




Adapted, inclusive and Paralympic sport: a break with discriminatory stereotypes against functional diversity

El deporte adaptado, inclusivo y paralímpico: una ruptura de estereotipos discriminatorios contra la diversidad funcional

Esporte adaptado, inclusivo e paralímpico: uma ruptura com estereótipos discriminatórios contra a diversidade funcional


Leonardo Eliecer Tarqui-Silva¹

Universidad Nacional de San Luis, San Luis – Argentina

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9004-8988>
leonardosicdeporte@yahoo.es (correspondence)


Marco Vinicio Sánchez-Salinas

Universidad Nacional de Loja, Loja - Ecuador

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4681-5742>
marco.v.sanchez.s@unl.edu.ec

José Ernesto Garcés-Mosquera

Universidad Técnica de Ambato, Tungurahua - Ecuador

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8461-7179>
je.garces@uta.edu.ec

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KEYWORDS

disability, sport,
discrimination, social
inclusion.

ABSTRACT. Objective: The purpose of this work was to expose the qualities and capacities that adapted, Paralympic and inclusive sport possesses, its effect of abolition on a series of discriminatory stereotypes against functional diversity, limitations that are still maintained in certain societies. Various realities are analyzed where inclusive government policies have been developed based on physical-sports practices in populations with disabilities, detailing the specific case of Ecuador. **Method:** This research was based on a documentary-bibliographical exploration, using the following databases: Psycinfo, Medline, Ebsco, Scielo, Psycodoc, PsycArticles, and the main

¹ Psicólogo Clínico, Máster en Psicología de la Actividad Física y el Deporte, Doctorando en Psicología en la Universidad Nacional de San Luis de Argentina.



repositories of postgraduate institutions. Within this selection procedure, only bibliographic material published within a range of the last five years was considered. Under these criteria, 75 papers were obtained, of which 33 were selected, of which 9 doctoral theses and a master's thesis with material directly related to the research proposal stand out. **Results:** The need to respect human rights in people with disabilities is evident, the urgency of being actively included in a society, among some points the practice of recreational, cultural and sports activities. These action mechanisms allow the breaking of stereotypes, consolidate the family environment and the internal world of the person with different capacities. **Conclusions:** Educational inclusion through sport is a strategy on which developing European countries are based. In Ecuador there are very low levels of physical-sports practices in people with functional diversity, a responsibility that falls on the government function, a structure that promotes improvement and growth in health and sports at the level of the population with disabilities.

PALABRAS CLAVE

deficiencia, deporte, discriminación, inclusión social.

RESUMEN. Objetivo: El propósito del trabajo fue exponer las cualidades y capacidades que posee el deporte adaptado, paralímpico e inclusivo, su efecto de abolición sobre una serie de estereotipos discriminatorios contra la diversidad funcional, limitantes que aún se mantienen en determinadas sociedades. Se analizan diversas realidades donde se han desarrollado políticas gubernamentales inclusivas en base a las prácticas físico-deportivas en poblaciones con discapacidades, se detalla el caso específico de Ecuador. **Método:** La presente investigación se fundamentó en una exploración documental-bibliográfica, se utilizaron las bases de datos: Psycinfo, Medline, Ebsco, Scielo, Psycodoc, PsycArticles, y principales repositorios instituciones de posgrado. Dentro de este procedimiento de selección, se consideró únicamente el material bibliográfico publicado dentro de un rango de los cinco últimos años. Bajo estos criterios se obtuvieron 75 trabajos, de los cuales se seleccionaron 33, de ellos resaltan 9 tesis doctorales y una tesis de maestría con material directamente relacionado a la propuesta investigativa. **Resultados:** Se evidencia la necesidad del respeto a los derechos humanos en las personas con discapacidades, la urgencia de ser incluidos activamente dentro una sociedad, entre algunos puntos destaca la práctica de actividades recreativas, culturales y deportivas. Estos mecanismos de acción permiten la ruptura de estereotipos, consolidan al entorno familiar y mundo interno de la persona con capacidades diferentes. **Conclusiones:** La inclusión educativa a través del deporte, es una estrategia en la cual se basan los países europeos en desarrollo. En Ecuador existen muy bajos niveles de prácticas físico-deportivas en personas con diversidad funcional, responsabilidad que recae en la función gubernamental, estructura promotora del mejoramiento y crecimiento en salud y deporte a nivel de la población con discapacidades.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

deficiência, esporte, discriminação, inclusão social.

