

OPENING NEW FRONTIERS IN ADAPTIVE SPORTS FOR SPECIAL PERSONS THROUGH INCLUSION

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Abstract

Disability has always been associated with limitations and social segregation. And when it comes to sports, circumstances for special persons are largely unfavorable. In this modern era, inclusion is somewhat replacing social segregation, but there are new frontiers waiting to be explored. The event of Paralympic is evolving along with the social norms within mainstream society. Hence, there is always a space for new ideas to emerge. For instance, several new sports can be modified and introduced to special persons. This research aimed at bridging this gap by introducing a plethora of conventional sports that can be modified to suit the needs of special persons. For example, special persons can be trained with modified versions of wrestling, karate, and power-lifting. Hence, the researcher triangulated his research by conducting semi-structured interviews aimed at special persons from all four types of disabilities to get their perspective. The researcher was well-acquainted with the relevance of different varieties within the emerging trends in sports. Therefore, his own participant observation guided the course of this study. A sample of 12 special persons with all four types of disability was interviewed. The study discovered that many special persons displayed prominent acumen and interest toward aforementioned sports.

Key Words: Inclusion, power-lifting, karate, Paralympics, special persons

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Introduction

Amongst the total population in the world, 15% are plagued with some kind of disability. Within this significant population of disabled persons, 2.4% experience extreme functioning disabilities in their daily lives. When we take a look at the previous WHO records, it is eminent that the numbers have grown within a few decades. According to a WHO research done in 1970s, at that time around 10% of world population of world population was facing some kind of impairment (Paralympics, 2012). Any kind of organized physical activity adapted for special persons can be referred to as 'disability sports'. On the other hand, sporting events organized for able-bodied persons is often referred to as mainstream sport (Nixon H. , 2007). In this modern era, a positive change towards the attitudes and attributes of special persons can be witnessed as the status of persons with disability has become more acceptable within the society. In this current century, a paradigm shift within the field of sports sciences is being witnessed. The terms sports and disability are now converging towards a new inclusive terminology better known as disability sports (Shapiro, 2010).

To understand the emerging trends within disability sports, one needs to delve right into its history. In Berlin in 1888, a first sports club for deaf people was founded. A few decades later, amputees were allowed access to that club as well, whereas, the first organized sporting event for disabled persons was a golf tournament. During World War I & II, a sports rehabilitation program was launched to facilitate war veterans, who suffered some kind of disability. The first international wheelchair competition for special persons was organized by Guttman in 1952. Ever since Stoke Mandeville event, sporting competitions for the wheelchair-bound special persons have become an international phenomenon (Fitzgerald, 2009). With the passage of time, the numbers of sport opportunities for persons with disability are growing but many challenges still remain at large for further facilitation of such sport

provisions.

As stated in Fitz Gerald 2009, "the multitude of local, regional, national and international organizations supporting disability sports can be a source of confusion for potential participants or other associated support workers (ibid, p. 20)."

As the number of sporting opportunities is increasing, new questions are also arising regarding equality, integration and inclusion. If facilities and opportunities can be modified to accommodate persons with disabilities in their everyday lives, why similar efforts cannot be made in major mainstream sports? Sadly, this cannot be seen in the current scenario of professional sport careers, training opportunities or competition systems within Pakistani context.

Right now, 28 sports are registered in the Paralympic games. Within these 28 sports, five are represented in winter Paralympics. In 2012 London Paralympics, about 42000 special athletes from 160 countries participated. After a gap of 12 years, intellectually disabled athletes were also permitted to compete in these events (IPC, 2019). But still there is a space for new sports to be included along with other 28 sports in Paralympics. Sports such as wrestling, power-lifting, and karate can be modified to suit the needs of special persons, but due to overly complex registration system in the Paralympics committee, these sports are ignored.

The researcher being a certified Karate practitioner and sports coach firmly believes that many particular styles of Martial Arts can be modified for other special persons and hence included in Paralympics. In the upcoming 2020 Paralympic games, Taekwondo will be introduced for the first time for physically disabled, visually impaired, intellectually disabled, and deaf and dumb. The taekwondo tournament includes two major aspects of taekwondo: the kyorugi (sparring) and poomsae (martial art form). Even though this is the first time in which a striking martial art is getting a formal induction in Paralympic games, but still the researcher has his reservations. For example, visually impaired are only

