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The Participation Of Youths With Disability In Sports Activities: Aspects Of Psychosocial Impact

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Abstract

Sports participation among the youth with disabilities is getting more attention due to the increase in their participant at national and international competitions. The benefits of participating in sports activities for youths with disabilities have been well documented. There has been evidence that sports contribute to the holistic development including better quality of life and provide opportunities for social and emotional development. This exploratory study aims to find out on the status of psychological skills among youths with disabilities who participate in sports activities. A set of questionnaire which measures athlete identity, social identity, exclusivity and negative affectivity was administered to 358 youths with disabilities who participated in sports activities organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Data were analysed descriptively involving mean scores and standard deviation. Inferential statistics involving analysis of variance and t-test were also used to explore the significant strength between variables. The findings show that there are significant difference among categories of disability for negative affectivity after involvement in sports programmes ($F=3.148$, $p<0.05$). There are also significant difference in athlete's identity ($F=7.017$, $p < 0.05$), psychosocial development ($F=2.864$, $p < 0.05$) and life values ($F=3.568$, $p < 0.05$). T-test analysis shows significant difference for some constructs based on gender which include self-identity ($t=94.655$, $p<0.05$), exclusivity ($t=90.240$, $p<0.05$), and negative affectivity ($t=93.377$, $p<0.05$). Further analysis reveals that individuals participating in team sports have higher psychosocial skills and increased confidence as compared to those involved in individual sports. This study has implications on increased provision of sports activities, personnel and facilities for youths with disabilities.

Keywords: athletes; disabilities; psychosocial impact; youth, participation

Introduction:

Sports is a physical activity which is closely related to quality of life, specifically to increase physical, spiritual and emotional health. Sports is a good avenue for stress management and enjoyment, besides giving a meaning to living (Berger & Tobar, 2012). Through physical activity, individuals will not only able to develop positive personal skills (M. Taib & Norlena, 2014) but will also be able to develop their social skills. Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory refers to development as how an individual change throughout lifetime by adapting to changes in personality, physical, cognitive and language developments (Erikson, et al, 1959). Thus, psychosocial development of youths with disabilities is an issue that that needs to be understood and given great consideration so that appropriate skills are taught in line with their development and ability. One means of increasing social skills and life values among youths with disabilities is through sports and recreation. Sports for the youth with disabilities would provide opportunities and exposure to gain experience through the process of socialization (Shikako-Thomas et al., 2008). Sports can also instill self-confidence and provide a base for positive psychosocial development. In addition, sports can also promote goodwill, tolerance

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and continuous quality physical and moral developments. At an individual level, sports can contribute to the formation of positive personality, competitiveness, improve health and physical fitness through beneficial use of leisure time, strengthen social interaction and mastery of basic and complex movements for skill developments (Omar-Fauzee et al., 2010).

To achieve the government's intention of introducing the concepts of "Sports For All", the Ministry of Youth and Sports has established a branch for Sports for People with Disabilities. This branch plays a role for providing scientific training programs related to sports and leisure to people with disabilities at all ages. It has conducted a few programs for people with disabilities who is actively involved in sports. Among the programs were *Program Perkhidmatan Latihan Sukan* (PLS), i-talent and i-train which were conducted throughout Malaysia.

Background of Research:

The aim of the study was to explore the impact of sports participation on psychosocial development of youths with disabilities. Three main determinants of psychosocial factors were researched, namely, athletes' identity, psychosocial skills and life values.

Athletes' identity is a good indicator for determining the sustainability of the athletes in their chosen sports. It is an indicator that shows how engagement and experience in sports can give positive impression to athletes from both psychological and cognitive aspects (Miller, 2009). Athletes' identity plays a role in identity mapping as well as a socialization agent. In other words, the identity of the athlete provides a framework for suitable programs consistent with the identification obtained from sports experiences. As a role for socialization, athletes' identity sometimes is determined by the perception of others on them (Tasiemski & Brewer, 2011); if others sees them as an athlete and praises their abilities, this will influence them and they will regard themselves as athletes. Since physical activity is a rather consistent activity and highly related to athlete's identity of getting praises and ovation, this strong identity will only increase the urge to participate in sports activity, probably at a higher leve (Pepitas et al., 2005).

There are four constructs in athletes' identity, namely, self-identity, social identity, exclusivity and negative affectivity. Self-identity refers to the strength of the individual's background which influences the identity of the athlete. Social identity refers to the influence of society's perception on the athletes; exclusivity refers to how far one identifies the role that he/she is an athlete which the exception of other life roles and negative affectivity refers to negative responses due to incompatibility to be engage in sports as important in athlete's identification of self.