RESUMO. Objetivo: O objetivo do trabalho foi expor as qualidades e capacidades que o esporte adaptado, paralímpico e inclusivo possui, seu efeito de abolição sobre uma série de estereótipos discriminatórios contra a diversidade funcional, limitações que ainda são mantidas em determinadas sociedades. São analisadas várias realidades onde foram desenvolvidas políticas governamentais inclusivas com base em práticas físico-esportivas em populações com deficiência, detalhando o caso específico do Equador. **Método:** Esta pesquisa foi baseada em uma exploração documental-bibliográfica, utilizando as seguintes bases de dados: Psycinfo, Medline, Ebsco, Scielo, Psycodoc, PsycArticles e os principais repositórios de instituições de pós-graduação. Nesse procedimento de seleção, foi considerado apenas o material bibliográfico publicado em um intervalo dos últimos cinco anos. Sob esses critérios, foram obtidos 75 trabalhos, dos quais 33 foram selecionados, dos quais se destacam 9 teses de doutorado e uma de mestrado com material diretamente relacionado à proposta de pesquisa. **Resultados:** Fica evidente a necessidade de respeitar os direitos humanos nas pessoas com deficiência, a urgência de se inserir ativamente em uma sociedade, dentre alguns pontos a prática de atividades recreativas, culturais e esportivas. Esses mecanismos de ação permitem quebrar estereótipos, consolidar o ambiente familiar e o mundo interno da pessoa com diferentes capacidades. **Conclusões:** A inclusão educativa através do desporto é uma estratégia em que se baseiam os países europeus em desenvolvimento. No Equador, há níveis muito baixos de práticas físico-esportivas em pessoas com diversidade funcional, uma responsabilidade que recai sobre a função do governo, uma estrutura que promove a melhoria e o crescimento da saúde e do esporte no nível da população com deficiência.



1. INTRODUCTION

According to Fajardo (2017), there have been people with different disabilities since our origin as humanity. Initially, this condition was associated with punishments of divine powers or supernatural actions, which had evolved radically, emerging the formal promotion of an inclusive coexistence in 2006, when the United Nations Organization proclaimed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. The doctoral thesis of Álvarez-Delgado (2022) on attitudes towards people with disabilities raises the importance of inclusive education at an early age since it is a stage where attitudes and conceptions about life are formed, this being a key maturational phase for a correct social awareness.

Disability is a condition that affects the entire community environment and can be analyzed from different perspectives, the most studied positions being: the medical-biological, social, rehabilitative, universal, eugenic, and biopsychosocial models of disability. However, a common element among these visions lies in the fulfillment of human rights and inclusion within a society of people who maintain this condition (Araque-Barboza et al., 2019).

One of the goals that current societies have worldwide, as proposed by Bravo-Loor (2019), is structured in the abolition of discriminatory stereotypes that are maintained against people who have different conditions and needs at the educational, labor, and social reintegration levels, being urgent the implementation of alternative strategies that remedy these deficiencies. Palacios (2020) emphasizes that the different states must reduce the existing gaps in terms of disadvantages, stigmas, prejudices, humiliations, violence, and stereotypes based on functional diversity.

The elimination of concepts and attitudes related to the exclusion of people with disabilities, to a large extent, lies in the creation of legal measures or resources available to the different states (Felipe-Rello, 2020). According to World Bank research (2021), about 85 million people with disabilities in Latin America, of which 15% of children do not go to school, being a university, sports, and labor-areas, practically inaccessible spaces for a large number of these vulnerable populations.

Rivadeneira-Guijarro (2021), in her doctoral proposal on the reality of disability in Ecuador, mentions that the first laws date back to 1910, based on health, workers, and education statutes. In 1966, the "First Law for the Protection of the Blind" was passed, being one of the pioneering policies in the Latin American region. In 2007, the Model of Care for Persons with Disabilities came into force and formally guaranteed the enjoyment of human rights established at the international level for Ecuadorians with functional diversity (Imacaña-Núñez & Villacrés-López, 2022).

In general, it is mentioned that people with different abilities require psychotherapeutic, educational, social insertion, and psychoemotional catharsis mechanisms in their great majority. In this sense, Martínez-Ferrer (2017) highlights that one of the contemporary cultural means to facilitate a correct integration with the environment is constituted by the practice of sports. Garrote-Rojas et al. (2017) highlight that, international entities such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and UN, from 2004 declared that sports and physical activities are a right for all human beings, without any type of exception. They add the results of existing studies, where it is shown that sport practiced by people with disabilities allows for overcoming barriers, social integration, and socio-educational, in general, offers the opportunity for comprehensive development.

An analysis presented by Dantas et al. (2021) on the relationship between sustainable development and the objectives of the Paralympic Movement raises restrictive elements, on the one hand, because only certain people with certain degrees of disability can participate in these tournaments. However, they counter this fact, as an adapted sport is expressed in other events of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), national committees, federations, and confederations of different sports, involving diverse populations with different disabilities and to varying degrees. They mention the role of Paralympic, adapted, and inclusive sports as a mechanism for prevention and health promotion, in addition to generating appropriate lifestyles, among some of the benefits.

As highlighted by Muñoz-Jiménez et al. (2017), within their exploration of the level of health, personal motivation, and inclusion of people with disabilities through the practice of physical-sports activities, they exalt the planning and development of socio-educational proposals that have raised and currently continue to evolve in different European countries, in addition to the USA, Canada, China, and Taiwan, who have even created scenarios and infrastructure for the practice of sport, designed to facilitate greater inclusion of their population with disabilities, and generate research concerning the impact of their integrative governmental actions of the social environment.

