
The Participation Motive in the Paralympics

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Abstract: *The purpose of this case study is to examine the factors that influenced the participation of individuals with disability in sports. An interview was carried out on ten athletes with disability (female=3; male=7) who participated in the Malaysian Paralympics Sports Competition. All of the respondents have signed an inform consent letter to be tape recorded. Output of the interview was transcribed verbatim and content analysis was carried out to identify the common themes. The findings of the study found five factors that influence participation of individuals with disability in sports; fun, support, fitness, reward, and reduce stress. The finding also showed that despite the disability that they have, the motives of involving in sports were similar to those who have no known disability.*

1. Introduction

Sport comes from a French word, *desporte*, which means leisure. It denotes activities involving the physical strength of every participants as the dominant factor in deciding the result; either win or lose. Nevertheless, the word has also been employed to connote activities such as mind sport and motor sport; which centers on one's intellect and the equipment quality. According to Gapor (2007), sport is an activity that competitively institutionalized one's strength and complex physical skills. Such activity is influenced by inner satisfaction and outer rewards achieved through the sport. Activities that has been categorised as sport must be synchronized. Hence, laws or rules and regulations need to be internationally agreed.

2. State of the Art

Paralympics is a division of sport specifically for the disabled person. It is an international competition with its own set of rules and regulations which has been agreed by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). Since Paralympics had been introduced in Toronto, Canada in 1976, it has become a boost to the betterment of the disabled individuals. This is proven by the involvement of the disabled individuals in sport through research done by Zurn, Lopiano, and Snyder, (2006). They reported during the United States of America paralympics that attracted the participation of 39 countries, the involvement of paralympics athlete is 99 women (20.9%). Meanwhile, the 375 men made up 79.1% of the total participants. Implication of the sport give these individuals the unlimited golden chance to introduce a positive image of the disabled individuals and a chance to increase health.

Referring to Weinberg and Gould (2007), among the dominant motives for involvement in sports are physical fitness, fun and friendship. The athletes who are involved directly or indirectly in the sports could achieve inner satisfaction and fun while competing among each other (Omar-Fauzee, Yusof & Zizzi, 2009). Although it is inner satisfaction, it is caused by external factors. The existence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is pertinent in sport because it could be a cause to improve one's performance (Jarvis,2006). In this context, sport acts as a mould of one's health, emotion, physical and attitude. They have the inner strength to grasp the attributes that are needed for an excellent athlete, in terms of mental and physical.

2.1 Literature Review

Dorothee, Martin dan Sabine (2006) found out that athletes with task orientation in physical activity is related to the motives of increasing skills and competence, competitiveness and building a positive attitude. The scenario is also pertinent in paralympics athletes. They have strong competitive psychological and physical desire in order to achieve excellency in individual or group sport. Sport and

physical activities are therapy for the paralympics athletes (Malanga, 2006).

In addition, Ryan (2006) stated that psychological researchers believe factors such as interpersonal relationship with coaches, family, friends and etcetera are motivation for athletes to become involved in sports activity. Roberts, Treasure, and Conroy (2007) also suggested that motivation takes the form of other motivation management. Nevertheless, the important individuals are parents, teachers or coaches, and motivational manager. Support is important for an athlete to continue their involvement in sports especially the disabled individuals who need the support more than able individuals.

Meanwhile, sports orientation is also a contributor of the paralympics involvement in sports. Physical activity could contribute in the increment of health and sport. Referring to Nets (2007), physical attribution is a product of physical activity and training. It also refers to the softness, strength, coordination and balance. Nonetheless, researches that have been carried out focus more on the relationship between physical strength and psychological aspect such as emphasizing cardiovascular component.

Usually, the disabled individuals have low-self esteem. Therefore, they prefer to keep to themselves than participating in a group activity. Their physical lacking, which has been seen as defective, inheritance problem due to diseases, trauma, other health related issues or other non-normal differences. Their defect is deemed as a load of burden which brings low quality of life for the disabled individuals and their families. This would later leads to worries and rejection.

3. Purpose of the Study

In sports activity, the disabled individuals are given the chances to be involved in group activity. Nonetheless, there are lack of exposure and importance of being involved in such activity. Relating to this issue, the research paper would discuss the outcome of a research focusing the involvement of the disabled individuals in sports.

Specifically, the paper attempts to seek the answers of these questions:

- a. What is the main motive for the disabled individuals to be involved in sport?
- b. What is the factor that attracted the disabled individuals to join sport?

