



The Importance of Sports for People with Disabilities

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the significance of physical activity for individuals with disabilities. Undoubtedly, consistent and appropriate physical exercise plays a crucial role in enhancing the physical, psychological, and physiological health of people with disabilities, while also mitigating the long-term consequences of disability. Physical education and sports are essential for all members of society, and for individuals with disabilities, they are vital. This research adopts a descriptive-analytical approach to investigate the effects of sports on people with disabilities. The findings indicate that engaging in physical activity can yield positive physical, psychological, and physiological outcomes for this population. The results demonstrate that regular daily and weekly exercise routines—focused on strength, flexibility, and endurance—can improve muscle strength, cardiovascular function, and joint mobility. Moreover, such activities foster self-confidence, self-efficacy, and independence among individuals with disabilities. Participation in sports also serves as a powerful tool for promoting and strengthening social integration within this community.

Keywords: Community, Disability, Physical Activity, Physical Health, Sports.

Introduction

Disability is defined as the inability to perform all or part of an individual's daily or social activities due to physical or psychological impairments caused by congenital disorders or environmental incidents (Hamada et al., 2017). In early societies, survival depended on labor and contribution; therefore, individuals unable to participate in communal, familial, or societal activities—such as the weak or disabled—were often marginalized. Today, citizens with disabilities are recognized as integral members of society, contributing to various sectors and fulfilling a part of the human resource needs of modern communities. Accordingly, creating favorable conditions and employment opportunities for this group enables the effective utilization of their latent potential (Ibrahim, 2007).

Physical education and sports are essential for all individuals, and for people with disabilities, they are vital. Preparing individuals with disabilities for active participation requires the implementation of scientifically validated and rational strategies. Research has

shown that regular physical activity – daily and weekly – through strength, flexibility, and endurance training, which are core components of fitness, can enhance muscle strength, Blood vessel function, and joint mobility. These activities also foster self-confidence, self-efficacy, and independence (Mosher, 2015). Given the inherent risk of injury in physical activities, it is crucial to adopt scientifically grounded training methods to minimize potential harm (Arian pour, 2015).

Disability may result from social factors (e.g., revolutions, wars, diseases) or natural events (e.g., earthquakes, accidents), leading to the dysfunction of one or more body parts. This often causes reduced mobility, diminished endurance, and slower movement. Psychological consequences such as depression, isolation, and withdrawal from social groups are common. However, these challenges can be mitigated through constructive interventions that reconnect individuals with their communities, promote personal autonomy, encourage group participation, and accelerate rehabilitation. Healthy sports activities serve as a source of vitality, moral Development, altruism, and personal growth. While sports may be secondary in the lives of able-bodied individuals, they play a fundamental role for people with disabilities (Schmidt et al., 2019).

Engagement in sports boosts the self-esteem of individuals with disabilities, empowering them to influence others and reshape societal perceptions. With the growing number of people with disabilities and the expansion of adaptive sports disciplines, there is an urgent need to develop and implement accessible, tailored methods that meet their unique physical needs. For years, misconceptions – particularly among individuals with spinal cord injuries – have led to the neglect of physical activity, under the false belief that mobility limitations prevent exercise or that sports have no impact on physical and mental health. In reality, consistent and appropriate physical activity significantly improves mental health outcomes and reduces the complications associated with disability. People with disabilities can benefit from physical activities such as adapted sports, games, and exercise routines just like anyone else (Walkman et al., 2018). However, some critics argue that despite positive intentions, disability sports may inadvertently reinforce social segregation. They suggest that separating competitions for disabled and non-disabled athletes – such as the Paralympics versus the Olympics – could perpetuate discriminatory attitudes and emphasize differences. Nevertheless, findings from this research suggest that sports contribute meaningfully to social integration or represent a form of positive segregation that warrants careful reevaluation. Addressing this issue requires a deeper analysis of individual experiences, institutional structures, and societal attitudes.

