Primary data

Figure 3.4 shows the types of sports events in which the respondents participate. The data indicates involvement in a wide range of sporting activities including athletics, Para badminton, swimming, football, wheelchair basketball, and throwing events.

Athletics-related events record higher participation compared to other sports. This may be due to lower infrastructure requirements, simpler training needs, and wider availability of facilities across regions. The diversity in sports participation reflects the adaptability, enthusiasm, and competitive spirit of Para-athletes. It also suggests that given appropriate opportunities and support, Para-athletes are capable of excelling in multiple sporting disciplines.

Figure 3.5 EDUCATION QUALIFICATION



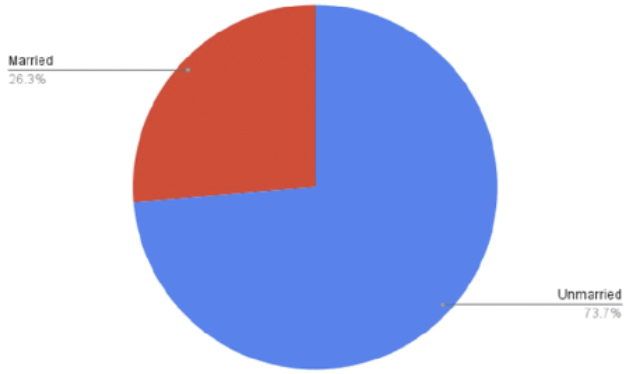
Source: Primary data

Figure 3.5 illustrates the educational qualifications of the respondents. The findings reveal that nearly half of the respondents (44.7%) have completed primary education, while 39.5% have attained graduate or diploma-level education. Only a small proportion has completed postgraduate studies, and a few respondents have studied in special schools or up to the Plus Two level.

This educational distribution indicates that although access to basic education is relatively widespread, progression to higher education remains limited among Para-athletes. Barriers such as economic hardship, physical inaccessibility, lack of inclusive educational infrastructure, and insufficient institutional support may hinder educational advancement. These challenges underline the importance of inclusive education policies and support systems for persons with disabilities.

3.6 MARITAL STATUS

Figure 3.6: Marital status



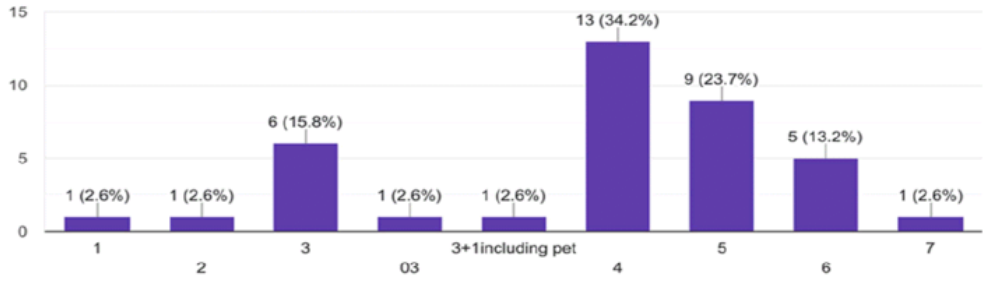
Source: Primary data

Figure 3.6 represents the marital status of the respondents, showing that a majority (73.7%) are unmarried, while 26.3% are married.

The high proportion of unmarried respondents may be influenced by factors such as disability-related stigma, economic instability, dependence on family members, and societal perceptions regarding marriage and disability. These findings reflect the broader social challenges faced by Para-athletes, extending beyond sports and into personal and social domains.

3.7 FAMILY SIZE

Figure 3.7: Family size



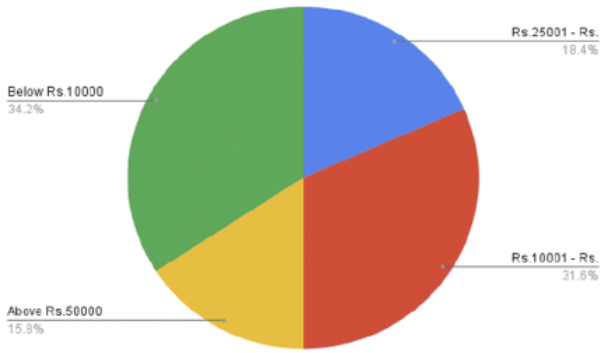
Source: Primary data

Figure 3.7 shows the distribution of respondents according to the number of members in their family. The majority of respondents (34.2%) belong to four-member families, followed by 23.7% from five-member families. About 15.8% reported having three family members, while 13.2% belong to families with six members. Very small proportions (2.6% each) reported family sizes of one, two, seven members, or three members including pets.

This indicates that most Para-athletes come from medium-sized families, where financial responsibilities are shared among limited members, potentially influencing the level of support available for sports participation and daily needs.

3.8 MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Figure 3.8: Monthly household income



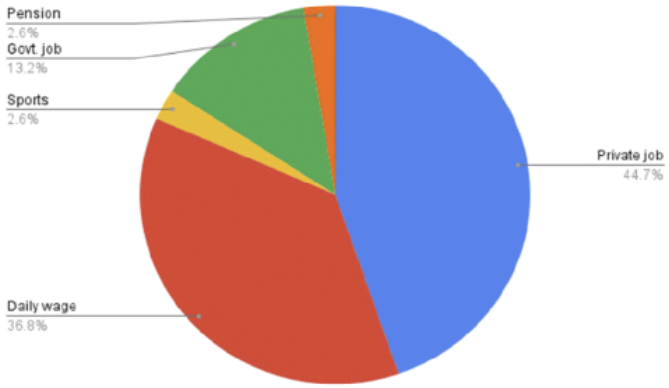
Source: Primary data

Figure 3.8 depicts the approximate monthly household income of the respondents. About 31.6% of respondents reported a monthly income between ₹ 10,001 and ₹ 25,000, while 34.2% fall under the below ₹ 10,000 category. Nearly 18.4% earn between ₹ 25,001 and ₹ 50,000, and only 15.8% reported an income above ₹ 50,000.

This income pattern highlights the economic vulnerability of Para-athletes' families. Financial constraints may limit access to quality training, sports equipment, nutrition, medical care, and travel for competitions, thereby affecting both athletic development and daily life.