allowed to compete in poomsae competitions. Meanwhile, a visually impaired or legally blind person can easily compete in kyorugi tournament. The researcher being a visually impaired/partially blind himself has competed in many mainstream Kyokushin karate tournaments himself. Kyokushin karate is a full-body contact striking martial arts that are much more vigorous and physically demanding as compared to Taekwondo. Holding a black-belt III Dan in Kyokushin karate, it is researcher's own participant observation which led to an assumption that other visually impaired persons like him can effortlessly compete in kyorugi tournaments as well as in other styles of martial arts. Likewise, the same argument can be attributed towards other aforementioned sports like wrestling and power-lifting. When it comes to grappling aspect of martial arts, only one game has created space within the Paralympics committee. That particular sport is Judo, which was introduced in 1988 for men and 2004 for women. Interestingly, when concerned with this sport, the administrative affairs are in topsy-turvy. Special persons with other disability types, such as deaf and dumb or intellectually disabled can easily compete in this sport, but these two types of disabilities are excluded in this sport event, mirroring the exclusion of visually impaired in Taekwondo kyorugi.

Powerlifting is also amongst such sports that were cherry-picked for Paralympic games. Powerlifting includes three major lifts, which are bench-presses, squat and deadlift. From these three major lifts, only bench-press was selected for physically handicapped persons. In case of visually impaired persons, it has been observed by the researcher that they can easily compete in all three lifts, but in reality the complete inclusion of power-lifting seems to be improbable in the near future. The main purpose of this paper is to identify such implications and rectify inadequacies within the sporting events such as Paralympics.

Literature Review

There is abundance of literature both from the perspective of sports psychologists and sports sociologists with regard to elite disabled sports.

But when it comes to major critique of such events, sports sociologists have contributed more as compared to sports psychologists, for example, they have engaged in much more intense debates and discourses about elite disabled sports, especially in the analysis of various systems of classifications used to organize competitive sport for disabled persons (Jones, 2006); (Smith, 2007). It has been a major part of critique by sports sociologists that medical model of disability has been catered too much as compared to the other models of disability, mainly social models. The social model of disability deals with the individual and societal potential of special persons (Brittain, 2004).

In addition, Hargreaves also reached a conclusion that Paralympic games are heavily male-dominated when it comes to participation. For this purpose, she developed an argument that the enormous stigma associated with disabled games segregates from rest of the world. This division of disability and non-disability overshadows any discourse related to gender discrimination (Hargreaves, 2000).

A study by (Berger, 2009) reinforces the previous notion that gender divisions are prominent but often ignored by mainstream academia. The same degree of negligence is witnessed when it comes to any refined policy and political commitment by the government.

Interestingly, another main issue that the sports sociologists have tackled pertains to the representation of elite level disability sports in the mainstream media. Brittain points out that mainstream media coverage of Paralympic games is increasing day by day, but on the broader perspective, it remains inadequate as it is limited to just a few weeks prior to or during an event involving Paralympic sports and games (Brittain, 2004). The narrow approach by media raises even more questions. For example, (Smith, 2007) stated: "media coverage of disabled sports has tended to focus on particular athletes, with particular impairments, competing in particular sports." (p. 151).

Highly medicalized terms were often utilized to describe these special athletes. Similarly, these disabled athletes were most often depicted as

victims that overcame many odds and their tragic life plagued with disability (Peers, 2009). Eventually, this type of media coverage leads towards the creation of disseminating stereotypes. Thus, turning them into 'supercrips' (Berger, 2009).

This definition of an athlete encompasses a special individual who has accomplished the impossible through perseverance, determination and dignity. But somehow leaves much to be desired to shatter such derogatory stereotypes.

On the other hand, (Hardin, 2004) presented a much more appropriate description of aforementioned 'supercrip' athlete. In their observation, a more nuanced perspective was in need in order to curb the stereotype that people associate with disabled persons. The media coverage on such sports events tends to both empower and disempower the status of a disabled person within society. Both authors believed that these 'supercrip' athletes can be role models not only for their own community, but also for the society in general. They emphasized on the benefits of competitive sports. These benefits include strengthening of camaraderie with their team mates, improved physical conditioning, a heightened command on their bodies and an increase in self-respect, confidence, the joy of playing the sport and promising opportunities to travel abroad.

According to (Berger, 2009), all of this glory comes with a price. There are certainly problems associated with such elite sporting events as well. These problems include unintended consequence of creating a sub-culture milieu that alienates the broader disabled community and creates obstacles towards the development of collective identity. To further elaborate this point, he stated: "It is that a cavalier dismissal of these athletes that fails to appreciate that they did not make it on their own. Why they most certainly deserve credit is for their hardworking, perseverance and accomplishments in the face of adversity. Their lives must be understood in social context – the actions they took were enabled by significant others and institutional forces that were available to them during their lives." (ibid, p. 43).