4. Methodology

The methodology of reseach is done through interviews to obtain information from research samples. Then, the information is analysed qualitatively focusing on the existed themes. The method has been chosen because it is descriptive and inductive. It could focus on the underlying meaning of the research samples motives. The population of the research consists of athletes that has been involved in Malaysia paralympics sport 2007. There are 10 research samples (3 women and 7 men) whose age range from 22 to 30 years old (min 24.4 and sd 2.75). They are chosen based on their involvement in certain sports and from various achievement and experience in sport. The collected data is based on interview protocol regarding the samples involvement in paralympic sport. Before the data is collected, agreement from Malaysia Welfare Department has been established and the samples have agreed to be interviewed by signing agreement letters. Before the interview session is carried out, the samples have been given talks so that they understand the real meaning of the research and honest in giving their answers and needed information. To ensure the samples understand the given questions, they have been given time to go through the question before shooting begins. Shooting is done only after the samples have given the permission to be ready for the interview. All of the shooting have been transcribed and analysed in order to obtain main data and the creation of research theme.

5. Results and Discussions

Demographic data of the research samples is listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Research Samples

	N	Percentage (%)	Min	Sd
Age			24.4	2.75
22	3	43		
24	2	29		
27	1	14		
30	1	14		
Gender	10		1.30	1.48
Men	7	70		
Women	3	30		
Sport			3.30	1.70
Weightlifting	2	20		
Wheelchair	1	10		
Race				
Track	3	30		
Yatch	1	10		
Ping Pong	2	20		
Tenpin	1	10		
Bowling				

Referring to the analysis of the interview content, the main theme was related to motive and important factors that triggered the athletes' involvement in sports. The data analysis was conducted by identifying raw data according to specifics, which are (1) the theme of the raw data, (2) secondary data theme, and (3) the main theme. The findings resulted in 110 raw themes. It was categorised to 23 secondary themes and 5 main themes. The five main themes of the motivational factors (Table 2) that influenced their

involvement in sports are fun consisting of 40 raw data themes (36.36%), and support theme where the raw data is 31 or 28.18%. Next, the third theme is fitness theme of 14 (12.73%) and reward as much as 13 raw themes which is 11.82%. Meanwhile, the last theme is to curb stress which consists of 12 raw themes which are 10.91%. The main theme could be referred in Appendix A.

Table 2: Factors Influencing The Disabled Individuals'

Involvement in Paralympics

Main Theme	Total of Raw Data
Percentage (%)	
Fun	40
36.36	
Support	31
28.18	
Fitness	14
12.73	
Rewards	13
11.82	
Stress relieved	12
10.91	

N (110)

1. FUN THEME

The first motivational factor that has been identified as the primary theme that drives the athletes' involvement in sport is due to fun which is 36.36%. The outcome suggests the paralympics athletes enjoy their involvement in sports. The enjoyment gives an inner motivation to them to continue participating in the sports. According to Amiot, Gaudreu, and Blanchard (2004), self-achieved motivation encouraged

more involvement in sports and to handle problems. Training sessions to become athletes is a motivation for the disabled individuals to show their skills, exchange of experiences, opportunities, sports attribution, show potentials, diverse events, enlightenment and media. Table 3 consists of a detailed division of main theme in enjoyment factor.

Table 3: Enjoyment Theme as a Factor to Become Athletes

Main Theme	Total of Raw Data
Percentage (%)	
Showing skills 20.0	8
Expertise sharing 17.5	7
Self-enlightenment 17.5	7
Sport Attribution 12.5	5
Showing talent 10.0	4
Opportunity 10.0	4
Showing mastery 5.0	2
Diverse events 5.0	2
Media 2.5	1
	N (40)

Based on Table 3, discussion focuses on main theme that could be found such as :

Showing Skills

The disabled individuals believe that showing skills to compete with the able individuals could give them satisfaction. One of the sample stated,

"...I join sport as it contributes and gives chances for the disabled athletes to show their skills in sport..."

This shows the disabled individuals have attitudes to show their skills even though they still have their weaknesses. Based on the research findings, 20% of the sample stated that they were involved in sports to show their skills.

Mohd. Salleh (2005) stresses that high intellectual individuals could achieve physical achievement to control their environments. This is appropriate with paralympics athletes that have disabilities but are competitive to choose their skills, controlling the environment, never gives up, and always find a way (positive thinking) to achieve self and group success. To illustrate, wheelchair basketball boosts the spirit of group and individuals to fight in sport even though they are faced with obstacles and injuries. Therefore, they attempt their best to show their skills in the paralympics activities that they have been involved and appropriate with their disabilities.

Sharing Experience

Motive to gain experience could also be a driving force for the involvement of paralympics athletes in sport. The motive is related with the differences in the athletes' achievement level based on their success and experience from the beginning of the sport to the highest level. Below are the outcome of a sample's interview.

