



Influence of Sports-themed movies on aspiring sportspersons of Gujarat

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Abstract: Generally movies / films are seen as means of entertainment. However, there are movies, sports genre in particular, not only facilitate social development but also inspire people for an action. A sport-themed Film has ingredients like sport setting, events and life of an athlete, who is also the protagonist. Such movies highlight grit, sacrifices and success of an athlete that leaves long lasting impact on the audience. Moreover, these movies have the potential to inspire the younger generation to build remarkable personality along with career. Last decade witnessed film-makers portraying the success of legendary sportspersons on 70mm. This paper looks at how sports-themed films have influenced teenage sportspersons of Gujarat and thereby affecting their on-field approach and performance. The research study is envisioned to explore facets of sports Biopic/ movies inspiring sports persons/athletes. The research study adopts quantitative research approaches in the form of survey..

Key Words: Sports, Biopics, Sportspersons, Inspiration, Gujarat, Movies.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Mass media is communication - written, broadcast, or spoken, — that reaches a large audience. It includes television, radio, advertising, movies, newspapers, magazines and internet or social media is the latest ‘channel’ added. Mass Media is one of the vital forces in modern culture which influences the society, especially in India.

One of the major functions of mass communication is inform and entertain. Films are a major source of entertainment. Recreation is an important part of each one’s life, thus watching a movie provides this avenue. The moment the person starts watching a movie he/she enters into a new world, forgetting all our worries and our mind is at ease (Rashatbekovna, 2021).

From a marginal beginning in early 20th century, Indian cinema has become influential art of form which has made an impact across the world (Joshi, 1999). According to Kumar (2020), India’s romance with cinema started when Lumiere Brothers held their ‘cinematographic exhibition in Bombay (now Mumbai) in 1896.

The first Indian full-length silent movie, was Raja Harishchandra made by D. G. Phalke, popular as Dada Saheb Phalke, in 1913. Dada Saheb followed it the “visual presentation” with Lanka Dahan (1917) and Krishna Janma (1918).

1.1 Bollywood

Interestingly, the term “Bollywood” which has become synonymous with Indian Hindi cinema, owes its origins to film critics from Mumbai who were first to coin the word in 1970s and 1980s. Bollywood was casually used instead of All-India Hindi film but its regular usage made it popular and acceptable, says Kumar (2014).

The technological advancements and understanding, witnessed dialogues and songs complimenting visual presentation that led to the dramatic flowering of cinema in the many diverse languages and regions of India. From black and white to colour and visual presentation to visual effects, Indian cinema has travelled long way in 100 years.

1.2 Sports and Movies

Sports helps an individual to build not only the physical aspects but also develops strategic, analytical, leadership skills, goal setting and risk taking. Simply builds a character.

Interestingly, much before Dada Saheb Phalke in 1913, Harishchandra Sakharam Bhatwadekar shot a scene of a wrestling match in Bombay's Hanging Gardens. Thus, The Wrestlers, became India's first movie in 1896. Popularly known as Sawe Dada, Bhatwadekar fascinated by Lumiere Brothers’ exhibition had ordered camera from London (Kumar, 2020).



As compared to 20th century, the early part of 21st century has seen Bollywood producing lot of sports biopics with several leading heroes essaying athletic roles and garnering appreciation (Tilak, 2019).

Given the multidimensional and intersectional nature of genres in sports, there exist examination and significance of sports, which might explain the growing collaboration between the fields of sport studies and film studies that has steadily increased over the past few years (Leconte, 2020).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To explore whether non-fictional sports movies creates an emotional appeal and inspires youngsters
- To study if sportsperson's life narrated or presented through cinema manages to attract teenagers and aspiring sportspersons
- To study whether aspiring sportspersons are finding any relation with the struggles and challenges faced by the legendary athletes

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Movies are very much popular among teenagers, who easily get influenced – positive and negative - by the characters portrayed. Watching movies increase rapidly. According to Rashatbekovna, most of the people addicted to watch movie in cinema, especially teenagers. There are so many advantages and disadvantages about watching movies.

A classic theme for sports films narrates success stories of an individual or team prevailing in hostile conditions. In the world of sports, the stories that are usually the hardest to believe are the ones that actually happened (Tilak, 2019).

In the sports film such athletic contests play a central role in defining the main characters. There are many Bollywood movies which are based on life of inspiring sports personalities. The story of an upcoming star or a forgotten hero fighting against all odds to defeat the bad guy and lift the cup sounds tailor-made for Bollywood.