3.9 PRIMARY SOURCE OF FAMILY INCOME

Figure 3.9: Primary source of family income

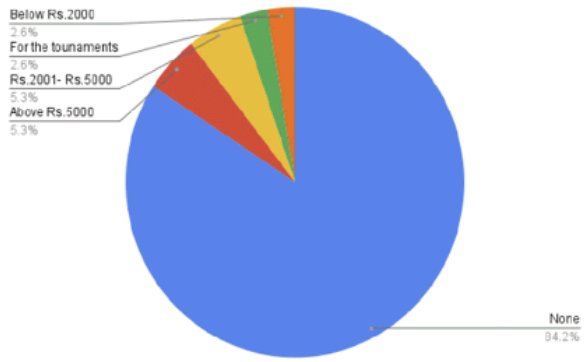


Source: Primary data

The analysis shows that the primary source of family income for most respondents comes from daily wage labour (36.8%) and private jobs or business (44.7%), indicating a high dependence on informal and less secure employment. Government jobs account for 13.2%, while agriculture supports 5.3% of the families. Other sources such as sports income, pension, occasional work, and small-scale activities each contribute 2. 6%. Overall, the findings reflect the economic vulnerability and income instability faced by many Para-athletes' families, which may limit their access to resources essential for sports development.

3.10 MONTHLY INCOME FROM SPORTS

Figure 3.10: Monthly income from sports



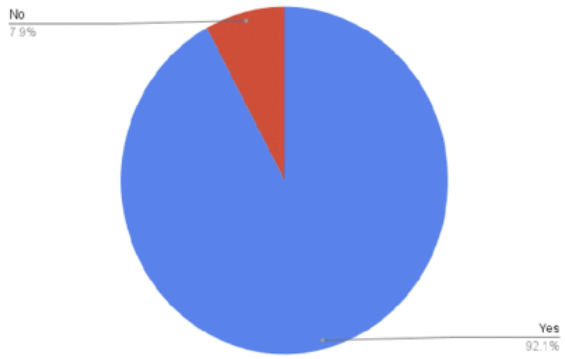
Source: Primary data

Figure 3.10 presents the average monthly income earned from sports activities. The findings reveal that 84.2% of respondents do not earn any income from sports, while the remaining respondents earn only minimal amounts.

This clearly indicates that Para-sports do not provide a stable source of livelihood for most athletes. Participation is primarily driven by passion, personal motivation, and a desire for achievement rather than financial incentives. The findings highlight the need for increased sponsorship, institutional support, and financial assistance to promote sustainability in Para-sports.

3.11 ACCESS TO PERSONAL FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Figure 3.11: Access to personal financial resources



Source: Primary data

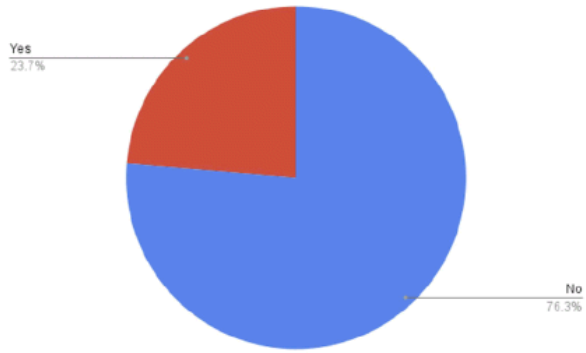
Figure 3.11 show that a large majority of the respondents have access to personal financial resources such as a bank account. Out of the 38 respondents, 92.1% reported that they have access to such financial facilities, while only 7.9% indicated that they do not.

This high percentage reflects a positive level of financial inclusion among the respondents, suggesting that most Para-athletes are integrated into the formal banking system. Access to bank accounts can support better financial management, enable receipt of salaries, pensions, or government benefits, and promote economic independence. However, the presence of a small proportion (8.3%) without access highlights the need for targeted interventions to ensure complete financial inclusion

and equal economic opportunities for all.

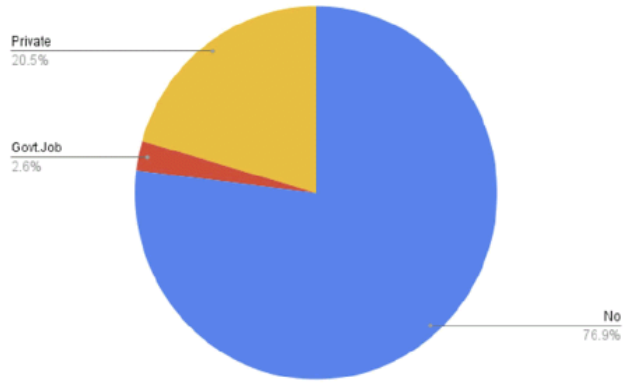
3.12 CURRENTLY EMPLOYED

Figure 3.12.a: Employment status of Para-athletes



Source: Primary data

Figure 3.12.b: Type of employment among Para-athletes



Source: Primary data

The pie chart 3.12.a based on 38 responses, indicates that a majority of respondents (76.3%) are not employed apart from sports, while only 23.7% are engaged in other forms of employment. This shows that most respondents depend largely on sports

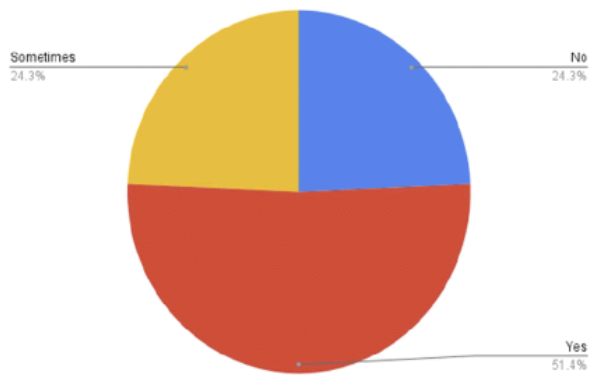
or remain outside the formal workforce. The high level of non-employment suggests limited access to alternative job opportunities and possible difficulties in balancing sports commitments with

regular work. Overall, the findings highlight economic vulnerability and underline the importance of skill development, flexible job options, and career guidance to ensure long-term financial stability beyond sports.

