

## **BIOGRAPHICAL METHOD RESEARCH IN SPORT**

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**Abstract:** An increasing number of academic fields, including literature, history, sociology, anthropology, social policy, use biographical methods in their studies. These techniques can be labeled by various terms, including autobiography, autoethnography, personal history, oral history, and life story. Biographies help us identify trends as well as unique aspects of life. A key issue in biographical research is objectivity and how to balance the particular and the universal, the individual and the common. The biographical method in sport is an analytical approach used to uncover the history of athletes and their sports organizations and provides an in-depth look at the athlete's place in the world of sport, focusing in particular on the role their personal life and experiences played in their sporting achievements.

**Keywords:** biographical method, science, history, sport

## **1. Introduction**

The use of biographical analysis as a method generally arises and develops across different disciplines, an excellent way to make theoretical sense of social phenomena. Depending on who writes the life story, we distinguish between autobiography (we write it ourselves, it is in some way a completed whole, a personal confession about a past life) and biography (it is written by other people after the stories).

The biographical method in scientific research is an approach to understanding scientific discoveries by exploring the lives of the scientists who made them. It involves investigating the background, education, personal and professional experiences, and motivation of scientists to gain insight into the process of scientific discovery. The biographical method is an interdisciplinary approach that draws upon techniques from history, anthropology, sociology, and psychology to analyze scientific life stories and elucidate their contribution to scientific knowledge.

In the biographical method, scientists become the subjects of inquiry, and their individual experiences and perspectives are studied to uncover their unique contributions

to scientific knowledge. This method is particularly useful for understanding the social, cultural, and intellectual contexts within which scientific discoveries occurred. For example, by examining the lives of scientists such as Albert Einstein, Charles Darwin, or Marie Curie, we can gain insight into the factors that influenced their work and ultimately led to groundbreaking discoveries.

One of the main advantages of the biographical method is that it highlights the social and cultural diversity that exists within scientific communities. By studying the biographies of scientists from different backgrounds, we can gain a better understanding of how gender, ethnicity, nationality, and social class influence scientific research. For example, the biographical method has been used to show how the social and cultural expectations placed on women scientists such as Rosalind Franklin and Lise Meitner influenced their scientific work and recognition.

Moreover, the biographical method provides a more dynamic and nuanced approach to understanding scientific discoveries. It recognizes that scientific theories and discoveries are not just a product of rational thought and experimen-

tation but are also shaped by personal experiences, values, and beliefs. By examining the biographies of scientists, we can see how their personal experiences influenced their scientific interests, hypotheses, and methods. For example, Einstein's fascination with the nature of light and space was influenced by his lifelong interest in philosophy and his personal experiences living in different cultures.

The biographical method is an important tool in scientific research that provides insight into the social, cultural, and personal factors that influence scientific discoveries. It is an interdisciplinary approach that draws upon techniques from multiple disciplines to analyze the life stories of scientists and elucidate their contribution to scientific knowledge. The biographical method is particularly useful for understanding the social and cultural diversity within scientific communities and provides a more nuanced approach to understanding scientific discoveries.

Defining a biographical method is not an easy task, although the name suggests that this approach is self-explanatory. However, biographical research arose from different theoretical paradigms, so certain terminological inconsistencies are

common - differently named terms sometimes refer to identical content, and it often happens that the same term is used for different research procedures. Although the typical subject of biographical research was an individual, this methodological procedure confirmed its validity by applying it to studies based on collective units of analysis. Thus, for example, some authors take the "history of family cases" as the basic unit of analysis, studying the transmission of family memory and the accumulation of biographical capital. The biographical method is extremely important and widespread in this research field today, and its contribution is unquestionable. It shows its special strength in exploratory studies dedicated to studying marginalized groups or discovering new connections between social phenomena (Ćosić, 2020).

## **2. Biographical approach to research**

One definition of a biographical account is a story told in the present about a person's experiences of events in the past and her or his expectations for the future (Nilsen 1997). The term 'biographical material' does however cover a wide range of empirical evidence: per-

sonal letters, diaries, photographs, written autobiographical accounts (life stories) and more (Nilsen, 2012).