Psychosocial skills allow individual to interact with, perceive, influence and relate to others. Psychosocial skills include the ability to appropriately experience, display and perceive emotional states and relate these to the events and environments where they occur (Pepitas et al., 2005). Psychosocial skills must work together with communication skills to enable individuals to interact appropriately with other individuals and function within a socially meaningful context. If a person has trouble recognizing when another person is happy, irritated, angry, sad etc. or has trouble experiencing these feelings then their interaction with others is likely to be poor and sometimes inappropriate.

Methodology:

Data from a larger study were used in this paper. Exploratory research design was employed to explore the psychological impact of youths with disabilities participating in sports activities. A set of questionnaires was used in the study. The questionnaire consists of two sections; the demography section and the psychosocial skills

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section. There are 6 items in the demography section namely age, gender, race group, types of disabilities, training centre and frequency of attending training. The psychosocial section has six subsections; self identity, social identity, exclusivity, negative affectivity, psychosocial development and life values. The items in the questionnaire were validated and have high reliability value of 0.946.

A total of 358 respondents were selected from 1837 participants attending programmes organized by the Malaysian Ministry of Youth and Sport held in six zones, the northern, central, eastern, southern zones, Sabah and Sarawak. The distribution of respondents according to zones is presented in table 1.

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents According to Zones

Zones	Population	No of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Northern	518	145	28
Eastern	380	80	20.7
Central	195	22	10.6
Southern	347	66	18.9
Sabah	167	16	9.2
Sarawak	230	29	12.6
Total	1837	358	100

The profile of the respondents is presented in Table 2.

Figure 2 Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Gender		
Male	294	82.1
Female	64	17.9
Age group		
10-14	58	16.2
15-19	219	60.9
20-24	33	9.2
25-29	20	5.6
30-34	17	4.7
35-39	9	2.5
40-44	2	0.6
Type of disabilities		
Learning disabilities	264	73.4
Physical impairments	77	21.5
Visual impairments	8	2.2
Hearing impairments	7	2.0
Cerebral palsy	2	0.6
Types of Sports		
Athletics	98	26.3
Football	59	16.5
Swimming	39	10.9
Lawn bowls	37	10.3
Badminton	34	9.8
Petanque	29	5.9
Tenpin bowling	18	5.0
Ping pong	11	3.1
Futsal	10	2.8
Volley ball	4	1.1
Tennis	4	1.1
Sailing	3	0.8
Handball	3	0.8
Bocce	2	0.6
Weight lifting	2	0.6
Netball	2	0.6
Archery	2	0.6
Hockey	1	0.3

Data were analysed descriptively using mean scores and standard deviations. Inferential statistics involving analysis of variance and t-test were also used to explore the significant strength between variables.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the study are presented in order to understand the status of psychological skills among youths with disabilities who took part in sports programmes. This status is measured based on its impact in relation to age, gender, types of disabilities and types of sports (individual or team sports participation). The findings in table 3 shows that the negative affectivity component ($F=2.61$, $p < 0.05$) is significant in relation to age factor as compared to the other five components.

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Table 3: One way ANOVA Analysis of Psychological Skills on Age Factor

Component	Source	Mean	df	F
Self-identity	Between Groups Within Groups	22.893 35.388	6 350	.647
Social Identity	Between Groups Within Groups	75.911 107.411	6 350	.707
Exclusivity	Between Groups Within Groups	3.570 2.174	6 350	1.642
Negative affectivity	Between Groups Within Groups	6.560 2.512	6 350	2.611
Psychosocial development	Between Groups Within Groups	22.893 35.388	6 350	.647
Life Value	Between Groups Within Groups	75.911 107.411	6 350	.707

A post-hoc tukey test (Figure 4) was carried out and it is found that there is significant difference between respondents in the age group of 25 to 29 years old as compared to the 10 to 14 age group and 15 to 29 age group. Participation in the programmes seems to be dominated by the 15 to 19 age group as they were still in the schooling age. A further explanation could be that chances to be involved in sports programmes is lesser as the programmes target school going children as their participants.