If yes, the pie chart 3.12.b shows the types of jobs held by respondents who reported employment, based on 38 responses. A large number of respondents (76.9%), indicating that many are not engaged in any form of employment despite the question being conditional. Among those who are employed, private jobs and part-time work form the most noticeable categories, though each accounts for (20.5%). Other occupations such as daily wage work, Govt. Jobs mobile recharge-related work, travel agent services, and miscellaneous jobs are represented by only one respondent each (around 2.6%). Overall, the chart highlights that employment among respondents is limited, scattered, and largely informal, reinforcing the need for stable job opportunities and structured employment support alongside sports careers.

3.13 DIFFICULTIES TO BALANCE SPORTS WITH LIVELIHOOD

Figure 3.13 Difficulties to balance sports with livelihood

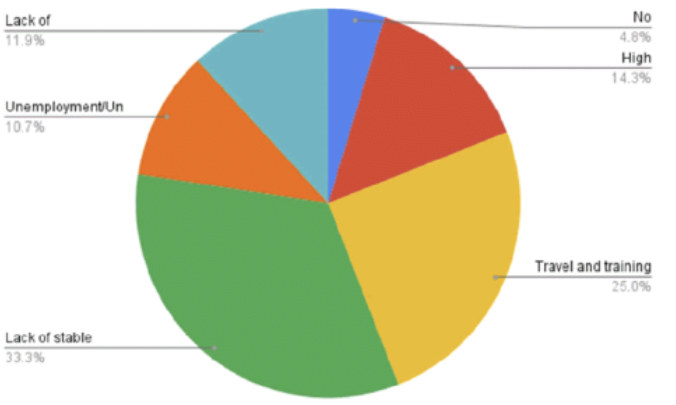


Source: Primary data

The pie chart 3.13 illustrates respondents' views on the difficulty of balancing sports with earning a livelihood, based on 37 responses. A majority, 51.4%, reported that they find it difficult to balance sports and income-generating activities, indicating significant pressure on athletes to manage both commitments. Meanwhile, 24.3% stated that they do not face such difficulty, suggesting that a smaller section has access to supportive conditions or flexible work arrangements. Another 24.3% reported experiencing difficulty sometimes, highlighting irregular or situational challenges. Overall, the findings show that for most respondents, balancing sports with livelihood remains a major concern, emphasizing the need for flexible employment, financial support, and institutional assistance for sportspersons.

3.14 ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AS PARA ATHLETES

Figure 3.14 Economic challenges as Para athletes



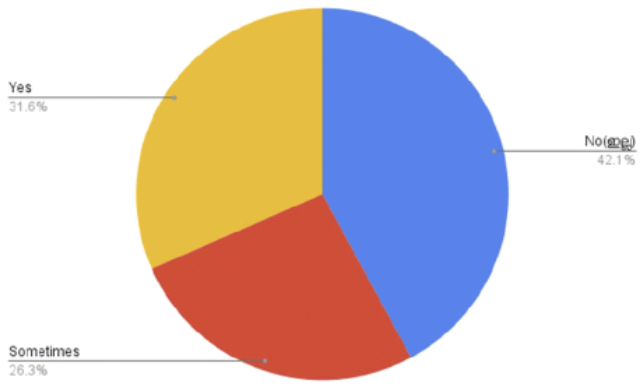
Source: Primary data

The pie chart 3.14 highlights the major economic challenges faced by Para-athletes, based on 38 responses, and reveals multiple overlapping financial constraints. The most significant challenge is the lack of stable income, reported by 26 respondents (33.3%), indicating

widespread income insecurity. This is followed by high travel and training costs faced by 20 respondents (25%), and lack of sponsorship, reported by 17 respondents (11.9%), showing the heavy financial burden of sustaining a sports career. Additionally, high medical and rehabilitation expenses affect 12 respondents (14.3%), while unemployment or underemployment impacts 11 respondents (10.7%). A few respondents reported specific or isolated issues such as out-dated assistive equipment, time management difficulties, or no major issues. Overall, the graph clearly shows that Para-athletes face significant economic vulnerability, emphasizing the need for stable income support, sponsorship opportunities, affordable healthcare, and institutional assistance to sustain their sporting careers.

3.15 IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATION ON THE PARTICIPATION OF PARA ATHLETES

Figure 3.15 Impact of discrimination on the participation of Para athletes



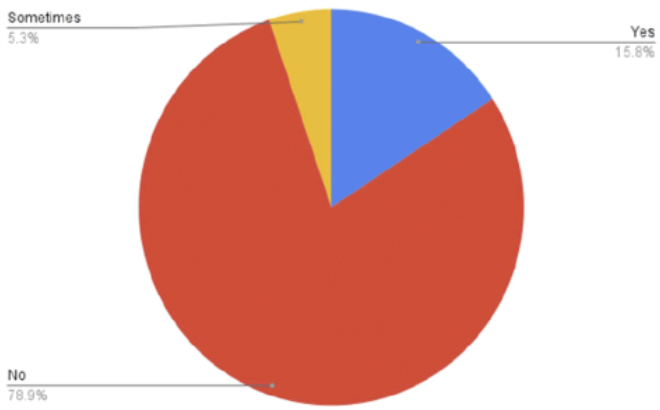
Source: Primary data

The pie chart 3.15 presents responses from 38 Para-athletes on whether they have faced discrimination in getting employment due to their disability. The results show that 31.6% of respondents reported directly experiencing discrimination, indicating that nearly one-third face clear barriers in the job market. A larger share, 42.1%, stated that they have not faced

discrimination, suggesting that experiences vary depending on context and opportunities. However, 26.3% reported facing discrimination sometimes, pointing to indirect, situational, or subtle forms of bias. Overall, the graph highlights that a substantial proportion of Para-athletes encounter discrimination either regularly or occasionally, underlining the need for inclusive employment practices, awareness programs, and stronger enforcement of disability-friendly workplace policies.