The more successful sports bio-pics seem to be those where the sporting figure has challenged the system, or overcome great adversity to become the legends they are. Narratives driven on the premise that the underdog can succeed have always proved a popular draw at the box office (Cheshire, 2014).

By offering a glimpse of the real and often hidden stories behind the athlete's (or team's) personae, makers of biopics not only solidify the portrayal of genuine celebrities but they also critique, between awe and excess, broader narratives of sport stardom and its reproduction in film (Leconte, 2020).

Without any doubt biopics have been most popular and liked genre of Hindi film industry. Moviegoers want to see background, struggle, problem and insights of popular personalities. (Pundir, 2018)

Sports being priority of majority of Indian audience specifically the teenagers and youth always enjoys upper hand even in cinema. Moreover, sports has been credited for promoting nationalism, integrity and unity. Biopics based on sports/sportsmen had had great run at box office (Sangwan, 2018).

Film of sports genera achieve a great success around the world and Bollywood film makers have realized that sports film are a good medium to communicate with several social issues (Ghosal, 2018).

Sports biopics have become the flavour of the season for Bollywood industry with the success of movies like Paan Singh Tomar, Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, Mary Kom, MS Dhoni – The Untold story, and Dangal, filmmakers are itching to document the hardships of Indian sports stars (Dutta, 2021).

One of the reasons for the success of these sports bio-pics at the box-office is that the viewers seek inspiration in the underlying messages in these stories (Dubey, 2019).

Bollywood, in recent times, has realised the potential of biopics of sports personalities do get the cash registers ringing in theatres and later, when the rights were sold to TV channels. Stars of yesteryears who won medals but unfortunately forgotten are now getting the glory they deserve (Pundir, 2018).

3. METHOD:

The study was carried out through a quantitative analysis method. Around 155 teenagers and aspiring sportspersons from third-tier cities or towns of Gujarat have been surveyed. They were chosen on purposive sampling basis. The major reason for selecting this age bracket was to study whether sports biopics impact or influence the upcoming sports stars.

The main objective of this research paper is to study whether sports biopics are creating awareness about the sports/sportsmen, also to know whether aspiring sportspersons, who work hard for on-field achievement, are drawing any inspiration from these sports biopic films.



3.1 Rationale for selection of movies

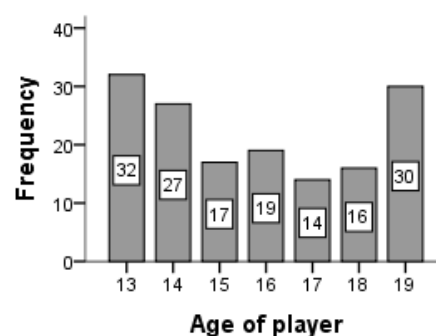
Moreover, research papers on Impact of Movies on youth and society have also been referred for the study. These movies Bhaag Milkha Bhaag (2013), Mary Kom (2014), Dangal (2016), Budhia Singh: Born To Run (2016), Azhar (2016), M.S Dhoni : The Untold Story (2017), Soorma (2018) and Saina (2021) released in last decade – 2012 to 2019 – were considered.

Inclusion of movies based on those movies were related to sports and sports played the central theme. Biopic based on cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar was more of a documentary, so was excluded.

4. MATERIALS / DATA:

Table 1: Number of respondents according to Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 13	32	20.6	20.6	20.6
14	27	17.4	17.4	38.1
15	17	11.0	11.0	49.0
16	19	12.3	12.3	61.3
17	14	9.0	9.0	70.3
18	16	10.3	10.3	80.6
19	30	19.4	19.4	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	



Statistics

Age of player

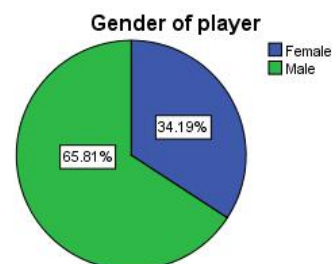
N	Valid	155
	Missing	0
Mean		15.80
Median		16.00

The respondents selected were teenagers – 13 to 19 – and aspiring sportspersons. Many experts feel that Primary reason for considering this age bracket 13-19 was that at this stage of life decision regarding career is taken. Moreover, these teenagers have good knowledge of their respective games.