Likewise, (Peers, 2009) offers a similar point of view with regard to competitive disabled sports. Her findings generated a same ambiance as that of Berger's (Berger, 2009). Her own personal experiences as a Paralympian provided an auto-ethnographic perspective. Whereas, she indeed received many benefits from her participation, there was a lingering price as well. At that time the society considered her disability as something that needed to be overcome, rather than something that was in need of a change. Peers firmly believed that these kinds of stereotypes within society were further segregating them and eventually leading to their social exclusion. She wrote: "Whether up on a pedestal or down in the gutter: they enable others not to look at us in the eye, they induce us to look into each other and they encourage us not to look inside of ourselves" (Peers, 2009).

She further criticized the problematic and simplistic narratives on 'supercrip'. "I know that many athletes thrive through sports. I know that they build communities and resistance. I know that they actively organize, disorganize, invent, and prevent the sports that they play. I know that these athletes have names and they have stories that neither originate in disability nor terminate in their sporting careers. I know this because of the stories that athletes tell each other. We tell each other stories that help us remember the historically irrelevant. We tell us stories that help us resist the institutionalized silences. We also tell stories, however, that help us raise ourselves above other stories that reproduce the pedestals from which we speak and the gutter on which the pedestals are made." (ibid, p. 662).

After taking in consideration all of the above mentioned reviews, it is not that hard to comprehend that there indeed are problems present within the elite sporting events that cannot be ignored. On the other hand, there indeed are social, psychological and physical benefits associated with such sports, yet they may not be preferable for each and every disabled person.

Physical, Social and Psychological Benefits of Inclusion in Sports

Due to increase in physical activity, people with all major impairments enjoy improved general health and fitness. Not only that, but there are also psychological and social implications as well (Rimmer, 1999). These activities generate a feeling of well-being and reduction of negative emotions pertaining to tension, anxiety and depression. Thus, the inhibiting self-esteem, self-concept, and self-efficacy steps in. This not only keeps them away from casual hospitalization, but also enables them to perform their everyday task (Sherrill, 1996). Their participation in such sport activity instills a sense of pride in them. This renewed confidence in return helps them in redefining their physical capabilities (Guthrie, 1999). From the get-go, the disability sport was most often associated with social inclusion of disabled people within the able-bodied society. Sir Ludwig Guttman pioneered the concept of disability sport by holding wheelchair sport events. Thus, it initializes the process of physical, psychological and sociological rehabilitation of the patients who suffer from spinal cord injuries (Anderson, 2003). It was his firm belief that this interaction between the abled and the disabled would "create a better understanding between abled and disabled bodied persons which would help the disabled in their social reintegration through the medium of sports" (Guttmann, 1976). Other than Guttmann, many other sociologists emphasized on the social advantages of combined sporting events between special persons and able-bodied persons. In addition to other benefits, participating in these sporting events can bring about a sense of camaraderie with peers (K. Greer, 2000). This social interaction leads to newer experiences and create new social nexuses that further lead to initialization of newer and unknown social activities (Blinde, 1997). In the case of special children, this argument holds even more water as during their motor-functioning they require social interactions to carve their social identity as typical children. These interactions also pride them with new learning opportunities which eventually lead to cooperation, sociability and

forming alliances (K. Greer, 2000). For adult disabled persons, these interactions enhance perceptions of their effectiveness as social actors and provide them with opportunities to showcase their abilities to their able-bodied friends. But these experiences are most often not constant in every part of the world as many disabled people have to pursue their physical activities in segregated insular disability-specific institutions and competitions (Hargreaves, 2000). This kind of treatment is detrimental for social inclusion as in many events even the participation of able-bodied persons is not enough to shed the dogma of social exclusion. The process of social integration in sports has nothing to do with the mixing of special persons and able-bodied persons, but has to be a more welcoming experience. Several studies done on physical education of special persons in an inclusive schooling environment show that negative attitudes of able-bodied participants led to negative experiences of special persons (Aithison, 2000). In another study, Linert states: "Some able-bodied students do not develop an understanding and tolerance for their classmates with disabilities. These problems become especially obvious during competitive activity in which winning is of utmost priority for the students. (Lienert, 2001)."