3.16 ACCESS TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT AMONG PARA-ATHLETES

Figure 3.16 Access to financial support among Para-athletes



Source: Primary data

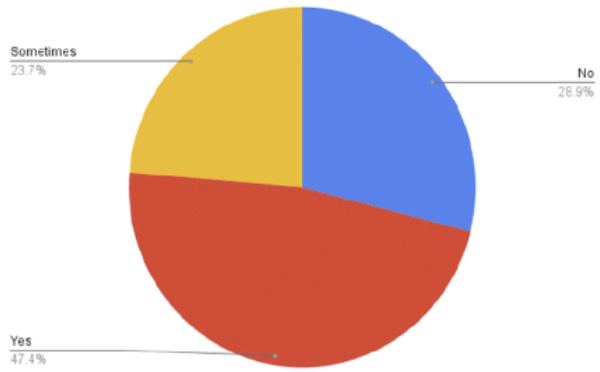
The pie chart 3.16 shows responses from 38 Para-athletes regarding whether they receive financial support from sports organizations or private sponsors. The findings reveal that a large majority, 78.9%, do not receive any financial support, indicating a serious lack of institutional and sponsorship backing. Only 15.8% of respondents reported that they do receive financial support, while a small proportion receive support

sometimes, reflecting irregular or uncertain assistance. This highlights that most Para-athletes are forced to fund their training, travel, equipment, and medical expenses on their own. Overall, the graph

underscores a significant support gap and emphasizes the need for stronger sponsorship programs, government assistance, and inclusive funding policies to ensure sustainable athletic and economic security for Para-athletes.

3.17 ECONOMIC LIMITATIONS AFFECTING CAREER GROWTH OF PARA-ATHLETES

Figure 3.17 Economic limitations affecting career growth of Para-athletes



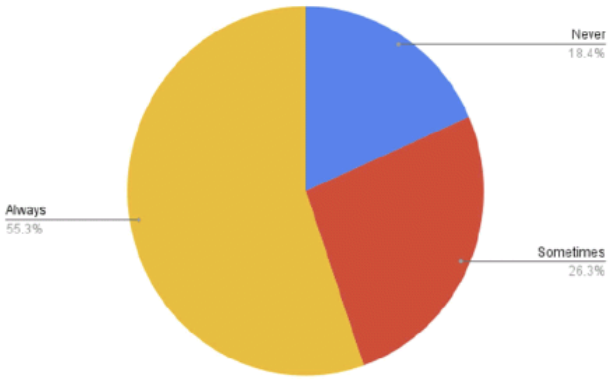
Source: Primary data

The pie chart 3.17 illustrates responses from 38 Para-athletes on whether their economic situation limits their career growth in sports. Nearly half of the respondents, 47.4%, stated yes, indicating that financial constraints significantly hinder their ability to progress as Para-athletes. Another 23.7% reported that economic limitations affect their career growth sometimes, suggesting irregular or situational financial barriers. In contrast, only 28.9% felt that their economic situation does not limit their career growth. Overall, the findings show that a clear majority of respondents experience economic constraints either consistently or occasionally,

highlighting the strong impact of financial factors on training quality, access to competitions, equipment, and long-term career development.

3.18 EXTENT OF FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS ON SPORTS PARTICIPATION AMONG PARA-ATHLETES

Figure 3.18 Extent of financial constraints on sports participation among Para-athletes

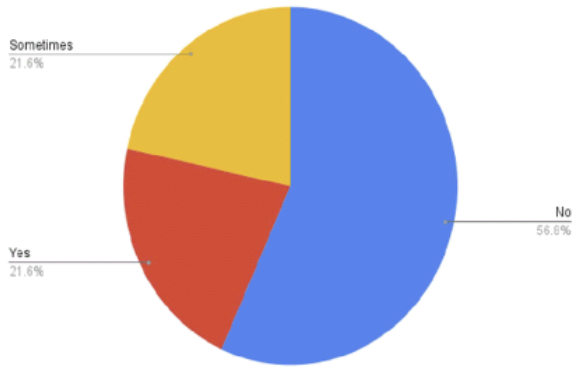


Source: Primary data

The pie chart 3.18 illustrates how frequently financial difficulties affect the participation of Para-athletes in sports events, based on 38 responses. More than half of the respondents (55.3%) reported that financial problems always affect their participation, indicating constant economic pressure and lack of adequate support. Additionally, 26.3%stated that financial difficulties affect them sometimes, suggesting occasional but significant disruptions to training and competition schedules. Only a small proportion (18.4%) reported that financial issues never affect their participation. Overall, the data clearly shows that financial constraints play a major role in limiting opportunities for Para-athletes, highlighting the need for improved financial assistance, sponsorships, and institutional support to ensure consistent participation and athletic development.

3.19 INCIDENCE OF SPORTS-RELATED INJURIES AMONG PARA-ATHLETES

Figure 3.19 Incidence of sports-related injuries among Para-athletes

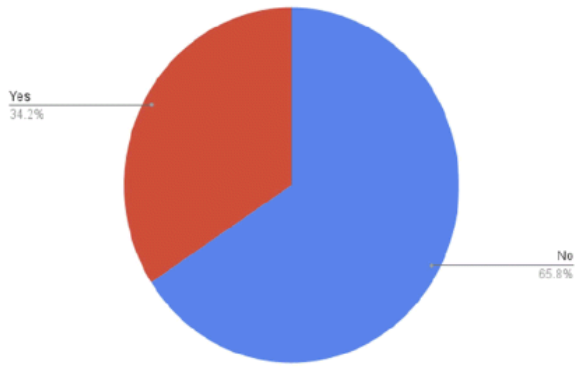


Source: Primary data

The findings reveal that 56.8% of the respondents reported not experiencing any accidents or injuries during their participation in sports events, suggesting that sports activities are generally conducted under safe conditions. However, 21.6% of the participants indicated that they had sustained injuries, while another 21.6% reported experiencing injuries occasionally. This indicates that although the majority remain injury-free, a significant proportion of participants are exposed to injury risks. The results emphasize the need for improved safety measures, proper training, adequate warm-up routines, and the availability of medical support during sports events to reduce the occurrence of sports-related injuries

3.20 AWARENESS OF GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AMONG PARA-ATHLETES IN KERALA

Figure 3.20 Awareness of government schemes among Para-athletes in Kerala



Source: Primary data

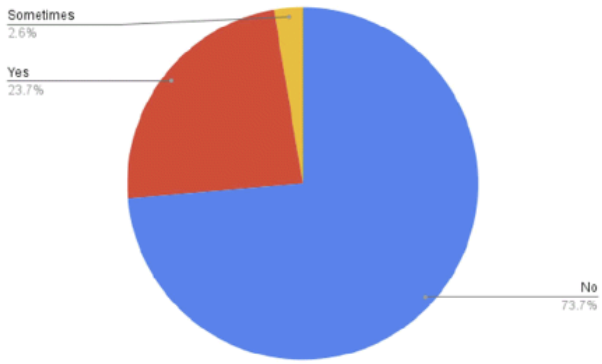
This figure 3.20 indicates that 65.8% of participants were not aware of government schemes in Kerala. This indicates that more than half of the population of Para athletes were not aware of schemes like the Financial Assistance for PwD Sports Personnel and the Shreshtam Scheme provided by the Kerala govt. through its social Justice department. Meanwhile only 34.2% of Para athletes were aware of Kerala government schemes. But most of the Para athletes were aware of central government schemes like Khelo India and TOPS.