Concerning the age group of the respondents, it was revealed that majority – 20.6% - were 13 year-olds followed by 19 year-olds with 19.4%. Among them, 17 year-olds were least with 9%.

Table 2: Number of respondents according to Gender / Sex

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Female	53	34.2	34.2	34.2
Male	102	65.8	65.8	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	



The population was selected by stratified random sampling. Out of 155, nearly 66% were male respondents while 34% were female.



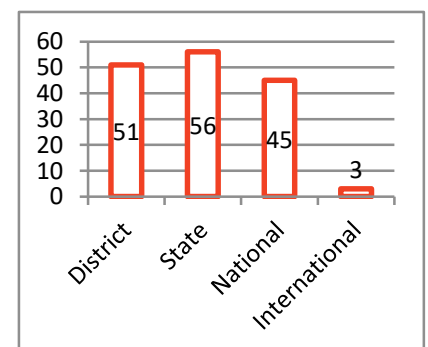
Table 3: Number of respondents according to sports

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Archery	1	.6	.6	.6
Athletics	18	11.6	11.6	12.3
Badminton	10	6.5	6.5	18.7
Chess	1	.6	.6	19.4
Cricket	9	5.8	5.8	25.2
Football	21	13.5	13.5	38.7
Handball	7	4.5	4.5	43.2
Hockey	20	12.9	12.9	56.1
Judo	2	1.3	1.3	57.4
Valid Kabaddi	1	.6	.6	58.1
Kho-kho	4	2.6	2.6	60.6
Netball	2	1.3	1.3	61.9
Swimming	2	1.3	1.3	63.2
Table Tennis	24	15.5	15.5	78.7
Taekwondo	6	3.9	3.9	82.6
Tennis	8	5.2	5.2	87.7
Volleyball	16	10.3	10.3	98.1
Wrestling	3	1.9	1.9	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Though, the sampling was purposive considering the research topic, the samples selected were random. Maximum respondents 15.5% were table tennis players while footballers and hockey players were 13.5% and 12.9% respectively. The respondents who can be bracketed as track and field athletes, were 12.3%.

Table 4: Highest level of play

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
District	51	32.9	32.9	32.9
International	3	1.9	1.9	34.8
Valid National	45	29.0	29.0	63.9
State	56	36.1	36.1	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

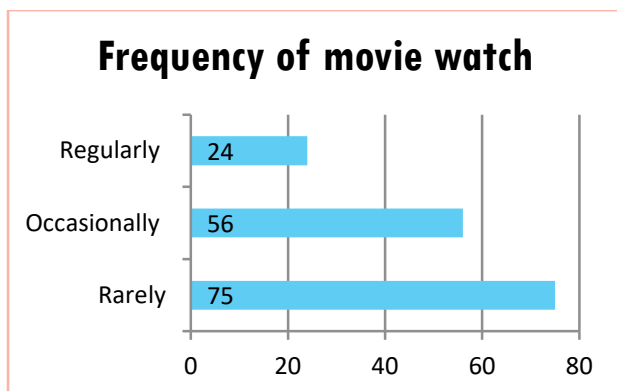


The survey revealed that majority of the students were state level players with 36%. The district level players comprised 33%. Respondents who have played at the international level were the least 2%. The National level athletes formed the rest of 29%.



5. FINDINGS:

Q.1 How often you watch movies



Frequency	Nos.	Percentage
Rarely	75	48.3
Occasionally	56	36.1
Regularly	24	15.4

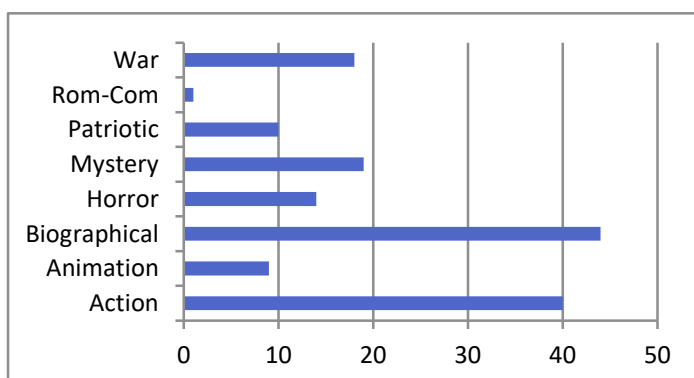
Out of 155 surveyed, nearly half of the respondents 48.3% very rarely watched movies followed by 36.1% respondents who watched movies occasionally. Respondents who watched movies regularly were the least with 15.4%. It can be inferred that majority of respondents don't watch movies on regular basis. One of the reasons was that their practice schedule in morning and evening, with afternoon time dedicated to studies and relaxation. Moreover, these young participants are focused and have been following strict practice regimes.