Therefore, the process of social inclusion of special persons carries a dimension which is much more complex and contradictory as it may seem. Riordan comprehensively explored the implications of integration of disability sport events into the normal sport events. His main area of focus was the emerging trends that could work in future. According to her, a nationwide effort was in need to include such sport events to an extent in which it justifies the whole process of integration. She states: "these developments may increase the level of public awareness and acceptance of athletes with disability and thus lead to changes in sports world both on national and international level" (Riordan, 1999).

She also posed a question that whether it is relevant to include persons with disability in an able-bodied system, because this type of conclusion will lead to a loss of identity on the part of these special persons. No

integration is complete without the acknowledgment of the individual needs of persons with disability. Hence, to fully integrate, the system needs to justify the future implications of such social practices. A special person must not feel that he only belongs within his specific community, even though able-bodied peers try too hard to justify such intermingling. Equal opportunities should be provided regardless of disability level and if assistance is required, it should be done in a manner that should not alienate a disabled person. When formulating such practices, diversity and individuality of a disabled person should always been taken into consideration (Ollqvist, 2011).

Integration should always be done on the basis of individual choice and should not be simplified to ease the process. Integration requires special arrangements in order to be useful and fruitful within the process of inclusion. Inclusion-scene, in a way, is much different from integration-scene, as in the integration process a person is taken from outside the system whereas, in inclusion, all participants share the same system. Inclusion refers to services and conditions which are open for everybody and where each person counts. In order for inclusion to be fully effective, it requires accessibility support and behavioural changes. The gist of the whole conception is that both parties learn from each other's experiences (Saari, 2011).

Most often, integration and inclusion are utilized as synonyms of each other, but in reality, integration is negative use of power as it only assists in the transfer of power from a general culture to a dominated one. Nixon stated that athletes with disability need to be viewed through the same lens as regular athletes without any discrimination as far as their impairment is concerned (Nixon H. L., 2007). This approach requires a completely different notion of athleticism, which would counter the traditional ideas about a sporting physique. If a common competing environment cannot be achieved then at least on the managerial and organizational level, integration should be encouraged. The common facilities, events and economic sources should include persons from

every community and every walk of life to make this process a success.

Theoretical Framework

The Concept of Disability

Disability has been deemed as a complex concept. During different eras, different interpretations of disability were carried out in academia all over the world. As it is often associated with social intricacies, the concept of disability is a sensitive subject (Jackson, 2012).

Model of Disability

When it comes to understanding the concept of disability, two models have dominated the whole discourse. These models are called the medical model and the social model. Last two decades of 20th century saw the paradigm shift from medical to social model of disability. Before that occurrence, medical model dominated in every walk for a disabled person (Von Heijden 2013). The medical model classifies disability as a problem that plagues an individual person. According to this model, the main hurdle towards the integration of special persons within society is their own impairment. This model ignores the prominent features of society that can easily be modified. For instance, if a wheelchair-bound person is unable to use stairs, then the medical model would focus on the wheelchair as an instrument of exclusion alone. To rectify this problem, this model would suggest that if the physical inadequacy of special person labels him as a victim, then he is in need of some kind of medical intervention or care (Silvers, 1998).

For this purpose, society created institutions and resources to care for the persons with disability. This role of society was mostly undertaken by faith-based or charitable organizations. All good intentions aside, this kind of treatment further places the disabled person on the outer spectrum of society (Brittain, 2004).

As time passed by, a shift in public perception started to emerge. The people focused their attention on integration and participation of a special person within normal society. The whole notion that disability by

itself is a problem got replaced with a more inclusive perspective. At that time, people were aware of their own responsibilities to include in every walk of life. Now the shoe was on the other foot. Instead of being labeled as defective and inferior, these special persons were being valued as normal members of society. Thus, forming a new social model of disability that emerged in the early 1980s (Oliver, 1983).

This model introduced a new discourse which critique the previous assumption made on the basis of medical model of disability. Instead of considering the disabled persons on personal lacking as hindrances for their social integration, it highlighted the short-comings of a social system which placed hurdles in their participation (Hughes, 1997).

Disability was now seen as modern outcome of impairment, but as a social construct. As (Shakespeare, 2002) argue: "the achievement of disability movement has been to break the link between our bodies and our social situation and the focus of real cause of disability, discrimination and prejudice."

Hence, the social model makes a clear distinction between impairment and disability as they are deemed as binary oppositions. Impairment is most often associated with physical dysfunction; whereas, disability refers to personal or social exclusion.

These distinctions are as follows:

Impairment: lacking part or all of the limb, or having a defected limb, organism or mechanism of the body.