The main questions of interest for biographical-theoretical research are how people "produce" biography in different cultural contexts and social situations, and what conditions, rules and patterns of construction can be observed in this process. Biographical research is interested in the processual and constructive nature of life histories and separates itself from identity models that see identity as something static and rigid (Apitzsch, Siouti, 2007).

The goal of biographical analysis is to recreate intentionality, which is portrayed as a person's life history, while also examining how the biographical narrative is ingrained in larger societal systems. Some writers advise sequential single case analysis, which combines three phases, for the biographical analysis of narrative interviews using the fundamental ideas of cognitive figures and process structures. The transcribed interview must be divided into its thematic portions as well as its narrative, argumentative, and descriptive elements in the first stage, which is the formal textual analysis. The structural

description of these parts is the second phase. The goal of the structural description is to explain the important social and biographical structural processes that are portrayed in the story, such as the trajectory of pain, the biographical action schemes, and other social processes. The sequential structural description views the textual structures as signs of the narrator's accumulation of experiences. It considers how the storyteller is influenced and subdued by them. (Riemann, 2003).

Biographical methods is an umbrella term for a set of loosely connected, variously titled activities: narrative, life history, oral history, autobiography, methods of biographical interpretation, storytelling, ethnography... These activities tend to work in parallel, often without recognizing the existence of each other, some characterized by disciplinary purity with others demonstrating intentional interdisciplinarity (Dašić, 2023a). To explain and present such a disparity of feeling is a demanding intellectual endeavor. History, psychology, sociology, social policy, anthropology, and even literature and sometimes neurobiology all play a role (Bornat, 2008). A growing number of academic fields, including

literature, history, sociology, anthropology, social policy, education, and feminist and minority studies, use biographical methodologies in their study. Researching life and the tales individuals tell about it is the subject of a plethora of doctorate and master's programs, special research centers, and conferences. These techniques can be referred to by a variety of terms, including autobiography, auto-ethnography, personal history, oral history, and life narrative. Biography allows us to see patterns, but also peculiarities in life. The relationship between the particular and the general, the uniqueness and the common, is actually a central question in biographical research (Merrill, West, 2009). The appeal of biographical research is that it investigates, using a variety of methodological and interpretive approaches, how specific life accounts can be understood within contemporary cultural and structural settings and thereby aids in charting the significant social changes taking place, not just on some general social level. Understanding big social shifts, particularly how people within families, small groups, and institutions perceive new experiences, can benefit greatly from biographical study. Perhaps an informative way

to understand the “biographical turn” in the human sciences is to outline a series of changes in qualitative research over the past century (Roberts, 2002).

The biographical research methodology outlined in this chapter aims to gather its "data" through a narrative course of conversation that reveals the interviewee's perspectives and subjective relevance and produces texts that allow social scientists to reconstruct the past. (Dašić, 2021). The process of reconstructing a biographical case provides a clear separation between the biographer's current perspective and perspectives from the past. The contrast between a person's biography as it is presented at the moment of narration and their experience in the past allows us to trace the principles that distinguish between the recounted and the experienced. Understanding social and psychological phenomena and explaining them in the context of their genesis, replication, and transformation is the general concern of biographical study in this process. In this tradition the phenomena on which the research question focuses are examined both from the subjective perspective of the individual and in the overall context of his/her life and the structuring of its

processes (Zinn, 2004). Finding the hidden and implicit organizing rules is made feasible by this. It must be underlined that the dialectic of the individual and the society forms the basis for the life history, the interpretative evaluation of the past, and the method in which the life story is told. We may recreate the connections between a person's experience and the larger social context through biographical study, thus when we reconstruct a specific example, we are constantly trying to draw general conclusions (Dašić, et al., 2023; Vučković, 2022). Therefore, the objective of biographical study is to get an awareness of societal reality or the interaction between society and life history, in addition to comprehending specific situations within the framework of specific life histories. (Rosenthal, 1998).