Q.2 Favourite Genre

Your fav genre

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Action	40	25.8	25.8	25.8
Animation	9	5.8	5.8	31.6
Biographical	44	28.4	28.4	60.0
Horror	14	9.0	9.0	69.0
Mystery	19	12.3	12.3	81.3
Patriotic	10	6.5	6.5	87.7
Rom-Com	1	.6	.6	88.4
War	18	11.6	11.6	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Nearly 28% of respondents said their favourite genre is biopics. It can be inferred that they are drawing inspiration. Around 25% of the respondents expressed Action movies as their favourite genre. Less than 1% of respondents termed Romantic-Comedy as their favourite genre. It can be inferred that teenagers opt for action packed movies which can also be inspirational.





Q.3 Sports Biopics watched by the Respondents / Players

Movie	Out of 155	Percentage
Bhaag Milkha Bhaag (2013)	90	60%
Mary Kom (2014)	46	29.6%
Dangal (2016)	98	63.22%
Azhar (2016)	24	15.4%
Budhia (2016)	9	5.8%
M.S.Dhoni (2017)	101	65.16%
Soorma (2018)	42	27.07%
Saina (2019)	29	18.70%

Around 65.16% had watched the movie. Dangal was the second top grosser among the respondents with 63.22% while Bhaag Milkha Bhaag released in 2013 was watched by 60% respondents. Budhia wasn't among the popular movies and only 5.8% respondents had watched the movie based on an athlete's life.

Among the 8 sports Biopics selected for the survey, MS Dhoni: An Untold Story was easily the most watched. One of the reasons can be Dhoni - the character - played by late Sushant Singh Rajput was that movie promised to highlight 'the untold story' about the former India captain, especially his personal life which he was extremely secretive of. The

curiosity to know how the sports superstar behaves with family and friends was natural. Moreover, it was devoid of any kind of scandal or grapevine events.

Q.4 Attraction towards biopics

What attracts you

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Both ON and OFF field life of a player	98	63.2	63.2	63.2
You want to see OFF-THE-FIELD life of a player	9	5.8	5.8	69.0
You want to see ON-THE-FIELD life of a player	48	31.0	31.0	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

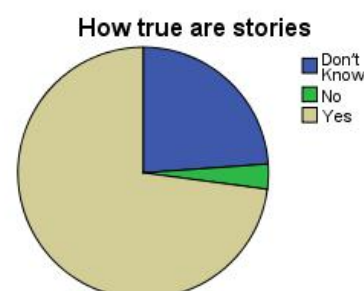
The former India captain had already lead India to memorable wins including two World Cups – T20 in 2007 and ODI 2011. Through his decorum on the field Dhoni has had set an example, naturally youngsters were curious to know more about his life off the field along with the much-talked his leadership qualities. Not surprisingly, having watched

Dhoni's on-the-field conduct, aspiring sportspersons wanted to see MS off the field. For more than 63% respondents the major attraction of Biopic was the witness and emulate the conduct of the player on and off the field. Nearly 32% said that they were interested in players' off the field conduct. Many aspiring sportspersons closely watch players' off-field deeds as they are heroes for them.

Q.5 Biopic reflect true stories?

How true are stories

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Don't Know	37	23.9	23.9	23.9
No	5	3.2	3.2	27.1
Yes	113	72.9	72.9	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	



It is never easy to make a sports biopic, as on many occasions director tries to take liberty of adding something fiction to give it an entertainment value. When the question about these biopics being fictional or true stories was raised, 113 out of 155, that nearly 73% felt that story wasn't imaginary. The movie depicted

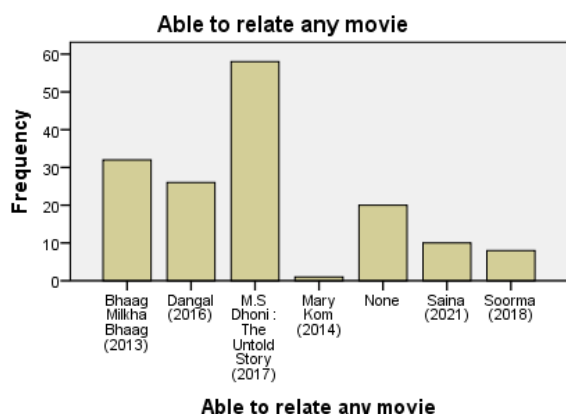


correct sequence of sportsperson’s life. Nearly 3% felt that these biopics had some imaginary events shown by the filmmaker. Milkha Singh’s affair with foreign player, Mahavir Phogat meeting his daughter at camp. However, 24% were not able to decide whether the story was completely true or there were a few imaginary events shown.