Disability: the disadvantage of restriction of activity caused by a temporary social organization that takes no or little account of people who have physical impairment and thus excludes them from mainstream social activities (UPIAS, 1976).

As social model of disability associates the defects of the physical body as impairments and the social defects within a community as disability, therefore it enables the classification of political strategy and barrier

removal. If all the major barriers that a disabled person faces can be attributed to social constructs, then these barriers indeed need to be dismantled by the society in order to fully embrace inclusion (Shakespeare, 2002).

The general perception within the academia reshaped along the same lines. As shown in a study by (Leegwater, 2005), in which all the participants agreed on the fact that there is a space within the society to include and incorporate special persons without any kind of obstacles. Interestingly, the social model has also been a subject of criticism in the recent studies.

Corker and Shakespeare (Corker, 2002) suggested that a viewpoint that correlates with a postmodern view of disability is in need of formulation. This viewpoint should recognize and embrace the disability of all bodies. Their key argument pertains to the fact that there is no qualitative difference found that separates disabled persons from the able-bodied person, because every person living on earth has his own limitations and is disabled in some way or the other.

One must not confuse this claim as an empirical fact. They are not arguing that "short-sightedness is equal to blindness or being unfit is similar to being paralyzed" (Shakespeare, 2002).

There is a vast variety of impairments that limit the capabilities of people. Thus, disability and impairment cannot be seen as binary oppositions. Everyone has its limitations and everyone is susceptible to many more limitations to come. One example of this phenomenon is the aging process that presents a plethora of limitations for every individual in their lives. Therefore, any attempt to minimize or completely eliminate these limitations should be encouraged. They also suggest that the aim of studies done on the subject of disability should contribute to "the development of inclusive societies" (ibid, p. 15).

The main criticism on this point of view is that it leaves many gaps,

especially when considering theory about equal opportunities (DePoy, 2010). This point of view is a new conception. Therefore, it has not made much impact on academia as yet. The space that needs to be filled within this perspective hinders its practical relevance. That is why the researcher of this paper decided to mention this approach.

Methodology

The research study used qualitative approach to obtain desired findings, meaning semi-structured interviews. According to (Silverman, 2000), to understand the intricacies of social life, qualitative research method is quintessential as it covers all the major aspects in every walk of life. Majority of qualitative researches utilize inductive approach as they evolve from personalized individual experiences to mainstream perspectives. Being visually impaired and an active member of special community in twin cities, the researcher conveniently collected and finalized a sample population of 12 special persons. In order to ensure generalizability, the sample population was carefully chosen in a way that it could equally cover all four types of known disabilities: three special persons from all four types comprised the overall sample population of 12. The sample population was interviewed using semi-structured approach. This mainly included group interviews, whereas individual interviews were follow-ups. As for deaf and dumb and intellectually disabled sample population, resource persons were used to obtain required answers.

This research was based on case study. A case study is defined as "an empirical study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context: when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (DePoy E. &, 1998). In order to analyse and describe practical social problems, a case study is the best suited method. In order to delve into the issues and the actions of participants, no other method provides a utility that is comparable to a case study (Syrjälä, 1994). Triangulation in a case study is utilized most often as it provides a certain flexibility that

other methodologies cannot.

Finding and Analysis

Protection of the privacy of participants is the primary objective of any researcher. Therefore, in order to ensure anonymity, the researcher used symbolic initials for the participants. These initials are divided into four types pertaining to each type of disability.

VIP-1 means "visually impaired participant-1"

IDP-1 means "intellectually disabled participant-1"

HIP-1 means "hearing impaired participant-1"

PHP-1 means "physically handicapped participant-1"

Four general themes emerged from these interviews, which include: current status of opportunities available to special persons, barriers that limit the participation of disabled persons in sporting events, lack of inclusion in sport facilities and lack of efforts when adapting new mainstream sports.

Current Status of Opportunities Available to Special Persons

Pakistan being a third-world country, not much can be expected in terms facilitation, but most of the participants seemed optimistic with regard to their future as special athletes. Thus, the researcher's first question was: "what is your perception about your career as special athlete given the circumstance you are in?"

A visually impaired participant jestingly replied:

VIP-1: "As far as foreign tours are concerned, I might make it but if you expect me to get a medal, then forget about it."

Another visually impaired participant added:

VIP-2: "Speak for yourself, Insha Allah, I will try my level best."

Both of these replies prompted the researcher to ask his second question: "are you satisfied with the sports facilities that are given to you by the

Government of Pakistan or NGOs?"