Studies indicate that individuals with disabilities often experience lower self-esteem and confidence, leading to higher stress levels. The results were compared with previous data from their able-bodied peers. This negatively affects their psychological well-being and overall quality of life (Pies et al., 2018). The visibility of a disability influences the attention and reactions received from society; the more apparent the disability, the greater the likelihood of disrupted social interactions. These individuals are acutely aware of societal prejudice and discrimination throughout their lives (Richardson et al., 1961). From birth, every person engages in interactions with others – parents, family members, peers, teachers, colleagues – which shape self-perception. Thus, social feedback plays a critical role in the Development of self-concept (Johnson et al., 2001). Although each person is born with a unique physical structure, some differences manifest as limitations or impairments, commonly referred to as Body disabilities. These differences must be

considered when examining concepts such as self and self-respect, as they can significantly influence personal Development (End et al., 2005).

Today, physical activity is especially important for individuals with special needs, including those with disabilities. It is recognized as a key factor in improving mental health and enhancing quality of life (Akbrzadah et al., 2018). In today's world, where justice and equality are fundamental human rights, promoting sports for people with disabilities is no longer a choice—it is a social responsibility. Media support, appropriate funding, infrastructure development, and the organization of professional competitions are essential steps toward advancing this field. It must not be overlooked that Paralympic champions, like other elite athletes, dedicate years of effort, training, and sacrifice to represent their nations with pride.

Moreover, the Development of disability sports promotes a culture of acceptance and respect for diversity. These activities play a vital role in reducing discrimination, raising public awareness, and strengthening social solidarity. Therefore, it is the duty of governments, sports institutions, media outlets, and the general public to support disabled athletes and recognize them as an inseparable part of the sporting community.

Ultimately, the findings indicate that disability sports are not merely a platform for competition and achievement—they are a pathway toward a more inclusive, equitable, and humane society. Investing in this population is an investment in the highest values of humanity (The Veldt et al., 2018).).

Ultimately, the goal of sports for people with disabilities is to facilitate their reintegration into normal life. Sports serve as a primary catalyst for independence and help guide people with disabilities toward self-sufficiency. The remainder of this article explores the role of sports in improving the psychological, social, and physiological well-being of individuals with disabilities.

Material and Method

The data and information for this study were collected using a library-based research method and analyzed through a descriptive-analytical approach. The essential materials for this research consisted of accessible scientific resources published by scholars and authors in the field. In addition to these, relevant books and research articles focusing on the importance of physical activity and sports for individuals with disabilities were utilized to support the study's objectives.

Psychological Importance

Physical impairments often affect mental well-being, leading to psychological challenges. Engaging in sports not only reduces individuals' focus on their disabilities—often a source of distress—but also helps them gradually forget or overcome these limitations. In certain sports, such as swimming, the disability may not be visible, which contributes to reduced psychological pressure over time. Participation in physical education and Physical Education activities provides an optimal environment for improving mental health (The Veldt et al., 2018).

Many believe that sports are a vital part of human life. A structured and regular exercise routine supports mental, physical, and Cognitive skills health, reduces the risk of chronic diseases, enhances life expectancy, and improves overall quality of life. When physical

activity becomes part of daily life, individuals experience increased energy and motivation. For people with disabilities, sports can boost self-confidence, reduce depression, and prevent social withdrawal. A consistent daily exercise program not only prevents further physical deterioration but also facilitates successful social and interpersonal interactions. The Psychological trauma need for sports among individuals with disabilities is often greater than among able-bodied individuals. Sports integrate disabled individuals into society and promote independence. Today, many people with disabilities actively participate in social events and competitions, asserting their identity within the community. Those who follow a structured sports program under professional supervision report better mental health compared to those without such routines (Young Son L et al., 2023).

Sports benefit not only the body but also the mind. Regular physical activity strengthens emotional resilience and mental clarity. It fosters a Positive impact attitude and equips individuals with greater confidence to face challenges. During exercise, the body releases endorphins—natural painkillers that reduce stress and anxiety, and promote a sense of well-being—even through simple physical activities (Neck et al., 2017).

Social Importance of Sports for People with Disabilities

Individuals with Physical disability often experience social isolation, partly due to societal and familial lack of awareness. Transitioning from solitude into small sports communities—especially through team sports like basketball or volleyball—creates pathways to broader social engagement. Sports serve as a mechanism for Social interaction and reintegration into everyday life.

