

Participation in Adaptive Sports Programs: Perceptions of the Parent and Child

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Background

Research has shown that participation in sports improves quality of life in children but children with a disability have been shown to participate significantly less than abled-bodied children.

Increased awareness of both barriers and facilitators can help develop new strategies to increase the number of children with a disability that participate in adaptive sports.



<https://www.laparent.com/inclusive-play-programs>

Purpose



The purpose of this study was to describe and interpret the experience of participating in an adaptive sports program from the perspective of the children with a physical disability and their parents.

Methods

A Phenomenological Research Design

Data Collection:

- In-person semi-structured interviews with guiding questions
- Each child and parent was interviewed separately
- Guiding questions:
 - Experience
 - Enjoyment and frustrations
 - Plans for the future



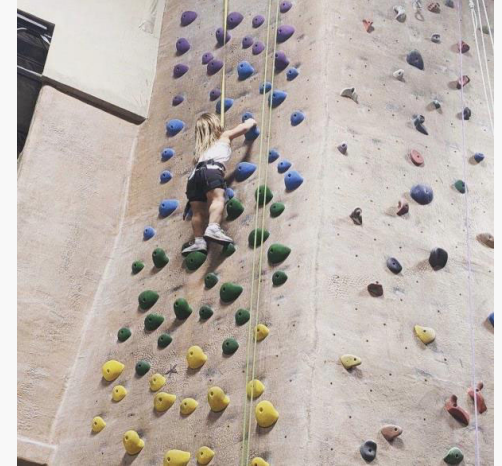
Participants Table

Parent		Child					
Name	Sex	Name	Sex	Age	Disability	Sport(s)	# of Years in sports
Justin	M	Francisco	M	9	Arthrogryposis	Track, field, rock climbing, swim	5
Shannon	F	Sophie	F	15	Spina Bifida	Baseball, wheelchair basketball, dance, horseback riding	8
Maria	F	Corey	M	14	Multiple Epiphyseal Dysplasia	Club swim, middle school swim	10
Peter	M	Zack	M	8	Spina Bifida	Basketball, track, archery	3
Reina	F	Tomás	M	15	Spina Bifida	Basketball, track, archery, field	9
Katie	F	Alicia	F	14	Spina Bifida	Wheelchair basketball	6
Jenna	F	Summer	F	11	Fibular Hemimelia/Amputation	Archery, field, tumbling	5
Matthew	M	Charlie	M	14	Spina Bifida	Karate, basketball, football, skiing	9
Alice	F	Erin	F	9	Cerebral Palsy	Swimming, triathlon, horseback riding	4

Methods

Data Analysis

- Interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriptionist
- Constant comparison coding using Nvivo Software for the data analysis
- Coding continued until data saturation was met

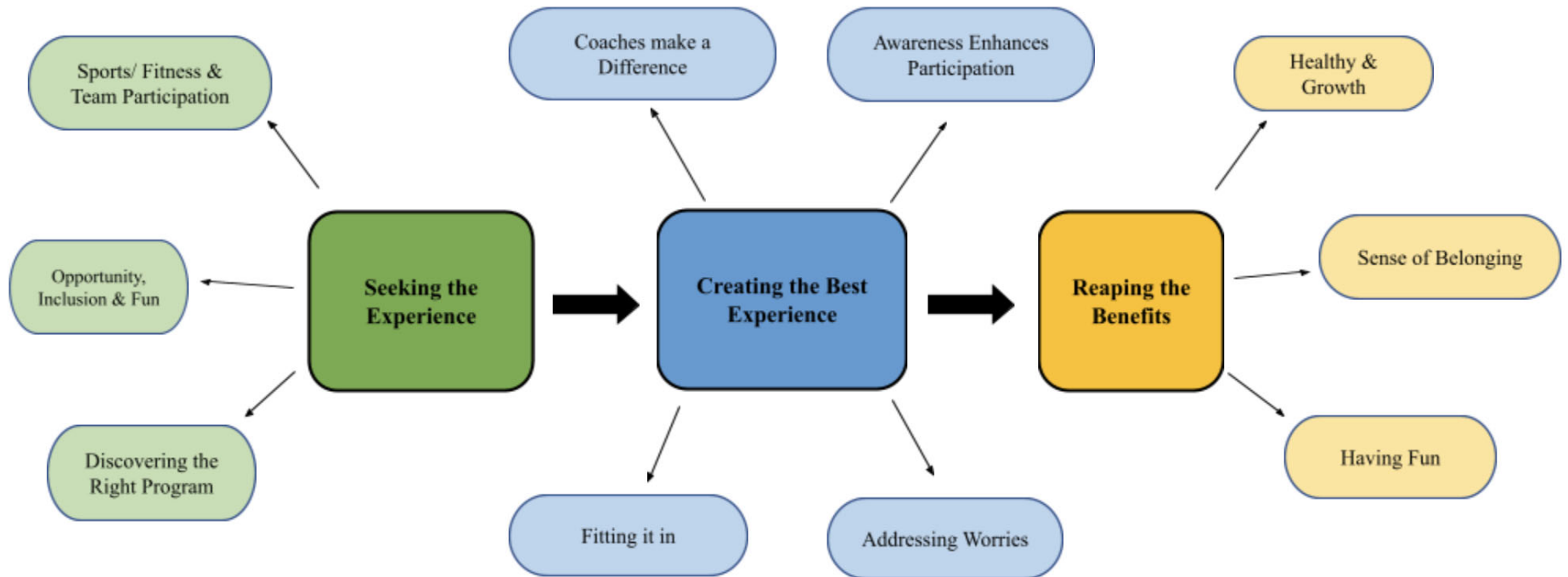


Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established using the four components of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Strategies employed:

- Triangulation of sources
- Peer debriefing
- Member checking
- Reflexive journaling
- Quotation exemplars
- Thick description
- Nvivo tracking
- Inquiry audit/audit trail

Findings



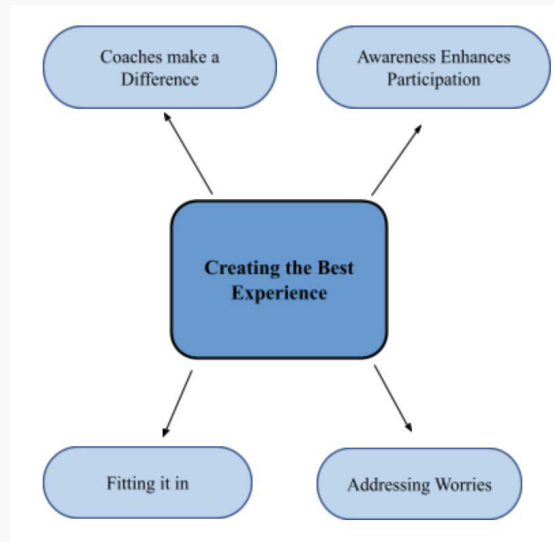
Seeking the Experience

Parents and children both wanted to have a sport/activity to participate in, and adaptive sports gave them the opportunity to gain the benefits of sport while feeling including and having fun. Discovering the right program was not always easy.



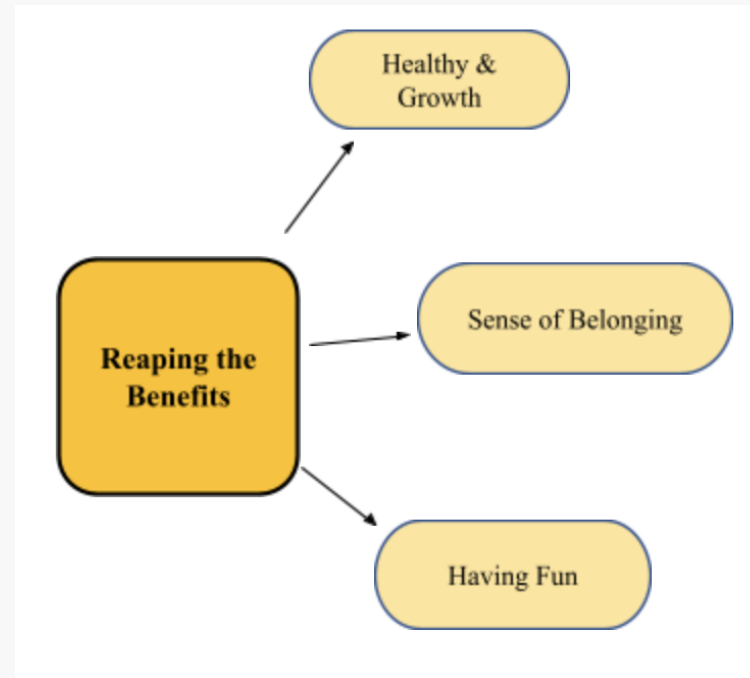
Creating the Best Experience:

Parents enjoyed the structure and helpfulness of the program while the kids liked how coaches made practice fun. Both parents and kids talked about the experience being better when more kids participated.



Reaping the Benefits:

Children directly benefited from their participation in adaptive sports, whereas the parents indirectly benefited through their child's accomplishments.



Metaphor: Quest for Health, Fulfillment, Growth and Inclusion

Discovering the path and finding the right route can be difficult

Supportive planks in a bridge necessary to cross the stream

- Awareness of the program
- Logistic factors
- Addressing child and family worries
- Coaches' attitudes and actions

Through this journey, the parents and children reported reaping the benefits in a manner similar to reaching the lush terrain on the other side of the bridge.



Conclusions

Facilitators and challenges found in this study that are consistent with previous research include:

- Facilitators: Fitting in, having fun and health benefits
- Challenges: Lack of information, concerns of injury, inclusion and financial responsibilities

This study found both parent and child preferred greater volume of involvement, while another research study showed smaller groups were more desirable.

Overall, this qualitative study suggested the children and parents involved in adaptive sports had a positive experience despite the difficulties of becoming involved



Clinical Relevance



This project adds to the under-researched topic of participation in adaptive sports for children with a disability. The perspectives of the involved families may help adaptive sports organizations recognize the important aspects of a successful program. Additionally, it may promote Physical Therapists to consider encouraging adaptive sports involvement for the children they treat.