Q.6 Are you able to relate any challenges of the biopic?

Able to relate any movie

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bhaag Milkha Bhaag (2013)	32	20.6	20.6	20.6
Dangal (2016)	26	16.8	16.8	37.4
M.S Dhoni : The Untold Story (2017)	58	37.4	37.4	74.8
Mary Kom (2014)	1	.6	.6	75.5
None	20	12.9	12.9	88.4
Saina (2021)	10	6.5	6.5	94.8
Soorma (2018)	8	5.2	5.2	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

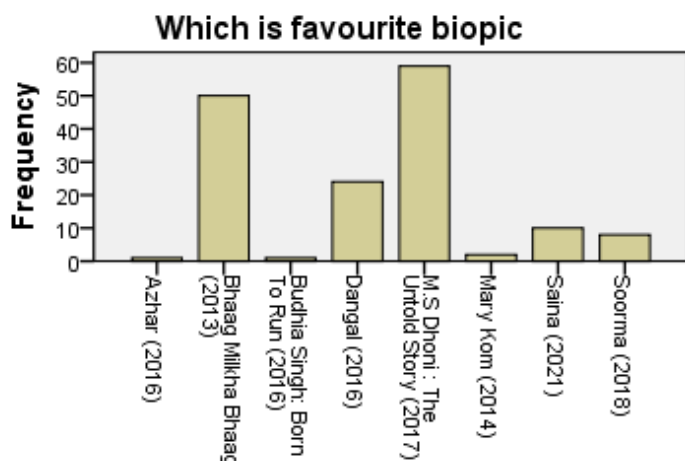


A movie becomes successful when the audience is able to establish some kind of relation with the on-screen characters. Success of M.S. Dhoni: An Untold Story lies in the fact that people were able to relate with his modest upbringing, struggle and hardships. Support from home and coaches is key during the budding days which most important. More than 37% respondents said that they were able to relate their challenges with MS Dhoni’s. Nearly 21% felt they are facing the on-field challenges like Milkha Singh, presented in Bhaag Milkha Bhaag. Though Farhan Akhtar starrer Bhaag Milkha Bhaag attracted a good number of eye-balls, cricket and Dhoni’s popularity made a big difference.

Q.7 Biopic liked the most?

Which is favourite biopic

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Azhar (2016)	1	.6	.6	.6
Bhaag Milkha Bhaag (2013)	50	32.3	32.3	32.9
Budhia Singh: Born To Run (2016)	1	.6	.6	33.5
Dangal (2016)	24	15.5	15.5	49.0
M.S Dhoni : The Untold Story (2017)	59	38.1	38.1	87.1
Mary Kom (2014)	2	1.3	1.3	88.4
Saina (2021)	10	6.5	6.5	94.8
Soorma (2018)	8	5.2	5.2	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	



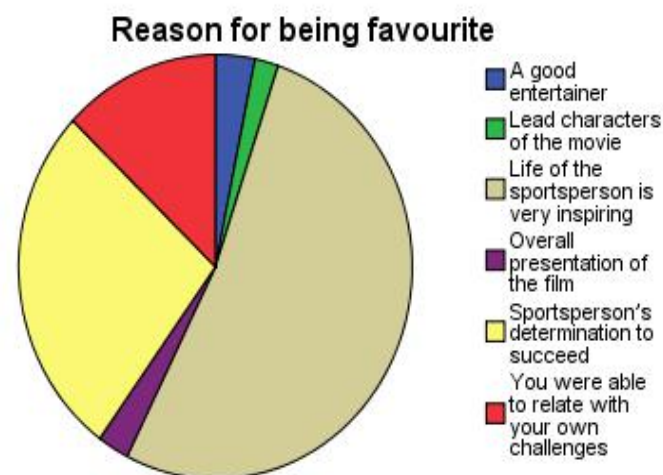
MS Dhoni: The Untold Story which was released in 2017 was the favourite among the participants. The late-Shushant Singh starrer attracted 38.1% followed by Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra directed Bhag Milkha Bhag. The movie based on legendary athlete Milkha Singh was liked by 32.2%. . One may argue about legendary Milkha Singh not being contemporary for many youngsters but badminton star Saina, boxing champion Mary Kom and Phogats of Dangal have undergone struggles. But cricket's fame proved crucial. However, Emran Hashmi starrer Azhar garnered less than 1% clearly suggests that people are least interested those who are