Figure 4: Post Hoc Tukey Test for Age Groups Factor

Age Group		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Significant
25-29	10-14	1.478	0.411	0.007
	15-19	1.320	0.370	0.008

*significant at p<0.05

Similar to age group factor, negative affectivity also showed significant difference on types of disabilities (F: 3.148, p <0.015). There is no significant difference in relation to other psychological skills factors. This is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: One way ANOVA Analysis of Psychological Skills on Types of Disabilities

Component	Source	Mean	df	F
Self-identity	Between groups	1.435	4	1.096
	Within Groups	1.309	352	
Social identity	Between groups	.971	4	.778
	Within Groups	1.248	352	
Exclusivity	Between groups	4.712	4	2.149
	Within Groups	2.192	352	
Negative affectivity	Between groups	7.925	4	3.148*
	Within Groups	2.517	352	
Psychosocial development	Between groups Within Groups	46.263 35.007	4 352	1.322
Life values	Between groups	54.765	4	.508
	Within Groups	107.879	352	

There is almost similar impact of participating in sports programmes with regards to types of disabilities experienced by the respondents. A post hoc Tukey analysis in Figure 6 showed that there is a significant different with regards to participants with physical impairment. The condition of their disabilities may be a challenge for them to be fully participating in the sports programmes (Omar-Fauzee et al., 2010).

T- test analysis was carried out for both gender and type of sports factors. For gender factor (see Figure 7), the findings showed that there is significant difference between gender and self-identity ($t=94.655$, $p<0.05$), exclusivity ($t=90.240$, $p<0.05$), and negative affectivity ($t=93.377$, $p<0.05$). Mean scores for male participants are found to be higher than that of female participants. This may be due to the nature of females being more humbled and are less exposed to sports activities (Hardin & Greer, 2009).

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Figure 6: Post Hoc Tukey Test for Types of Disabilities Factor

Types of Disabilities		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Significant
Physical impairment	Learning disabilities	*0.624	0.206	0.022

*significant at p<0.05

Figure 7: Tt- test Results between Psychosocial Skills and Gender

Component	Gender	Mean score	t Value
Self identity	Male	6.96	94.665*
	Female	6.39	
Social identity	Male	6.48	102.206
	Female	6.20	
Exclusivity	Male	10.15	90.240*
	Female	9.39	
Negative affectivity	Male	6.02	93.377*
	Female	5.45	
Psychosocial development	Male	35.07	1.175
	Female	34.11	
Life values	Male	74.53	100.992
	Female	71.84	

*significant at p<0.05

For types of sports, the t-test results in Figure 8 showed that there is significant difference between types of sports and psychosocial skills. Significant differences were found on self identity (t=2.343, p<0.05), psychosocial development (t=3.727, p<0.05), and life values (t=3.551, p<0.05). High mean scores is found among participants of team sports as compared to those participating in individual sports. Thus, it can be concluded that those participated in team sports were more outstanding in terms of psychosocial skills and confidence. This is in lieu with the nature of team sports whereby participants have more opportunity to interact with team mates (Hadiyan & Sheikh, 2015).

Figure 8 : T- test results between Psychosocial Skills and Types of Sports

Component	Group	df	F
Self identity	Team	6.92	2.343*
	Individual	6.62	
Social identity	Team	6.44	.331
	Individual	6.39	
Exclusivity	Team	10.04	.592
	Individual	9.92	
Negative affectivity	Team	5.90	- .541
	Individual	6.00	
Psychosocial development	Team	35.55	3.727*
	Individual	32.58	
Life values	Team	75.20	3.551*
	Individual	70.00	

*significant at p<0.05

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Conclusion

This study has shown some perspectives on the involvement of youths with disabilities in sports programs organized by the Malaysian Ministry of Youth and Sports. There is a growing positive development on the participants' psychosocial elements. They showed increased confidence and are more skilled in their respective sports events. Efforts to enculturate sports among youths with disabilities should be made widely across types of disabilities and should be started at a very young age.

A comprehensive and effective sports program is pertinent as sports can be one of the platform for positive development for youth with disabilities. Continuous support and motivation from various parties would create a wider pathway for youths with disabilities to be more involved in sports and other related activities. Suggestions for wider participant by youth with disabilities in sports and related sports are among others that wider choices in sports activities for social inclusion and active participation be made for both typical and atypical youth. It is important that efforts in identifying the extrinsic factors in planning sports activities for youths with disabilities are made. This is because mode of support, motivation and incentives may varies depending on interest of the parties involved. By widening the choices, it then helps in increasing community sports activities as a medium to advocate importance of recreation and sports participation for youths with disabilities for better psychological and physical health outcomes

Another aspect that is necessary to be included is the establishment of an intact framework for providing sporting activities for youths with disabilities that promotes positive intercultural understanding, expansion of social inclusion, experience gaining opportunities and increase of better life values that can compensate disability effects. This framework can be based on the information provided by sports agencies, families, youth with disabilities and service providers in planning activities that fit the preferences and ensuring active participation of youths with disabilities. Lastly, documentation of best practices and successful sports activities for youths with disabilities should be made available which can be replicated in suitable setting and types of disabilities in local sports setting.

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