This graph explains 3/4th of population of Para athletes were not updated about the schemes that had been provided by the Kerala govt. But Mostly 1/4th Para athlete' s

population were aware about the Kerala govt. schemes. This shows lack of information regarding Kerala govt. schemes may be due to inadequate support from Kerala govt. or they were not aware of these schemes.

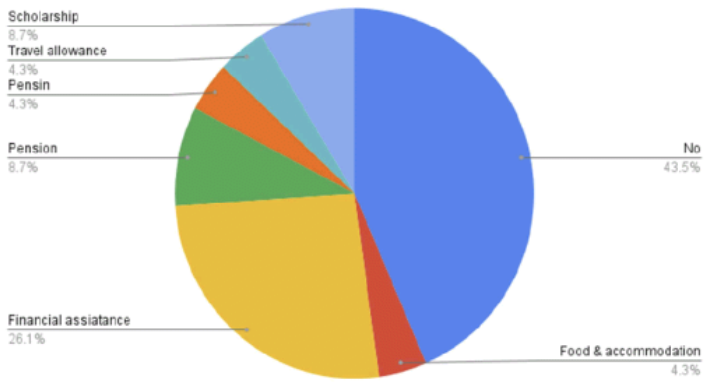
3.21 BENEFICIARY STATUS OF PARA-ATHLETES UNDER GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

Figure 3.21.a: Beneficiary status of Para-athletes under government schemes



Source: Primary data

Figure 3.21.b: Types of government benefits received by Para-athletes



Source: Primary data

Figure 3.21.a aimed to understand whether the respondents had personally benefited from any government schemes. Out of the 38 participants, a large majority (73.7%) reported that they

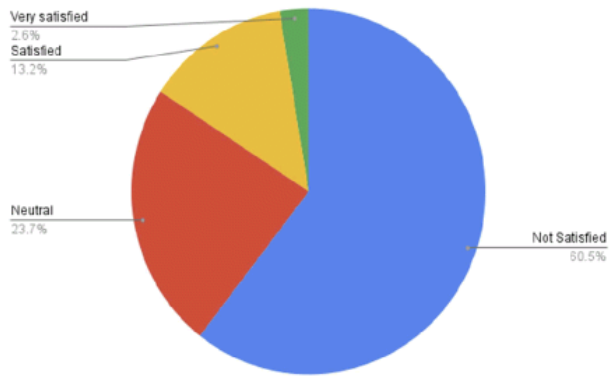
had not received any direct benefit, while only 23.7% stated that they had benefited from such schemes. A very small percentage responded that they had benefited occasionally. This clearly indicates that although various government schemes are introduced for Para athletes by the Kerala govt., many people are either unaware of them, unable to access them, or do not meet the eligibility criteria.

Meanwhile, the fig 3.21.b shows the different type of benefits received by the Para athletes, occasionally or always .The graph shows 26.1 % received benefits in the form of financial assistance,8.7% personally benefitted from scholarships ,4.3 % received the benefitted from travel allowance, Food and accommodation, pension from government.

The findings highlight the need for better awareness campaigns, easier procedures, and more effective implementation to ensure that Kerala government schemes reach a larger section of the Para athletes.

3.22 SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT SUPPORT RECEIVED

Figure 3.22: Satisfaction with government support received

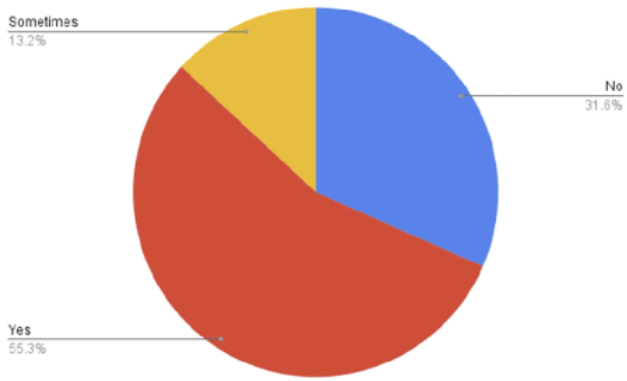


Source: Primary data

The survey aimed to evaluate the level of satisfaction among respondents regarding the government support they received. Out of 38 respondents, a majority of 60.5% reported that they were not satisfied with the support provided by the government. Around 23.7% of the participants remained neutral, indicating mixed or uncertain opinions. Only 13.2% expressed satisfaction, while a very small percentage reported being highly satisfied. This clearly shows that most respondents feel that government support is insufficient or ineffective in meeting their needs. The results highlight the need for better implementation, improved accessibility, and more efficient delivery of government services to enhance public satisfaction.