### **3. Biographical method in sports**

The idea of biographical learning was first brought to adult education research in the early 1990s by sociologist Peter Alheit. It is intimately connected to a methodology that supports the use of autobiographical narratives in this area of study as well as the resurgence of biographical approaches in the social sciences more broadly. Additi-

onally, it is connected to a specific educational strategy that uses autobiographical narrative and is based on the idea that adult education in particular has to start with people's life experiences. Representing an alternative configuration of lifelong learning, intending to increase knowledge about 'the relation between individual biographies and institutions of adult education', the 'biographical approach' is said to provide a 'new horizon' for adult education research (Hallqvist, 2014). After the initial interest, biographical and generally qualitative research methods gave way to quantitative approaches, until a strong resistance to positivist-empiricist dominance re-invigorated research based on biographical and narrative approaches (Theodoros, Sporton, 2009). Experience of using the biographical method has sometimes grown and sometimes declined. The method of biographical research, which has undergone similar changes in literary criticism, has not lost its place because it plays an important role in the historically correct and fair solution of a serious literary problem that needs to be solved (Istamovna, 2022). Approaches that address the biographical as a social phenomenon are diverse and can be found in various disci-

plines of the humanities and social sciences. They include theories of the biographical, as well as considerations concerning the collection and analysis of biographical material, either in 'natural' form (e.g. diaries, letters, photographs) or generated in the research process, usually through life history interviews (Becker, Pohn-Lauggas, Santos, 2023).

From its inception, the biography genre was extremely diverse, including curriculum vitae, accounts of historical figures' valiant actions, and hagiographies (Zorić, Jovanović, 2018). It supported history and eventually developed into a topic for literary studies. Other scientific investigations occasionally or, as in psychoanalysis, specifically focused on the biographical genre. The definition of biography has been expanded to include the idea of reality as it exists in human existence independent of how it is expressed in recorded cultural sources. In this regard, the idea is equally ambivalent as, for instance, the idea of history, which denotes both a sequence of actual events, acts, and fulfillments and their literal replication in historical writings and other sorts of texts (Obradović, 2022). Given that the biography was grabbing the interest of cultural

scholars, theorists, and historians of culture, it is especially important to take into account this ambiguity of meaning. The desire to study culture without deviating from its bearer/creator, but rather through him and with him, stipulates this attention in the first place. In this sense, the biography appears as an actualization of cultural potential and as the determination of its values, standards, and institutions, as the organization of human life in the specific era and as the cornerstone of human mutual identification; it is the source for the sense of belonging to a particular cultural situation. A human being develops self-awareness and the purpose behind their acts on this nexus between the unique and the universal. Thus, culture presents itself through the biography to history and to the present. Therefore, by studying biography, a man's life, we actually study by what and how the culture is represented in it. The biography is the living and particular language of culture (Artamoshkina, Morawski, Prokudin, 2021).

The biographical method in sports is an approach that analyzes the life stories of athletes in order to better understand their development and success in their sport (Dašić, 2023b). By examining an athlete's upbrin-

ging, experiences, and personal characteristics, researchers can gain insight into the factors that contribute to their athletic achievements.

One of the primary advantages of the biographical method in sports is that it provides a more comprehensive understanding of an athlete's background and personal qualities. The traditional approach to sports analysis often focuses on objective measurements, such as an athlete's physical attributes or statistics. While these factors are undoubtedly important, they offer only a partial picture of an athlete's development and success. In contrast, a biographical approach seeks to understand how an athlete's personality, family background, and life experiences shaped their athletic career (Domazet, 2022). The biographical method can also provide valuable insight into the wider social, economic and political factors affecting sport (Lukinović, et al., 2020). For example, by examining the life stories of female athletes in male-dominated sports, researchers can illuminate the challenges of gender discrimination and the role of social norms in shaping sporting opportunities (Dašić, Ratković, 2022). Similarly, by studying the life stories of athletes from disadvantaged backgrounds,

researchers can identify barriers that marginalized groups face in accessing sporting opportunities.

One of the most significant applications of the biographical method in sports is the study of leadership and team dynamics. Research has shown that the personal characteristics and communication styles of team captains can have a significant impact on team performance. By studying the biographical details of successful team captains, researchers can gain insight into the qualities that are most effective in leadership roles.