One of the key functional roles of sports is its capacity to foster social cohesion among individuals and groups. This cohesion varies depending on the level of participation. At elite levels, sports can lead to greater social acceptance and admiration. Casual participation in sports is a socially valued activities that connect individuals to their communities. The social function of sports is well-documented, particularly its role in facilitating interpersonal contact. Many researchers argue that social interaction is one of the primary motivations for sports participation. Sports environments promote both verbal and non-verbal communication, fostering growth, mutual understanding, and solidarity.

Thus, the social-interactive dimension of sports is significant in two ways: it creates opportunities for meeting others and enables Development and social Development for individuals with disabilities (Ashlyn KB & Lex Ell J, 2017). Preventing isolation and rebuilding social connections are central goals in disability research. Sports are a powerful tool for facilitating communication and accelerating reintegration into society. Through sports, individuals' perceptions of society—and vice versa—can shift, depending on prevailing cultural values. Researchers emphasize that sports activate behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of individuals (Schmidt SM et al., 2019).

Humans are inherently social beings who rely on interaction to meet basic needs. Beyond essentials like food, shelter, and clothing, individuals also require emotional connection, companionship, and affection—all of which contribute to mental well-being. Humans with disabilities, despite their limitations, share these needs and seek Valuable relationships within society (Neck D et al., 2017).

Physiological Effects of Exercise on People with Disabilities

Regular exercise among individuals with disabilities enhances muscular energy and improves muscle efficiency through increased oxygen utilization. Physical activity helps deliver oxygen to vital organs such as the lungs, brain, heart, and muscles, significantly improving cellular oxygen transport. When the body adapts to lower caloric intake, it becomes more efficient at using energy rather than storing it.

Exercise has a profound impact on bone strength, particularly in young women, often exceeding the benefits of calcium intake. Weight-bearing activities strengthen bones, counteracting the bone loss experienced by astronauts in zero-gravity environments. One reason exercise supports bone formation is its ability to reduce calcium loss through the kidneys compared to sedentary states (Ibrahim, 2007).

Physiological benefits of regular physical activity for individuals with disabilities include:

- Enhancing muscle strength, preventing atrophy, and promoting the use of healthy limbs over impaired ones.
- Preventing cardiovascular and respiratory complications, which are common due to reduced mobility.
- Maintaining joint mobility and preventing stiffness through passive, active, resistance, and assisted movements across all joint levels, ultimately preserving the body's natural posture (Hydrae Nick, 2015).

Discussion

In recent decades, sports for people with disabilities have emerged as a powerful tool for empowering individuals with physical and mental impairments. Many experts believe that sports not only contribute to the physical and mental well-being of these individuals but also enhance their self-confidence, autonomy, and active participation in society. Major events such as the Paralympics provide a valuable platform to showcase the capabilities of people with disabilities and help shift public perceptions about disability. However, some critics argue that despite its positive intentions, disability sports may inadvertently lead to greater social segregation. They contend that separating athletic competitions for people with disabilities from those for non-disabled individuals—such as the division between the Paralympics and the Olympics—can reinforce discriminatory and difference-based attitudes between the two groups. Nevertheless, my research suggests that these sports do in fact promote social inclusion, or represent a form of "positive segregation" that should be carefully reconsidered. Answering this question requires a deeper analysis of personal experiences, institutional structures, and individual attitudes

Conclusion

Sports for individuals with disabilities represent one of the most powerful arenas for showcasing human capability, determination, and resilience. Those who engage in athletic competition despite physical limitations serve as inspiring role models, proving that disability does not equate to inability. Sports not only help maintain physical and mental health but also foster identity, self-confidence, and social inclusion. Today, sports are

widely acknowledged as one of the most influential social tools for fostering national pride and enhancing public health and vitality. Governments around the world strive to leverage the joyful, economic, cultural, and political dimensions of sports to promote physical and psychological well-being—especially among individuals with disabilities. Regular participation in physical and athletic activities not only improves physical capabilities and health but also accelerates recovery and contributes to emotional and mental rejuvenation. It is crucial to consider that the nature of certain sports disciplines requires careful selection based on the type of disability. Choosing the appropriate sport can enhance physical and psychological Development while minimizing the risk of injury. Sports play a significant role in social integration, normalization, and the improvement of physical, mental, and emotional capacities among individuals with disabilities. Thus, sports can be regarded as a gateway for people with disabilities to enter and engage with society.

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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