A visually impaired participant replied:

VIP-3: "If by satisfaction you mean getting injured or taking some time off, then I am satisfied. But if you mean that we are getting the same facilities as our international counterparts, then of course, not."

This answer led to a follow-up question, "can you elaborate a little more?"

VIP-3 added: "I mean that how can you expect me to be at my peak physical condition if the whole process of organizing the camps is too rushed. In this kind of situation, all of us are getting drained and are more prone to injuries."

The researcher was not expecting such a blunt reply. Hence, he improvised by asking a spontaneous follow-up question: "have you shared this problem with any other resource person, and if yes, then have they done anything to address your reservation?"

To which the same participant replied: "we are already walking on eggshells. So do you think we could muster up enough courage to protest and lose our currently available limited facilities?"

Another participant continued his point:

PHP-1: "All of us can agree on one thing that while initiating any kind of program or event, disabled persons are never given any consideration. This can be seen in the inadequate infrastructure of our educational institutions and offices. These are the basic amenities. So how can you think that a supplementary issue such as adaptive sports would be given any kind of consideration?"

The researcher asked: "are your concerned sports officials readily available to assist you?"

PHP-2: "We don't term bureaucracy as 'afsar shahi' for no reason. The

process to reach concerned officials is complex and vexing endeavor. Most of us are not sure where the office of Paralympics committee is."

Researcher: "How do you carry out daily sporting activities?"

PHP-3: "most of us don't live a very active life style. If some of us have to do any kind of physical or sporting activity, we have to do it in regular vicinity. Most often we have to take our relatives or friends with us in order to ensure our safety. There is not a single resource person available for us to provide any kind of assistance in such facilities."

Barriers That Limit the Participation of Disabled Persons in Sporting Events

The aforementioned replies by the participants led to researcher to pose questions with regard to barriers that these special persons face. Therefore, the researcher posed a question: "what are the main barriers or problems that you face in your daily activities as a special athlete?"

To which, a physically handicapped participant replied:

PHP-3 "The first barrier that we face is lack of awareness within our own community along with mainstream society. Besides, our community is least of the concerns during formulation of policies as well as the establishment of social welfare projects by the state."

The researcher then asked for further elaboration on this point.

PHP-3 "What I meant to say was that in any of government's actions taken for masses or community is unlikely to address our issues, whether it is in the form of favourable infrastructure or general amenities."

Another physically handicapped participant added:

PHP-2 "Actually, the issue is public attitude or treatment of special persons, which is a major hurdle. This is because of lack of awareness among masses, who consider us not part of their society. Also, special community's representation in mainstream media is absent. As for special athletes, given all the hurdles and challenges, there is no

appreciation, perks or financial benefits on part of the government even if we bring medals back home."

Lack of Inclusion in Sports Facilities

It seemed, from the previous responses given by the participants that they yearned for inclusion. Therefore, the researcher opted for a better understanding of their standing on the concept of inclusion. The researcher posed a question, "what are your thoughts on the concept of inclusion, especially regarding the sporting events that you compete in?" To which, a visually impaired participant replied:

VIP-1 "I received my primary education with able-bodied students. That is why I know the implications of inclusion as it has positively impacted my life."

The researcher inquired: "how do you think that this concept can be practically implemented in your lives as special athletes?"

To which the same participant replied: "For start, we need to be given proper training along with normal persons. It is not that I ask them to compete with us in major events, but a friendly sparring or a training session would do wonders for us."

In another session with hearing impaired and intellectually disabled participants, the researcher posed the same question. To which, a deaf student answered:

HIP-1 "I have been competing in mainstream Kyokushin karate tournaments from a very early age. I have never faced any difficulty in going toe-to-toe with normal students. As my disability does not hinder me in any way in that particular sport."

During this study, the researcher found two participants from two distinct disability types that displayed no problem competing in striking-dominated Martial Arts. In the upcoming Paralympics 2020, both hearing impaired and intellectually disabled participants will be allowed to compete in kyorugi (sparring) tournament, while visually impaired are

only limited to poomsae (martial arts form) tournament. The researcher himself being partially blind and holding a black belt in Kyokushin Kaikan Karate considers his own abilities to be ample enough to compete in kyorugi tournament, but unfortunately he is not allowed by the international Paralympics committee to compete in his desired event.

This is one of those core issues that need dire attention by the international community. Having coaching experience of 15 years, the researcher thinks that his own martial arts style, with a few alterations, can be adapted in national or international Paralympics. Same goes with other aforementioned sports: power-lifting and wrestling.