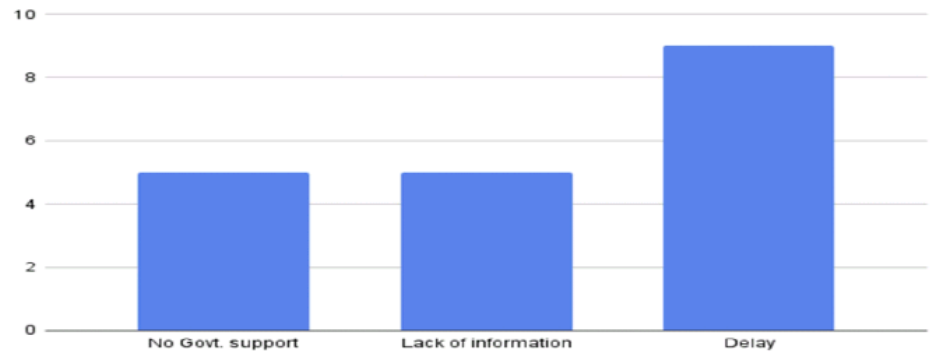
3.23 DIFFICULTIES IN ACCESSING GOVERNMENT BENEFITS

Figure 3.23.a: Difficulties in accessing government benefits



Source: Primary data

Figure 3.23.b: Types of access difficulties



Source: Primary data

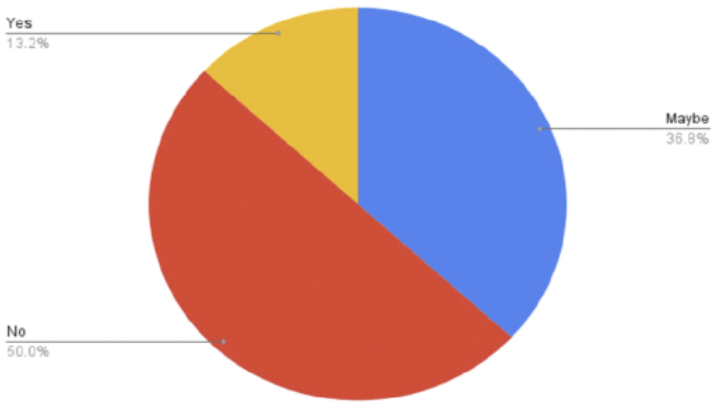
Figure 3.23.a examined whether respondents face difficulties in accessing government benefits. Out of 38 participants, a majority of 55.3% reported that they do face difficulties, while 13.2% stated that they experience such issues sometimes. Only 31.6% of respondents mentioned that they do not face any problems.

The follow-up responses in Fig 3.23.b revealed that the major challenges include certificate delays, lack of proper government support, complicated procedures, insufficient information about schemes, and rejection of expenses or documents. These findings clearly indicate that although government schemes are available, many beneficiaries struggle to access them due to administrative delays and lack of awareness.

Therefore, simplifying procedures, improving communication, and ensuring timely processing are essential to make government benefits more accessible and effective.

3.24 OPINION ON THE SUFFICIENCY OF GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR PARA ATHLETES

Figure 3.24: Opinion on the sufficiency of government schemes for Para athletes



Source: Primary data

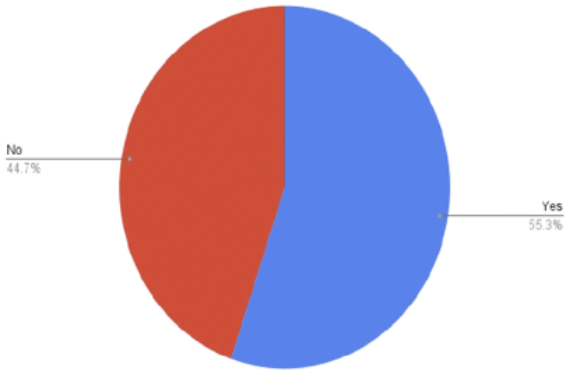
The survey findings indicate that a majority of respondents feel that existing government schemes are not sufficient to meet the economic needs of Para-athletes. Out of 38 respondents, 50% clearly stated that the current schemes are inadequate, highlighting concerns about limited financial assistance, lack of accessibility, or ineffective implementation. Meanwhile, 36.8% of respondents were uncertain and selected " Maybe," suggesting that while some support exists, they feel it may not be consistent or comprehensive enough. Only 13.2% believed that the available schemes are sufficient. This perception can be justified by the continuing financial and structural challenges faced by Para-athletes, such as high training and equipment costs, expenses related to travel and participation in competitions, and the need for

specialised coaching and medical support. In many cases, government assistance is either limited in amount, delayed in disbursement, or difficult to access due to complex administrative procedures and lack of awareness. As a

result, even when schemes are available, they do not adequately cover the actual economic requirements of Para-athletes.

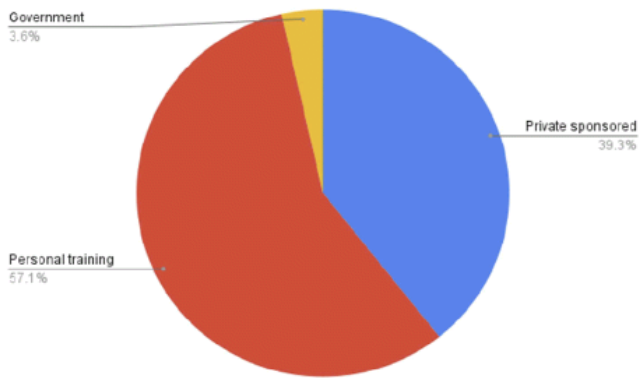
3.25 AVAILABILITY OF TRAINING FACILITIES AMONG RESPONDENTS

Figure 3.25.a: Access to training facilities among respondents



Source: Primary data

Figure 3.25.b: Types of training facilities received by respondents



The survey analysis shows a mixed experience regarding access to training facilities for Para-athletes. Out of 38 respondents, 55.3% reported that they do receive some form of training support, indicating that slightly more than half have access to facilities or guidance. However, a significant 44.7% stated that they do not receive any training facility. This highlights a major gap, as almost half of the respondents are deprived of essential training opportunities needed for improvement and competitive performance. Overall, the results suggest that while training facilities are available to some extent, they are not adequately distributed or accessible to all Para-athletes, pointing to the need for better infrastructure and inclusive sports development initiatives.

Meanwhile out of 55.3% respondents who received training support were included in different kinds of training facility like the above figure shows ,57.1 % of majority population received personal training, 39.3% Para-athletes received private sponsored training and only

3.6 % Para-athletes received government sponsored training facility. This response reflects a need for strong support and improvement from Government side to provide better training and adequate support for the betterment of Para-athletes.

3.26 COACHING SUPPORT AMONG ATHLETES

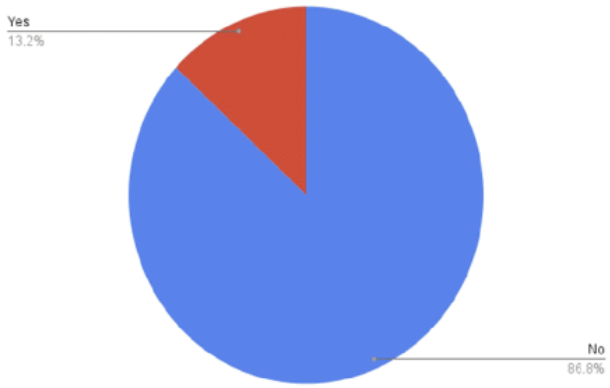
Figure 3.26: Coaching support among athletes

sports-related expenses. About 21.1% (10 respondents) manage financial stress through personal savings, indicating self-reliance among a smaller group. A limited number of respondents rely on loans (10.5%), which suggest that borrowing is not a preferred option due to repayment burdens. Sponsorships are the least used method, with only 7.9% benefiting from them,

highlighting the lack of adequate external financial support. Overall, the graph reveals that Para athletes largely depend on family assistance, reflecting insufficient institutional and sponsorship support for managing financial challenges in sports.