"...I love to go out from here to compete and gain diverse experience and know their places and how they play..."

This statement shows that success through experience and the chance to be in action, especially with overseas athletes, have given more benefits in terms of knowledge and new skills. Besides, the sample stated that he could make a comparison and analyse the game form diverse perspectives such as evaluating the opponents' strength formula. Hence, the paralympics athletes will always work to increase exercise and show commitment to display quality games despite their deformities.

Now, it is clear that the disabled individuals' involvement in paralympics sports through shared experience will help that in increasing their achievement in sport and self-faith in dealing with the trials and tribulations of lives. Athletes that has done a lot of exercise are assumed as having more experience in physical activity and realize how to master the skills in each sport (Ryan, 2006).

Self-realization

One of the motivational factor for paralympics athletes is to possess self-realization. It means the athletes know and understand the importance of the sport to their health. Although they have deformities, the realization of the health benefit make them involved in sports.

Even though the disabled individuals have physical deformities but they have amazing abilities that are difficult for the normal individuals to perform. Nonetheless, it is this speciality that give them the boost to continue to be involved in sport. This is stressed by Blauwet (2007) by giving the individuals with disabilities the title of athletes will lift their spirit to achieve physical fitness and great mental. The statement is supported by a sample who said :

"...even though i am disabled, I am able to involve myself in appropriate sport with my health. For example, I have spinal disability yet I am still involved in ping-pong. Therefore, I am fit..."

Sports Attributes

During the time the sample is involved in sport, it has enriched them with mountainous knowledge and experience that drive them to continue their involvement in sport. The sports attribute factor has been explained by few of the samples. One of the comments is:

“...I am involved in wheelchair sport curling because it is adventurous...”

Based on Zurn, Lopiano, and Snyder (2006), the paralympics athletes involvement in 2006 in United States of America are in events such as ice hockey, skidornic, and events for wheelchair. Similar types of events have been competed in 2002. The events are the athletes favourite to be involved in. The appropriate sport activity and types of deformities with appropriate physical for the sport activity make specific sports as the athletes' choices.

To Broadcast Talent and Show Skills

The paralympics athletes' involvement in sports is due to their desire to portray their talent and skills that they possess and to increase their achievement although they are in lacking environment. One of the samples stated that the talent factor drives the paralympics to join sport which is :

“...initially i was involved in sport for fun. But, when I realized my talent was noticed, I continue increasing my exercises for my own performances...”

Mohd Salleh (2005) stated that individuals with high talent could employ their physical achievement to control the environment. It is undeniable that the athletes' natural talent is a gift. The talent factor also plays an important role to give intrinsic motivation to the athletes because they are confident in themselves and interested to explore complex skills. When they are confident with their talent, they would not miss the opportunities. The chance factor is also a drive to the athletes to be involved in sports.

Media

The findings of the research proves the media is also a source of the athletes' motivation to be involved in sport. One of the findings is :

“...the commercial factor such as in Malaysia that had hel The Commonwealth Games. There, I become acquainted with my own event, I met the coaches at schools and incereased passion to try in tracks...”

Based on the three motivational factors that have been stated, the factor of interest in the sport is the foundation of realization about one's ability and talent. Besides, media could act as an informational medium to give idea and attract the athletes' interest to become acquainted in the sport. Omardin (1998) believes the media contributes to increased sport development.

2. SUPPORT THEME

Support theme (Table 4) is the second motivational need (28.18%) that drives the athletes' involvenment in sport. The motivation to be involved in sport is due to the relationship and support of colleagues, families, coaches, and inner motivation.

Table 4 : The Support Theme To Be Involved In Sport

Main theme	Total of Raw Data
Percentage (%)	
Family 32.26	10
Friends 25.81	8
Staffs and Sponsors 19.35	6
Self Motivation 12.90	4
Coaches	3
9.68	N (31)

Based on Table 4, the pertinent support factors are as follows:

Family support

The need for the relationship is to boost the athletes' spirits and drive to shine in the sport industry. Dorothee, Martin and Sabine (2006) said that social support is acknowledged as a source to increased skills. One of the samples stated:

"...I love group activity because I enjoy it very much. I need to adapt to my friends and I gathered lots of input from them. Sport strengthen my family bond..."

Family support becomes an important matter because parents and families are the closest force of their children's involvement in sport. They are the main factor in increasing ones' motivation and mould ones' success in the future. The physical condition of the disabled individuals always need support in every activity; from the beginning till the time

freedom is achieved when they do not have to depend on their parents. This condition has created a deep love bond between the family support especially parents. This is a psychological benefit when one has family support.