The researcher wanted to address the participants on thinking on the topic of inclusion. Hence, he asked: "do you think inclusion is applicable in sport activities and will it work under Pakistani social context?"

To which, intellectually disabled participants enthusiastically replied:

IDP-1/2/3: "Yes sir, we like playing sports with my other siblings. But sometimes, they are really mean to us."

A resource teacher told the researcher that she witnessed many positive changes in the behavior of intellectually disabled students when normal children took part in leisure activities with them. This led the researcher to pose a question to both visually impaired and physically handicapped participants: "how do you feel when you have to compete with able-bodied persons in your sport activities?"

To which, a partially blind participant replied:

VIP-2: "Sir, my own personal experiences differ throughout my life. When I was a child, my peers used to compete with me, but in the case of adults, the attitudes are much supporting when engaging in any kind of sporting activity."

Lack of Efforts When Adapting New Mainstream Sports

Among all participants, there were many who competed in wrestling, power-lifting and karate. As mentioned previously, the researcher himself holds Black Belt in two major styles of karate. Thus, he knew the relevance of adapting new sports into Paralympics. For example, physically handicapped and hearing impaired athletes are already competing in Taekwondo tournaments. Then why not, karate could be altered to accommodate their needs for better inclusion. Similarly, the visually impaired students, who compete in Judo can easily compete in wrestling as well, given minor alterations in its rules.

As for power-lifting, disabled participants that can extend their arms to 360 degree are eligible to compete in bench-press tournaments. But why should this sport be limited to only one type of disability and one type of lift? For instance, a visually impaired and a hearing impaired person can easily compete in all three major lifts related to power-lifting. These lifts include bench-press, dead-lift and squat. Even their combined disabilities do not pose any kind of hindrance for them to compete in these lifts.

Many participants in this study were already competing in the aforementioned sports. Therefore, the researcher posed a question to all of them: "do you think with little or no changes in rules of all three sports, you would be able to compete?"

To which, a visually impaired participant, who was getting trained in wrestling and power-lifting gave an answer that best summarizes the situation in Pakistan.

VIP-2: "Of course, sir. I myself participate in power-lifting and wrestling on regular basis. Even though I was discouraged by my peers because these sports do not have any future relevance as far as my career as a special athlete is concerned. I would really love to compete in these sports if given opportunity and necessary incentives. I have to pay for my own nutrition and other expenses that come with such sport activity. We do not get health insurance or any other kind of facility, if we are

injured. So how can you expect us to be optimistic about our future? Injuries in any sport are a norm, and hailing from a humble background, my life comes to a halt if, God forbid, I am injured."

The researcher asked follow-up question to same participant: "what are your expectations for the inclusion of the aforementioned sports in future sporting events?"

To which, he replied: "I am not very optimistic about the future of these sports. It took 10 years for the International Paralympic Committee to induct or include Taekwondo in Paralympic games. So God knows when these three sports might get registered. As far as my disabled community is concerned, we neither have the resources nor the time to start a movement for induction of new sports in Paralympics."

This answer by the participant led the researcher to ask his final question: "will you continue on with such sports even if you feel that you might have to risk your career for it?"

To which, the same participant answered: "I have already mastered a style of karate. Hence, I can compete in Taekwondo. The basics of all striking and grappling martial arts are the same. If you are proficient in one, then the other comes to you naturally. As far as power-lifting is concerned, I do it as a leisurely activity, which is essential for my healthy life style. If things do not go my way, I can always adapt and the same goes to my community, as we have gotten medals for this country with very limited resources and incentives."

Conclusion

This research filled many gaps, especially in relevance to Pakistani context. Having professional and academic experience, the researcher himself went into this study with a preconceived and somewhat incomplete notion. Thus, this research was beneficial for the researcher as well, as he received many answers that he could not have obtained through his own personal participant observation alone.

Four themes emerged from this research that are: current status of opportunities available to special persons, barriers that limit the participation of disabled persons in sporting events, lack of inclusion in sport facilities and lack of efforts when adapting new mainstream sports.

These four themes best describe the current situation and future implications with regard to induction of new sports in mainstream Paralympic games.

The first theme underscored an inquiry into the opportunities available to special athletes or aspiring special sportspersons. It was discovered that despite little opportunities to excel in Pakistan, which is third-world country; participants showed keen interest in joining sports and welcomed the notion of adaptive sports for special persons -- wrestling, power-lifting and karate for that matter.

The second theme pertained to the barriers in participation for disabled persons in sporting events. The main barriers toward successful inclusion included lack of awareness among masses as to how to treat special persons, which results in feeling of alienation from mainstream society, lack of infrastructure and other facilities in sport institutions, and government's disregard toward facilitating special persons in formulation of policies and implementation of social welfare projects.