3.28 ALTERNATIVE INCOME STRATEGIES

Figure 3.28: Alternative income strategies



Source: Primary data

The pie chart 3.28 reveals that a significant majority of respondents (86.8%) have not developed any alternative income strategies, while only 13.2% have taken steps to generate additional income beyond their primary source. This large disparity highlights a strong dependence on a single income source. The absence of alternative income strategies may be due to factors such as:

Lack of employment

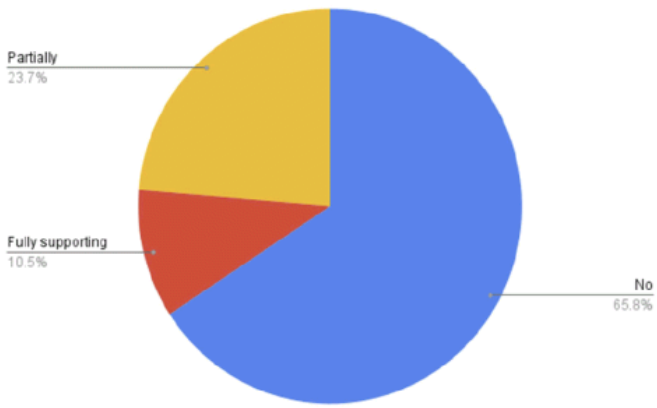
opportunities Limited skills or

Lack of awareness about income diversification options the small proportion of respondents who have developed alternative income strategies suggests that only a few individuals are proactive in managing financial risks. This situation makes the majority of respondents more vulnerable to unexpected financial difficulties such as job loss, inflation, or emergency expenses. The findings indicate a low level of financial preparedness among respondents.

Income diversification is a key component of financial stability, and the lack of it may lead to long-term economic insecurity.

Figure 3.29 CONTRIBUTION TO FAMILY INCOME

Figure 3.29 Contribution to family income



Source: Primary data

The pie chart 3.29 shows that the highest number of respondents falls under categories such as ' Not contributing' , ' Nothing' , ' Very small' , or ' Little bit' . This indicates that most respondents contribute minimally or not at all to their

household income. Only a small percentage of respondents reported partial, half, or full contribution, suggesting that a limited number of individuals are financially independent or actively supporting their families. The

uneven distribution across categories reflects varying financial capacities among respondents. Several reasons may explain this pattern:

Majority of respondents being students

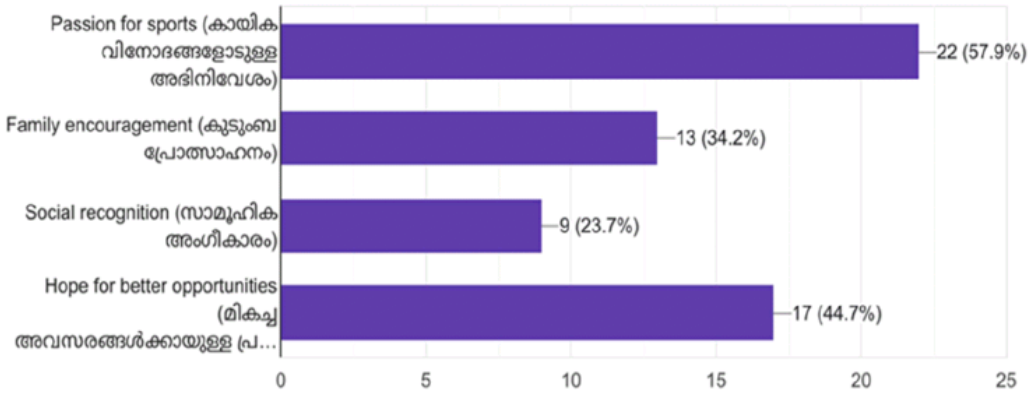
Lack of stable employment

Low income levels

Dependence on parents or guardians the graph clearly indicates a high level of financial dependency among respondents. Minimal contribution to family income suggests limited earning ability, which aligns with the findings from Graph 29 regarding the lack of alternative income sources.

Figure 3.30 MOTIVATION TO CONTINUE SPORTS

Figure 3.30 Motivation to continue sports



Source: Primary data

This graph 3.30 shows the factors that motivate respondents to continue their sports

intrinsic motivation play a crucial role in sustaining participation in sports. This is followed by hope for better opportunities (44.7%), suggesting that many respondents view sports as a pathway to future career prospects, recognition, or improved socio-economic status. Family encouragement motivates 34.2% of the respondents, highlighting the importance of emotional and moral support from family members in overcoming difficulties. In comparison, social recognition is the least influential factor, reported by 23.7%, indicating that external appreciation is less significant than internal passion and future aspirations in motivating individuals to continue their sports journey.

CHAPTER 4:

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the major findings of the study on the, A socio-economic study of livelihood challenges and resilience of Para athletes in Kerala. Based on the primary data collected from respondents, the chapter analyses demographic characteristics, economic background, employment status, access to government support, training facilities, and motivational factors influencing Para-athletes. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the realities faced by Para-athletes, highlighting both their struggles and strengths. Drawing from these findings, the chapter further offers practical and policy-oriented recommendations aimed at improving the socio-economic well-being, sporting opportunities and institutional support for Para-athletes in Kerala. The chapter concludes by summarizing the key insights of the study and emphasizing the need for inclusive, sustainable, and athlete-centric interventions to promote dignity, empowerment, and long-term development of Para-athletes.