Friends

Other samples explained that family support plays an important role in helping to motivate them in sport. One of them stated that :

“...friends give support. For example, when I missed my training, they would ask about my whereabouts and encourage me to undergo my training...”

Apart from family, relatives and parents, friends are the closest to the disabled individuals. This presents a psychological benefit such as confidence, love and closeness with those that we know. Based on the above response, it is crystal clear that athletes need strong supports from the closest people. These people need to understand the need of the athletes to win in the sports.

Self Motivation

Individual who has high-esteem motivation will maintain their involvement in activities. A statement from one of the sample is :

“...I want to continue participating in paralympics...”

According to Perreault (2007), motivation through *coping skill* could increase students' involvement in sport activity. This could be proven by research conducted on wheelchair basketball athletes. They are accustomed to face problems due to their physical disabilities. The disabled individuals have strong will to support the paralympic athletes.

Coaches

Dorothee, Martin and Sabine (2006) stressed the orientation of a personal coach could give effects to athletes' behaviour. One of them said,

“...coach is the closest person to me.therefore, he always support me to be involved in sport...”

In addition, Malletts (2002) stated that coaches are important in an athlete's sport progress. They have to prepare the athletes with skills and knowledge that is needed to advance, progress and succeed in their respective sport (Nazaruddin, Omar-fauzee, Geok, Jamalis & Din, 2009). Coaches also have big influence to make an enjoyable involvement in the sport. Based on the above statement and the research findings, they show that methodologies and coaches' support are the mainframe that generated the athletes' success in sport.

3. FITNESS THEME

Fitness theme influenced the paralympics motivation to be involved in sport which is 12.73%. Fitness is a high and consistent organ system due to constant training. Fitness theme (Table 5) consists of body health and ones' deformities. Fitness could be seen from psyhiological, psychological, motor abilities and body structure. The health benefit from the physical activity depends on the types of activity, the period of each activities, endurance level, and participation frequency.

Table 5 : Fitness Theme To Become An Athlete

Main Theme	Total of Raw Data
Percentage (%)	
Health Condition	10
71.43	
Hiding Disabilities	4
28.57	
	N (14)

The details of Table 5 are as follows:

Health Benefit

Sport activity has health benefits (Omar-fauzee, et. al., 2009). Scientific research proves that sport activity could give positive response to human's psychological such as maintaining one's temperature and control blood in the body. Optimum health exists if paralympics athletes know the importance of quality health. One of the sample stated that :

"...I feel healthy and fit as compared to before since I have followed this sport and I felt I have no skills deformities, I am the same as normal individuals..."

Malanga (2006) stated that sports benefits for the disabled individuals are they could increase their endurance, cardiovascular effectiveness, increase balance and motor skills that are better than the other disabled individuals who are not involved in sport. For example, athletes that have spine injuries have better chances to increase their health and undergo faster recovery process. With physical trainings, opportunity to increase the capacity of the bone is higher than the injuries. The research proves that paralympics athletes could hide if they are consistently involved in sport.

4. REWARD THEME

The findings of the interview show facility theme ranked third (11.82%) in motivating the athletes to be involved in sports. Examples of the facility theme are athletes' desire to visit other states, future guarantee and gratitude (Table 6).

Table 6 : Reward Factor to Become An Athlete

Main Theme	Total of Raw Data
Percentage (%)	
Visiting other countries 46.15	6
Guaranteed Future 23.07	3
Incentive 15.38	2
Appreciation 15.38	2
N (13)	

Based on Table 6, the detailed discussion is as followed :

Visiting Other Countries

Based on the reward factor, visiting other countries consist of 46.15%; the highest factor that lead to the involvement of the athletes' in sport. When the paralympics tournament was held in other sountries, the athletes are anxious to tour the countries. One of them stated :

“...I enjoy participating in the sport because I could see the other countries and tour as I enrolled in the paralympics sport...”

The findings clearly stated that as paralympics athletes could feel the fun in touring as a motivation to continue their involvement in sport. Therefore, the paralympics athletes could feel satisfied and grstitude when they coould achieve a high performmance compared to individuals who have no such opportunities (Ryan, 2005).

Incentive

There are some of the samples that stated financial factor is a motivation and a cause to be involved such as the below response:

"...financial factor, when I win in sport, I would get allowance, incentives and rewards, to increase the economy..."

The factor is definitely a motivational drive to the disabled individuals because rewards and facilities, either through financial help or rewards, could ease their financial burden. The paralympics athletes that come from less fortunate families, in terms of economy, would really appreciate the help. In addition, the disabled individuals would have to undergo consistent and repeated health therapy to curb their deformities.

