



Perception of Unified Patners in Engaging with Special Athletes of Puducherry

MANISH KUMAR SINSINWAR AND RAM MOHAN SINGH

M. PED 2nd year E-mail: mkumarsinswar@gmail.com

Department of Physical Education & Sports, Pondicherry University

Assistant Professor, Dept of physical education & sports, Pondicherry University

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Abstract: Special Olympics is a global movement of people creating a new world of inclusion and community, where every single person is accepted and welcomed, regardless of ability or disability. We are helping to make the world a better, healthier and more joyful place—one athlete, one volunteer, one family member at a time. – Special Olympics Bharat.

Through the power of sports, people with intellectual disabilities discover new strengths and abilities, skills and success. Our athletes find joy, confidence and fulfilment — on the playing field and in life. They also inspire people in their communities and elsewhere to open their hearts to a wider world of human talents and potential. – Special Olympics Bharat. The study show the 90% of Unified partners were happy and satisfied with Engaging with the Special Athletes. They were willing to contribute more for their Special Athlete Partners.

Key words: Satisfaction, Special Olympics, Unified sports, Unified Partner, Special Athletes, Special Olympics Bharat

INTRODUCTION

There are as many as 200 million people with intellectual disabilities around the world. Our goal is to reach out to every one of them – and their families as well. Special Olympics does this through a wide range of trainings, competitions, health screenings and fund-raising events. We also create opportunities for families, community members, local leaders, businesses, law enforcement, celebrities, dignitaries and others to band together to change attitudes and support athletes.

Special Olympics competitions are held every day, all around the world—including local, national and regional competitions, adding up to more than 100,000 events a year.^[3] Like the International Paralympic Committee, the Special Olympics organization is recognized by the International Olympic Committee; however, unlike the Paralympic Games, Special

Olympics World Games are not held in the same year or in conjunction with the Olympic Games.

Special Olympics is the world's largest sports organization for children and adults with intellectual disabilities and physical disabilities, providing year-round training and competitions to 5 million athletes and Unified Sports partners in 172 countries.^[2] Special Olympics competitions are held every day, all around the world—including local, national and regional competitions, adding up to more than 100,000 events a year.^[3] Like the International Paralympic Committee, the Special Olympics organization is recognized by the International Olympic Committee; however, unlike the Paralympic Games, Special Olympics World Games are not held in the same year or in conjunction with the Olympic Games.

UNIFIED SPORTS

Unified Sports was inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a fast track to friendship and understanding between athletes with and without intellectual disabilities. Unified Sports **brings together persons with and without intellectual disabilities**, to train and compete as teammates. Unified Sports helps athletes improve physical fitness, sharpen skills, challenge and compete and have fun in a variety of sports ranging from basketball to golf to figure skating. It helps strike bonding between players on and off the sports field. Unified Sports is considered a strong and effective tool for promoting Inclusion Unified Sports helps athletes:

1. Learn new sports
2. Enjoy new competition experiences
3. Develop higher- level skills
4. Experience meaningful inclusion as each athlete is ensured of playing a valued role on the team
5. Socialise and make new friends through the Unified Sports forum of positive social interaction between teammates

Special Olympics is dedicated to promoting social inclusion through shared sports training and competition experiences. Unified Sports joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. It was inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding.

In Unified Sports, teams are made up of people of similar age and ability. That makes practices more fun and games more challenging and exciting for all.

Study was conducted because I really want to do study that is different from others that can make change in somebody's life that was my aim . From the past one year I was volunteer of SOB Puducherry going with their staff to collect data . their many studies done about Special Athletes but not done about their Unified partners . So, I decided to do study on the Unified Partners of Special Athletes.

SELECTION OF SUBJECTS

For the purpose of the study willing non special partner of the special athletes were selected as subject . They are referred as Unified Partners as defined by Special Olympics International. Data was collected during Asian & football week celebration in Puducherry, during all the Unified programs of SOB Puducherry.