4.2. Findings

4.2.1 Age Distribution of Para- athletes in Kerala

The age distribution of Para-athletes in Kerala represents a wide range of age groups, reflecting the inclusiveness at different stages of life. The younger and early adult age group had the highest concentration of age distribution, which suggests that many differently- abled individuals are being introduced to Para-sports at an early age. This early participation helps them built their confidence, physical rehabilitation, and social integration. Simultaneously, the participation of middle and higher age groups highlights their continued involvement in sports against physical, social, and economic

ages while also retaining athletes into adulthood, emphasizing sports as a lifelong pursuit for persons with disabilities.

4.2.2Gender Representation

Para-sports are mainly male dominated, with 70% of respondents being male and 30% being female. The lower representation of female Para-athletes may be due to the social and cultural norms, mobility and safety concerns, limited access to sporting opportunities, and inadequate encouragement for women with disabilities to engage in competitive sports. Despite this gap, the growing participation of female Para-athletes shows gradual improvement, though social and cultural barriers.

4.2.3Type of Disability

The study includes individuals with diverse disabilities such as locomotors disability, visual impairment, mental retardation, spinal cord injury, Down syndrome, and polio. The largest groups of participants are athletes who have locomotion disabilities and spinal cord injuries. This pattern shows the inclusive nature of Para-sports in Kerala.

4.2.4Type of sports participated

In Kerala Para-athletes participate in a variety of sports events like athletics, Para badminton, swimming, football, wheelchair basketball, throwing events, etc. Among these, the highest number of participation is for athletics-related events. This is most likely due to the lower infrastructure requirements and unavailability of facilities. This diversity reflects the adaptability and competitive spirit of Para-athletes, and it also indicates the need to expand support for a broader range of sports disciplines.

4.2.5Educational Background

Almost half of the respondents have completed only the primary education, while only 40% have attained undergraduate education or equivalent education. Higher education facilities remain limited for Para-athletes due to economic difficulties and accessibility issues.

4.2.6Family size and background

In general, most of the respondents belong to medium-sized families, with four- and five-member households. This suggests that the par-athletes in Kerala have financial responsibilities within the families, which influences their level of economic and emotional support available for sports participation and daily needs.

4.2.7Monthly Household Income

The findings shows that a significant proportion of Para-athletes come from economically weak households. About 34.2% of respondents reported a monthly household income below

₹ 10,000, while another 31.6% earned between ₹ 10,001 and ₹ 25,000. Thus, more than two-thirds of the respondents belong to families earning less than ₹ 25,000 per month. This income pattern highlights the financial vulnerability of Para-athletes' families and suggests limited capacity to meet expenses related to training, sports equipment, medical care, nutrition, and travel for competitions.

4.2.8Source of Family Income

heavy dependence on informal employment indicates income insecurity and limited long-term financial stability among Para-athletes' households.

4.2.9Income from Sports Activities

The findings clearly indicate that Para-sports do not provide a dependable source of income for most athletes. A large majority of respondents (84.2%) reported that they do not earn any monthly income from sports activities. The remaining respondents earn only small and irregular amounts through prize money, incentives, or allowances. This shows that participation in Para-sports is not financially rewarding for most athletes and cannot be relied upon as a primary source of livelihood.

4.2.10 Employment Status Apart from Sports

With regard to employment outside sports, the findings show that 76.3% of the respondents are not engaged in any form of employment apart from sports. Among the small proportion who is employed, most are involved in informal or part-time work with limited income and job security. This indicates restricted access to stable employment opportunities for Para-athletes, which further contributes to their economic dependency.

4.2.11 Difficulty in Balancing Sports and Livelihood

The study also examined the ability of Para-athletes to balance sports participation with income-generating activities. The findings reveal that 51.4% of respondents find it difficult to balance sports and livelihood, while 24.3% reported experiencing such difficulties occasionally. This suggests that training schedules, competitions, and

4.2.12 Major Economic Challenges

The major economic challenges faced by Para-athletes include lack of stable income (68.4%), high training and travel costs (52.6%), and lack of sponsorship or financial support (44.7%). In addition, medical and rehabilitation expenses (31.6%) and issues related to unemployment or underemployment were also reported. These challenges collectively limit consistent participation, performance improvement, and long-term career development in Para-sports.

4.2.13 Discrimination in Employment

The findings of the study indicate that Para-athletes face notable discrimination in employment opportunities, which significantly affects their economic stability. A large proportion of respondents belong to low-income households, with 31.6% earning below

₹ 10,000 and 34.2% earning between ₹ 10,001– ₹ 25,000 per month, as shown in the monthly household income pie chart. This income pattern suggests limited access to stable and well-paying employment. Discrimination due to disability often restricts career growth, resulting in dependence on daily wage work (34.2%) or private business and informal jobs (34.2%). Such employment insecurity negatively impacts self-esteem, long-term financial planning, and professional development.

4.2.14 Awareness of Government Schemes

The study reveals a low level of awareness regarding Kerala state government schemes among Para-athletes. While respondents reported relatively better awareness

of central government schemes, state-level schemes remain underutilized. This lack of awareness contributes to limited access to education support, sports incentives, and financial assistance. The findings suggest that inadequate dissemination of information prevents Para-athletes

from fully benefiting from welfare initiatives meant to support their socio-economic and sporting development.

4.2.15 Access to Government Benefits

Despite the existence of multiple welfare and sports-related schemes, the majority of Para-athletes have not received any direct financial benefit. This is clearly reflected in the sports income pie chart, where 84.2% of respondents reported no monthly income from sports. Only a very small percentage earn below ₹ 2,000 or between ₹ 2,001–₹ 5,000, while an extremely limited number receive amounts above ₹ 5,000. Complex application procedures, lack of guidance, documentation hurdles, and administrative delays discourage Para-athletes from accessing these benefits, highlighting serious gaps in policy implementation.

4.2.16 Satisfaction with Government Support

Most respondents expressed dissatisfaction with existing government support mechanisms. Although 60.5% of Para-athletes have access to personal financial resources such as bank accounts, this financial inclusion has not translated into effective utilization of government schemes. The dissatisfaction stems from insufficient financial assistance, delayed benefits, and lack of follow-up support. These findings point to a mismatch between policy intentions and ground-level execution, indicating the need for more inclusive and athlete-friendly support systems.

4.2.17 Access to Training Facilities

The study highlights unequal access to training facilities among Para-athletes. Nearly

half of the respondents reported inadequate access to professional coaching, structured training environments, and proper sports infrastructure. Financial limitations, combined with low household income levels and minimal sports-related earnings, restrict their ability to invest in