Another successful application of the biographical method in sports is in the study of overcoming adversity. Elite athletes often face significant challenges and obstacles, such as injuries or personal tragedies, on their path to success. By examining how athletes overcome these obstacles and persevere to achieve their goals, researchers can identify strategies that can help others facing similar challenges.

Therefore, the biographical method in sports is a valuable tool for gaining insight into personal and social factors that shape sports success. By examining the life stories of athletes, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that



contribute to their achievements. From leadership and team dynamics to overcoming adversity, a biographical approach offers an expanded perspective on sports analysis that can inform future research and practice. In the following text, we will analyze three autobiographies of famous sportsmen, two coaches and one football player.

Sir Alex Ferguson is undoubtedly one of the greatest football managers the world has ever seen. Born in Govan, Glasgow on December 31, 1941, Ferguson started his career as a footballer at the age of sixteen, when he signed for Queen's Park. He played for several other Scottish clubs, including St Johnstone, Dunfermline Athletic, and Glasgow Rangers. Ferguson's success at Manchester United can be attributed to his incredible work ethic and attention to detail. He was a master at man-management, able to inspire his players to greatness, while also being tough when necessary. He had an innovative approach to tactics and training, and was always looking to improve and evolve his team.

Throughout his career, Ferguson also faced several challenges, including several high-profile fallouts with players, such as David Beck-

ham, Roy Keane, and Paul Ince. However, he always remained true to his principles, and his dedication to the game and his players never wavered. In summary, Sir Alex Ferguson's autobiography is a fascinating read about one of football's greatest managers. His story is one of hard work, dedication, and success, and his legacy in the game will always be remembered.

Jurgen Klopp is one of the most renowned football managers in the world. Born on June 16th, 1967 in Stuttgart, Germany, Klopp grew up in a footballing family. His father played football professionally for Eintracht Frankfurt and encouraged his son to follow in his footsteps.

Following his success at Borussia Dortmund, Klopp was highly sought-after by top clubs across Europe. In October 2015, he was appointed as the manager of Liverpool FC, one of the most storied clubs in English football. Klopp's impact was immediate, as he led Liverpool to the Europa League final in his first season. In 2018, Klopp earned his first major trophy with Liverpool, winning the Champions League, after his team defeated Tottenham Hotspur in the final. Klopp's impact on Liverpool has been significant beyond just on-

field success. He has instilled a sense of identity and purpose at the club, rallying the fans and players alike behind the club's motto of "You'll Never Walk Alone". Klopp has also shown a deep commitment to social responsibility, speaking out on issues such as mental health, homelessness, and the environment.

Jürgen Klopp, the Liverpool FC coach, has written a book about his football philosophy titled "Bring the Noise: The Jürgen Klopp Story." This book is an autobiography that gives us an insight into Klopp's mind and his approach to football, management, and life. Klopp's book portrays his career journey from playing football in his hometown of Stuttgart to his successful career as a coach. He provides details about his experiences and the things he learned along the way that have helped him succeed.

In his book, Klopp talks about his passion for football and how his love for the game has driven him to succeed. He also shares his views on management and how he believes that a leader should inspire and motivate their team. Klopp believes that a manager should be honest, reliable and provide clear instructions to their team. He is known for his excellent commu-

nication skills, and this is evident in how he interacts with his players and staff.

Steven Gerrard is one of the most celebrated football players in Liverpool's history. From humble beginnings in Whiston, Merseyside, Gerrard dreamt of becoming a professional football player, from the time he was a youngster. Today, at 41 years of age, he is counted among the greatest football players of all time. Gerrard kick-started his football career at Liverpool Academy, where he first showed his potential with the ball on the pitch. Mr. Gerrard's lifelong love for Liverpool FC grew with time, and as he progressed through the ranks at the academy, he caught the attention of his coaches and the Liverpool scouts. Steven Gerrard made his debut for Liverpool FC in 1998, at just 18 years of age against Blackburn Rovers. He made a stunning impact in the game, scoring his first goal just within 10 minutes. At that moment, the Liverpool hero was born. Gerrard became one of the elite members of a legendary Liverpool squad that overcame incredible odds to lead their club to the pinnacle of English football. He went on to score many memorable goals that delighted Liverpool fans worldwide.