As stated above, third theme related to lack of inclusion in sport facilities. Let alone Pakistan, inclusion is a new concept in the modern world. Some participants had experienced inclusion even though they were unaware of the concept. Their experiences regarding inclusion in sport activities were positive in general. But their experiences as children can be best summed up as mixed baggage of incidents. Children tend to be competitive while adults showcase a more humane side when participating in inclusive physical activities.

According to participants of all major disabilities, their shared experiences showcase a growth in character and understanding with the

introduction of the concept of inclusion as it benefitted both sides. The only factor that seems to hinder inclusion is the lack of facilities such as clubs, stadiums, grounds and courts that would be welcoming for both the able-bodied and disabled participants. The disabled participants showed a keen interest in sparring and all three aforementioned sports with their able-bodied counterparts. This research does not imply that there should be joint tournaments in all major sporting events, but a friendly practice session would not hurt anyone.

The fourth and last theme was about lack of efforts when adapting new mainstream sports. It was discovered in this research that participants from all four types of disabilities showed both interest and capabilities to adopt new sports. Some of them were already practicing such sports that are not present within mainstream special events, for instance wrestling, power-lifting (for all major disabilities) and karate. The researcher's own narrative regarding inclusion of these sports served as beneficial for this particular research. Where his personal experience lacked, the responses from the participants made up for it. The researcher along with other visually impaired and hearing impaired peers were already competing in mainstream martial arts tournaments with able-bodied persons. So, this kind of exclusion of such sports is detrimental to their own careers in sports. With few modifications, all of the aforementioned sports can be included in Paralympics. Thus, hopefully this research gave an incentive for further exploration in sports sciences, especially regarding the inclusion of both special persons and new sports in the mainstream sport events.

One major factor that emerged from this research was that we the people of Pakistan lag behind the modern world when it comes to adaption of social model of disability. We still conceive and consider disability as a disease that needs to be cured. This kind of mind-set instills a negative attitude towards all major forms of disabilities. Thus, stigmatizing disabled persons and socially disabling them along with their other inadequacies. The researcher sincerely hopes that this study drives the

discourse in the direction that facilitates inclusion in near future.

1. The curriculum of primary and secondary education level should entail chapters related to inclusion of special persons in mainstream society.
2. The media should launch a serious campaign to create awareness about inclusive education and sport activities
3. The sports coaches and instructors should be provided with in-service training in order for them to be better equipped with the skill set to deal with the issues concerning special persons.
4. Special athletes should be provided with ample emotional and financial incentives in order to participate in inclusive sports sessions.
5. Let alone disabled athletes, sports facilities in Pakistan are in shambles even for the able-bodied.
6. Such facilities rather become hazardous for the special athletes as they are more likely to get injured than able-bodied fellows.
7. The attitude of bureaucracy toward the issue of athletics related to special persons is abysmal.
8. Many special athletes too reticent to raise their voice against such officials.
9. Even though there are ample number of disabled sports athletes who can serve as sports coaches and trainers, yet they are deprived of their sports career at a very earlier stage of their lives. Therefore, special seats for coaching and training should be reserved for special athletes.
10. The Pakistani state and media are allocating most of their resources for the sports of cricket. This situation can be observed in the sports landscape for normal persons as well. Likewise, cricket is dominating the lives of special athletes. First of all, the government and media should provide reasonable support to the games meant for special

athletes. Secondly, this sport must be balanced in favour of other sports, such as karate, wrestling and power-lifting.

11. There are many sports in which the special persons of their particular disability type can compete without any restriction or disability. For example, the sports of judo and wrestling do not pose any limiting factor for special persons, such as visually impaired and deaf and dumb. Such sports should be given preference if the government wishes to ensure real inclusion.

12. Friendly sport events between the disabled and able-bodied individuals should be held in order to create inclusion and boost the morale of special athletes. These events should be held in a friendly and non-competitive atmosphere. Hence, this research suggests that only adolescents and adults should participate in such events.

13. The findings of this research clearly indicate that there are plethora of sports that can be modified and adapted for special persons. Yet, the effort to do so has been negligible, especially in Pakistani context.

14. This research has truly opened new frontiers as far as Pakistani academia is concerned. New studies are in order to better grasp the problems and limitations in this regard.

15. There is plenty of research gap in this particular field. Hopefully, this research proves helpful for the researchers interested in this subject.

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