involved in scandals as serious as match-fixing. Three sports-themed movies were released in 2016. However unlike Azhar and Budhia, Nitesh Tiwari directed Dangal was not only hit at the Box Office but also among the participants – 15.5%. Saina managed to attract 6.5%.

Q.8 Reason for liking sports biopic the most?

Reason for being favourite

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A good entertainer	5	3.2	3.2	3.2
Lead characters of the movie	3	1.9	1.9	5.2
Life of the sportsperson is very inspiring	81	52.3	52.3	57.4
Overall presentation of the film	4	2.6	2.6	60.0
Sportsperson's determination to succeed	42	27.1	27.1	87.1
You were able to relate with your own challenges	20	12.9	12.9	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	



Biopics also reveal the ways to overcome all the obstacles in not only sports but also off the field. Captain Cool MS Dhoni's life was certainly stimulating. It was no surprise that the more than half 52.3% aspiring sportspersons termed Mahi's life as inspiration. The movie clearly showcased the way Mahi handle challenging situations in real life. Milkha Singh, Saina Nehwal, Sandeep Singh and Geeta Phogat's determination proved crucial in their respective success and one of the reasons for it being favourite among participants. Interestingly, among the sportspersons selected, 11.6% were track and field athletes, 5.9% cricketers and wrestlers forming 1.9%. One of the reasons for the participants to like a biopic was that they were able to relate their own on and off

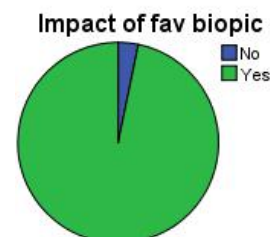
the field challenges and struggles. Lead characters, Presentation and entertainment aspect didn't impress them.



Q.9 Has your favourite biopic made any impact on you?

Impact of fav biopic

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No	5	3.2	3.2	3.2
Valid Yes	150	96.8	96.8	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

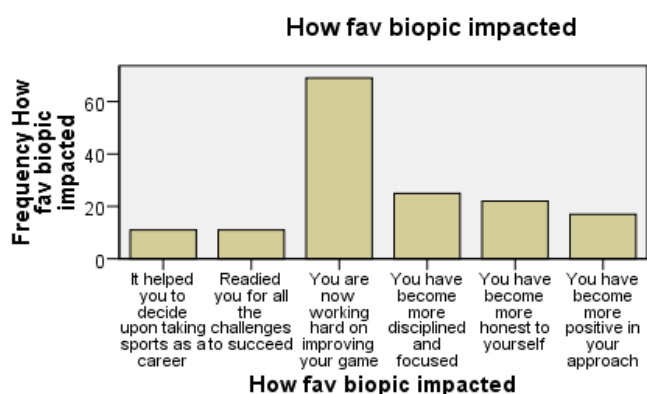


Dhoni has time again displayed his leadership credentials, especially not shying away from any responsibilities. Whether it was his decision to come ahead in World Cup final against Sri Lanka at Wankhede Stadium in 2011 or backing rookie Joginder Sharma in 2007 T20 WC final against Pakistan, Dhoni has been hailed as most dynamic captain. When a youngster looks upon someone as a role model, these are some of the qualities that the youth wishes to see. Moreover, Geeta Phogat, Milkha Singh, Sandeep Singh, Mary Kom and Saina Nehwal’s grit was vital in their respective success. Biopics of these stars portrayed the same and impact was visible. These greats have been role models for many. Not surprisingly, nearly 97% of 155 participants admitted that biopics did make an impact on them. Movies do make impact and the sports biopics did make on teenage sportspersons as well.

Q.10 How has the biopic you liked the most impacted you?