In 2015, after 17 years of service, Gerrard finally left Liverpool FC. He was offered a place in the team's coaching staff, but he decided to join Los Angeles Galaxy in the MLS. He finished his career in the Scottish Premiership with Rangers in 2021.

In the book, Steven Gerrard describes his early life growing up in Huyton, Liverpool. He talks about how he was obsessed with football from a young age and would spend hours playing football in his backyard. He also talks about the support he received from his parents, who encouraged his passion for the game. He describes how he was scouted by Liverpool FC and joined their academy at the age of nine. The book provides a candid and insightful look into the life of a professional footballer. It is written in Steven Gerrard's voice, and the reader gets a sense of his personality and character. He talks about his motivations and what drove him to become one of the greatest footballers of his generation.

Steven Gerrard's book "My Story" is a fascinating read for anyone interested in football or the life of a top-level athlete. It provides insight into the challenges and rewards of a career in football and gives a glimpse into the mind of one of the game's greatest players. The book is

highly recommended for anyone interested in sports biographies, and it is sure to inspire and entertain readers of all ages.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Science, in the function of sport, plays a pivotal role in enhancing an athlete's performance and ensuring that they compete in a safe environment. The advancement of technology has provided sports scientists with the tools needed to measure, analyze, and enhance an athlete's performance (Dašić, et al. 2021). From wearable technology to data-driven coaching, science has transformed the landscape of sports and changed the way athletes train and compete.

The biographical method in sport is an analytical approach used to uncover the history of athletes and their sports organizations and provides an in-depth look at the athlete's place in the world of sport. Autobiographies of famous athletes are a compelling genre that allows readers to gain an in-depth understanding of the life of a public figure. These books provide insight into the world of sports, the struggles and challenges faced by athletes, and their experiences of being in the limelight. Reading autobiographies of famous athletes can be inspiring

as it is an opportunity to learn from their strengths and mistakes.

These books are written by the athletes themselves and give a personal account of their life stories, which include their childhood, family life, career trajectory, and challenges faced along the way. The accounts also provide insight into the personality of the athlete and their determination, focus, and passion for their sport. The record of their journey can serve as a source of motivation for the aspiring athletes or anyone seeking inspiration in general.

One example of a famous athlete who has written an autobiography is Michael Jordan. In his autobiography "For the love of the game," Jordan shares his story of how he pursued his love for basketball and became one of the most prominent athletes in the history of the sport. Through his book, Jordan provides details about his playing career, his life off the court, his family, and his determination to be the best. His account is highly inspiring and offers a fascinating insight into the world of professional basketball. Overall, autobiographies of famous athletes serve as an excellent source of motivation and are a reminder that with hard work, passion, and dedication, success can be achieved.

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## BIOGRAFSKA METODA ISTRAŽIVANJA U SPORTU

Dejan Dašić

**Sažetak:** Sve veći broj akademskih oblasti, uključujući književnost, istoriju, sociologiju, antropologiju, socijalnu politiku, koriste biografske metode u svom proučavanju. Ove tehnike se mogu označiti različitim terminima, uključujući autobiografiju, autoetnografiju, ličnu istoriju, usmenu istoriju i životnu priču. Biografije nam pomažu da identifikujemo trendove, kao i jedinstvene aspekte života. Ključno pitanje u biografskim istraživanjima je objektivnost i kako uravnotežiti posebno i univerzalno, pojedinačno i zajedničko. Biografski metod u sportu je analitički pristup koji se koristi za otkrivanje istorije sportista i njihovih sportskih organizacija i omogućava dubinski pogled na mesto sportiste u svetu sporta, posebno fokusirajući se na ulogu koju su njihov lični život i iskustva u njihovim sportskim dostignućima.

**Ključne reči:** biografska metoda, nauka, istorija, sport