
EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF DISABILITY ON SPORT PARTICIPATION

Submitting author: Dr Tracy Taylor
University of Technology Sydney, Business
broadway,
Australia

All authors: Tracy Taylor (corresp), Simon Darcy, Dan Lock

Type: Scientific
Category: 11: Sport Participation

Abstract

In this study disability type, level of support needs and constraints (intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural) are investigated in a national study of people with a disabilities' (PwD) participation in sport.

Understanding the factors that constrain participation is fundamental to maximising sport participation. We explore whether different disability types and levels of support needs influence the constraints people experience. The research questions explored are:

RQ1.​What is the relationship between disability type and a person's level of support needs?

RQ2.​Are there differences in the magnitude and category of constraints encountered based on disability type?

RQ3.​Are there differences in the magnitude and category of constraints encountered based on the level of support needs (none, low, medium, high and very high)?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The social model conceptualisation of disability and leisure constraints provides an appropriate framework for developing an understanding of the constraints faced by PwD in sporting contexts. Disability is a social relationship shaped by the privileging of normalcy and overarching processes of exclusion across social, political and cultural relationships (Barnes et al., 2010; Swain, 2004). Social model approaches to disability emphasise the ways in which organisations, structures, processes and practices need to change to account for access and support required to enable participation and inclusion for PwD in social, political and cultural life. Understanding the disability experience by considering impairment effects creates a paradigm that takes into account the range and intersections of socio-cultural disadvantage embodied in social approaches associated with gender, race, location, sexuality and socio-economic positioning (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). There is scope to elaborate on the social model of disability through an application of leisure constraints to sport participation.

The seven leisure constraint factors: time; facilities/services; accessibility/financial; lack of partners; lack of knowledge; individual psychological; and lack of interest (Alexandris & Carroll, 1997) have been the foundation of the constraints identified. While the identification of constraints has occurred for different leisure and sport activities (Alexandris et al., 2008; Andronikidis, Vassiliadis, Priporas, & Kamenidou, 2007; Hudson et al., 2010; Lamont et al., 2012;), geographic contexts (Greece, USA, Canada, Germany and Australia), and with other theoretical constructs (e.g., Alexandris et al., 2008; Kim & Trail, 2010) little is known about how these relate to PwD.

METHODOLOGY

The instrument developed to collect data comprised three sections: constraints to participation; dimension of disability and level of support needs; and demographic/psychographic profile. An electronic snowballing technique was used to contact a radiating sample of PwD. Responses were obtained from 1046 people with a disability, or their representatives, via a multi-platform questionnaire survey capturing data on constraints to participation, and the effect of disability type and levels of support needs. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, chi-square and a 2-way factorial MANOVA.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings indicated that disability is not a homogenous construct and clearly showed that disability type and level of support needs explain significant variations in constraints to participation and nonparticipation. In particular, when the 2-Way MANOVA included disability and level of support needs as contingent independent variables, level of support needs was the most significant indicator of the likelihood of the constraints to participation or nonparticipation. The Exploratory Factor Analysis identified eight constraint factors: 1. Community/organisation (structural); 2. Time (structural); 3. Equipment (structural); 4. Economic (structural); 5. Intrapersonal; 6. Interpersonal; 7. Transport/location (structural); and 8. Gender and traditions (structural). The structural constraint factors were multidimensional (six factors in this case), whereas the intrapersonal and interpersonal items loaded on two separate factors. While intrapersonal and interpersonal considerations were found to constrain sport participation, the six structural constructs had the most significant impact on sport participation.

This research provides a basis to develop a better understanding of the constraints to sport participation for PwD and presents findings that could be used to improve inclusive organisational practices. The results highlight the need for a more considered conceptualisation of the intrapersonal considerations of the individual, across their interpersonal relationships and within the structural constraints present within sport organisations, sport policy provisions and macro-level policy considerations. The leisure constraints framework of intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints was a useful theoretical framework to approach the examination of perceived individual constraints to sport participation. However, the critical action point is how

this research is used to build inclusive approaches to PwD's sport participation. This may be achieved through facilitating a better understanding of how PwD's relationships with sport providers and the broader macro policy environment affect the opportunities that PwD have for social participation and citizenship.

References

- Alexandris, K., Kouthouris, C., Funk, D., & Chatzigianni, E. (2008). Examining the relationships between leisure constraints, involvement and attitudinal loyalty among Greek recreational skiers. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 8, 247-264.
- Barnes, C., Mercer, G., & Shakespeare, T. (2010). *Exploring disability: A sociological introduction* (2nd ed.). Malden, Mass: Polity Press.
- Meekosha, H. & Shuttleworth, R. (2009). What's so 'critical' about critical disability studies. *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 15, 47-75.