How fav biopic impacted

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid It helped you to decide upon taking sports as a career	11	7.1	7.1	7.1
Readied you for all the challenges to succeed	11	7.1	7.1	14.2
You are now working hard on improving your game	69	44.5	44.5	58.7
You have become more disciplined and focused	25	16.1	16.1	74.8
You have become more honest to yourself	22	14.2	14.2	89.0
You have become more positive in your approach	17	11.0	11.0	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	



Taking a cue from sportspersons, whether it was MS Dhoni or Milkha Singh or Geeta Phogat or even Saina Nehwal, one thing is sure there is no alternative to hard-work.

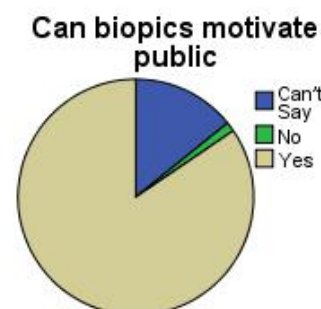
It wasn’t surprising that after watching movies the young Turks have shifted their focus on improving respective games. Nearly 45% have had started putting an extra efforts as well. Around 17% happened to have become more disciplined while 14.2% became more honest with themselves, analyzing strength and weakness.



Q.11 Can these biopics motivate people to take up sports?

Can biopics motivate public

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Can't Say	22	14.2	14.2
	No	2	1.3	15.5
	Yes	131	84.5	100.0
	Total	155	100.0	100.0



The participants also felt that the biopics were not only inspiration for sportspersons but for common man was well. Around 85% felt that these biopics has the potential to encourage people to take up sports. Dangal which portrayed real life of Haryanavi wrestler Mahavir Singh Phogat, who trained his daughters to become world-class wrestlers talked about gender equality.

Farhan Akhtar in Bhag Milkha Bhag very well portrayed life of Milkha Singh, who experienced horrific pain of partition to shouldering hopes of Indians at Olympics and winning Gold at Asian Games. The challenges, sacrifices, struggles and determination of a person can helps him to conquer the imagination of the nation. Even Soorma of hockey legend Sandeep Singh talks about how a person can make a comeback after hitting the nadir.

Q.12 Reason for motivating common man

Being an open-ended questions, responses varied. However, general perception is such biopics introduces common man with all elements associated with games, especially the training and facilities required for a player. A strong determination displayed by mother-of-three Mary Kom showcases one overcome barriers to become a champion. Earlier, people were unaware but now they know how a sports can be approached to make a career. Sports develops personality both mentally and physically, wins admiration, gives name and fame and above all serve the nation. There were a few who self-determination matters while selecting sports as the career. An overwhelming majority of the respondents opined that sports movies or biopics are certainly motivates a common man to pick sports as a career. Smaller pockets of the respondents said that unless a person is determined, sports can't be taken as a career despite the movies being inspirational in nature.

Gender and Relating to biopic

Gender of player * Able to relate any movie Crosstabulation

	Able to relate any movie							Total
	Bhaag Milkha Bhaag (2013)	Dangal (2016)	M.S Dhoni : The Untold Story (2017)	Mary Kom (2014)	None	Saina (2021)	Soorma (2018)	
Gender of Female player	7	15	12	0	10	7	2	53
Gender of Male player	25	11	46	1	10	3	6	102
Total	32	26	58	1	20	10	8	155



Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.977 ^a	6	.001
Likelihood Ratio	21.991	6	.001
N of Valid Cases	155		

Dangal which narrated story of 2010 Commonwealth Game gold medalist Geeta Phogat and her father's achievements and aspirations mesmerized nearly 29% of 53 female participants. Interestingly, none of 53 girls were able to relate with the Omung Kumar directed movie and Priyanka Chopra starrer Mary Kom. As the significance value is .001 it is inferred that sports athletes were able to relate with the movies or struggles of the legends.

6. CONCLUSION / RESULT:

This research study was envisioned to explore whether non-fictional sports movies creates an emotional appeal and inspires youngsters, To study if sportsperson's life narrated or presented through cinema manages to attract teenagers and aspiring sportspersons and To study whether aspiring sportspersons are finding any relation with the struggles and challenges faced by the legendary athletes.

The study enlightened several facets sport biopics and its influence on young minds. Some of the key finds of the study revealed that biopics do make an impact on youngsters. Moreover, it's not the actor or actress or director but the life of sportsperson that makes the sports biopics unique. Neeraj Pandey directed and Late Shushant Singh Rajput starrer MS Dhoni: An Untold Story personifies it.

Moreover, the findings also revealed that people believe whatever is shown in biopics are true events.

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