Appreciation

The spirit to achieve gratitude could influence the athletes' performance in sport. This is what one of the sample has said :

"...it feels like there are more benefits than none athletes because I have the chance to be in other countries. Feel appreciated..."

When one of them receive rewards for their performance as "the most appreciated players", this gives them the drive to increase their intrinsic motivation. The reality is athletes who feel appreciated would display better performance

5. REDUCING STRESS THEME

The last main theme is reducing stress (8.29%). The three items that drives the athletes' motivation to be involved

in sport are mental endurance, satisfaction and avoiding time wasting.

Physical activity could give a positive benefit to mental health. This is stated by academic meeting tht was held by Somerset Health Authority in January 1999. They agree to the fact that physical activity is beneficial for mental health. Table 7 shows items that are consisted in reducing stress theme.

Table 7 : Reducing Strees Theme As a Factor To Become An Athlete

Main Theme	Total of Raw Data
Percentage (%)	
Mental Endurance 50	6
Satisfaction and Appreciation 25	3
Avoiding Wasting Time 25	3
	N (12)
100%	

In detail, the discussion of Table 7 is as follows:

Mental Endurance

Referring to Table 7, the factor of moulding good moral values have the highest percentage which is 5.45%. The factor proves that the key to become an incredible athlete is basef on positive and great moral values that come from sincerity, spiritual and mental strength, dicipline and ectera. This is very important as it drives the athletes to achieve greatness. This theme has been stated by few samples such as :

“..in a competition, I need mental strength because I have to face my opponents and their supporters....”

The mind helps to assume and to guess behoaviour. Accurate guess will become a motivation to take the next big step. This is alligned with Weinberg and Gould (2006), where

visualisation, rehearsal mental, imagery and mental training refer to creation of experience in the mind.

Satisfaction and Enjoyment

In the research, satisfaction and enjoyment that are product of sport activity are identified as factor that had the most raw data(10) and percentage (5.5%). To prove, below are responses from samples.

...satisfaction factor, when one could perform greatly, is extremely satisfying...

The sample's opinion stresses that disabled athletes want to achieve satisfaction and enjoyment to achieve their goals. Therefore, athletes would feel the success and satisfaction when they have perform greatly as compared to individuals that have no opportunities (Ryan, 2005)

6. Summary and Conclusion

Overall, there are six factors that have become the motivation for the paralympics to join sport. The main motivational factor of athletes' involvement in sport is enjoyment, followed by support, fitness, reward and curbing stress theme. The research findings proves the main motivational factor of enjoyment is an important asset in driving the paralympics athletes' involvement in sport. This factor is alligned with Weinberg and Gould (2007) who stated the main motive in sport is physical fitness, enjoyment and friendship. Paralympics athletes, either they are involved directly and indirectly in sport, achieve enjoyment when they are able to compete with each other.

Friends, family and coaches' support are motivating the paralympics athletes. Ryan (2006) stated the psychological researches such as interpersonal factor with the coaches, family, friends and ectera are motivational factor of athletes' involvement in sport.

Fitness factor that consists of health and hiding deforminities are contributors of paralympics athletes to

continue their sport involvement. Malanga (2006) supports the beneficial of the disabled sport are endurance increment, muscle strength, cardiovascular effectiveness, balance increment and motor skills as compare to other disabled individuals who are not involved in sport.

In addition, their motives to be involved in sport is to gain rewards and curb stress. The motives help them to become active in sport (Omar-fauzee, et al., 2009). The reward, regardless it was received intrinsically or extrinsically, are motivation to the disabled individuals. According to Jarvis (2006), intrinsic and extrinsic motivation could increase one's achievement in sport. Indeed, satisfaction is the athletes' inner intrinsic.

The disabled individuals' involvement in paralympics has identified extrinsic factor is important in planning diverse involvement in a sport competition (Perreault, 2007). Therefore, suggestion have been made to the responsible authorities of the athletes' welfare to raise the sport allowances according to local or international achievement. Support and incentives such as in the form of rewards motivate them to continue their training in order to excel in sport. Besides, participation in sport help to finance the athletes' training especially in buying equipment and extra food.

In conclusion, the research findings denotes trust in motivational factors that influence the athletes' involvement in sport. Considering the roles of diverse authorities, responses that are related to the factors could be informed in sport training, coaches training, campaigns in increasing awareness and the different medium to uphold the disabled individuals' involvement in sport. A structured environment that includes the roles of the factors and themes of the research could be considered by the related authorities in order to attract the whole disabled individuals community.

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