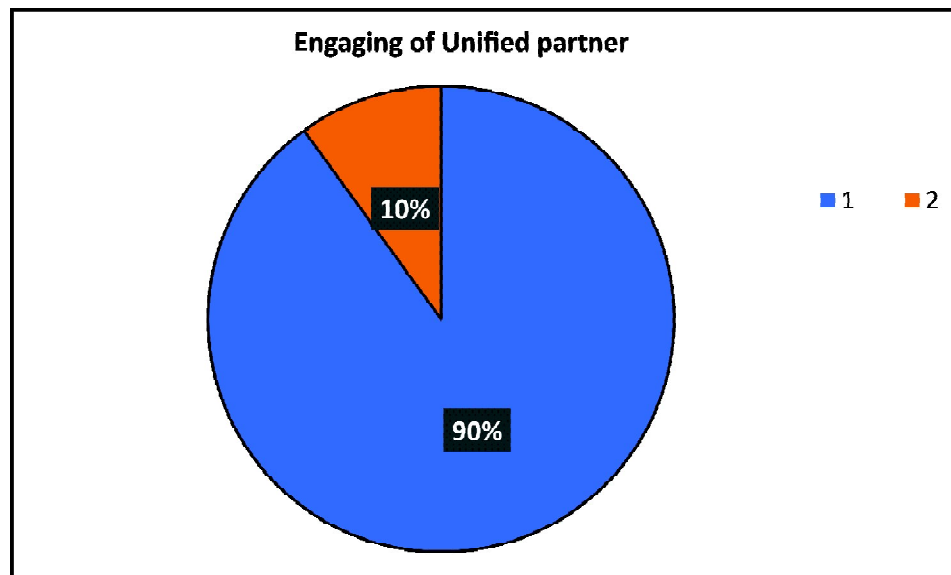
EXPERIMENT DESIGN

The subjects were selected during the Asian football week celebration by Special Olympics Bharat Pondicherry.. Experiment conducted with the help of a Self-assessment Questionnaire that was distributed to the Unified Partners of Special Athletes to get their Perception and Enjoyment of engaging with their Special Athletes . The questionnaire was designed to get their level of happiness when they get when they played with Special Athletes as partners. It contained questions related to their previous experience of engaging with Special Athletes as well. The questions ranged from asking . Is they had any idea about Special Olympics movement, If their inclusion with program led to any change in their lifestyle of the special athletes. What they felt about their partner athlete after playing with them . Did playing with Special Athletes was a learning or education experience for them. The response was recorded in the point scale Yes or No – 2 points for Yes and 0 point for No. more number of 2's meant that experience for the UP was enjoyable and positive .

RESULT

The result of the experiment showed that the questionnaire given to the Unified partner was good enough in getting their desirable response . The experiment was conducted on 40 unified partners of Special Athletes among them 90% of them really enjoyed the engagement with special athletes. In the rest 10% they were engaging with the Special Athlete for their Unified Partners it was learning process how to communicate with their partners that was new experience with them. But there 10% unified partner impressed were their athlete partners.

Figure 1



- Pie chart showing Percent Age of enjoyment of Unified Partners with their Special Athlete

DISCUSSION

The present study revealed Perception and Enjoyment of Engaging with Special Athletes by their Unified partners. Results showed that engagement of the unified partners with the special athletes were mutually beneficial that they can be at same page as the normal person while but need a different approach from the Normal people and they have perform with their partner. Their new unified partner was so excited after this that want to engage with special athletes not with the same but any special athlete. While engaging with the Special Athletes they have seen that after that much difficulty in the life of Special Athletes with their small contribution that can make a big Difference not that but they also can be brought to the main stream of life by the means of Unified Sports & partners.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that participation in even easy and small activity like football or any other sports can make the great difference to the life's of the special athletes. It has also made a big difference in the life of the unified partner even by their smallest contribution. This study revealed that learning about each other takes place because the new unified partner

unless their importance towards their partner athlete. The objective of inclusive and rightful sports participation for all in great actively such Unified Programs.

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