In South America, during the last decades, there has been a growth in policies related to social inclusion. In this process, the practice of sports activities for the population with disabilities has been growing. Countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico stand out for their support of inclusive, adapted, and Paralympic sports. However, there are also states within this continent that have not exploited the benefits of the practice of physical and sports activities so necessary for this vulnerable sector (Carrizo-Páez, 2021).

In Ecuador, the Ecuadorian Paralympic Committee was born on November 1, 2012, through Ministerial Agreement 1320. From that moment, the promotion of sports for people with various disabilities is structured in an organized manner. National federations and clubs are organized by adapted and/or Paralympic sport (Ministry of Sport of Ecuador, n.d.). However, prior to this, the 2008 Constitution, in Section Six, Article 48 (Section 3), indicates that the State will adopt the creation of policies and programs aimed at promoting recreation and rest for people with disabilities (Constituent Assembly of the Republic of Ecuador, 2008).

Within this context, the purpose of this paper is to expose the qualities and capabilities of adapted, Paralympic, and inclusive sports, their effect on abolishing a series of discriminatory stereotypes against functional diversity, and limiting factors that are still maintained in certain societies. Different realities are analyzed where inclusive governmental policies have been developed based on physical-sports practices in populations with disabilities. The specific case of Ecuador is detailed.

2. METHOD

The present research was based on a documentary-bibliographic exploration, following the parameters proposed by Rubio and Gleason-Rodríguez (2020). They emphasize that this type of exploratory approach contributes to the cognitive mechanisms of learning, in addition to facilitating the assimilation of the realities of the different environments since a referential theoretical foundation is necessary. In this sense, Del Pino-Ordoñez (2020) states that bibliographic approaches are excellent tools to promote research processes at the academic level. Within the documentary analysis procedure, the approach of Barros-Bastidas and Turpo-Gebera (2022) was considered, who suggest, in the first instance, establishing an organized and structured search of the subject matter, to classify the information obtained subsequently, all this based on the objectives, needs, and orientations of the researcher.

The following databases were used: Psycinfo, Medline, Ebsco, Scielo, Psycodoc, PsycArticles, and central repositories institutions at the graduate thesis level. Within this selection procedure, only bibliographic material published within a range of the last five years was considered. The keywords used were: impairment, sport, discrimination, and social inclusion, while the search strategies focused on: "adapted, inclusive and Paralympic sport," "sport and functional diversity," and "breaking stereotypes against disability" finally, to extend the information record, we resorted to the same exploratory criteria translated into English.

Subsequent to these procedures, all the information published between 2017 and 2022 was filtered. In addition, any study that, despite having some relationship with the explored topic, maintained topics distant from the analysis proposal was obviated. Under these criteria, 75 works were obtained, of which 33 were selected, including 9 doctoral theses and one master's thesis with material directly related to the research proposal. The information gathered was analyzed inductively, a process that took about two and a half months.

3. ESSAY'S BODY

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) proposed by the United Nations, which was approved on December 13, 2006, in its Article 30, in summary, specifies that the different countries should generate active participation of persons with disabilities in cultural life, leisure, recreation, and sports, strengthening the development of creative abilities, not only for personal benefit but also considering a social evolution and consolidation. Subsequently, in Article 31, access to recreational, sports, and leisure activities for children and adults with disabilities is highlighted, mentioning the importance of sports, tourism, and recreational facilities at all levels, including the school system environment (United Nations International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Easy to Read, 2013).

Recent and exciting research raised by Meléndez-Labrador (2021) on the elaboration of the social imaginary of disability through the Olympic and Paralympic Games, from a vision of alternative journalism, states that this type of events allows people with some disabilities to be part of the construction of the cultural and political world. This generates an attitudinal transformation in the environments, which is made visible through the conceptual and social evolutions on inclusion and disabilities.

The doctoral work presented by Muñoz-Cutuli (2020) highlights the importance of social and adaptive factors, the development of conceptual skills, and learning ways to respond to the social environment in people with intellectual disabilities. In this sense, group sports such as soccer represent favorable mechanisms for strengthening socio-integrative behaviors and promoting the social acceptance of people with these deficiencies.

On the other hand, several authors, such as Rosero-Duque (2022), propose the existence of internal and external motivation for the practice of physical-sports activities in people with disabilities as being essential to identify the psychological factors that lead to pursuing this type of participation. This author concludes that there is a need to generate a culture of value regarding sports practice in different social environments since there are marked beneficial characteristics in terms of healthy lifestyle habits and the reduction of various diseases.

It should be noted that, on the European continent, schools and colleges are the first scenarios where the practice of adapted sports is disseminated, in addition to its psychological, social, and physical benefits. In Spain, there is, for example, the Inclusive Sport at School Program (DIE), which is widespread nationwide and covers high school and secondary school students. Among the goals is the dissemination and massification of the practice

of Paralympic specialties through an inclusive methodology, in addition to raising awareness throughout the environment (Peinado-Vicente, 2017).

Cendrero-Uceda (2017) mentions that states such as Italy, France, the USA, Germany, the UK, and some Nordic countries, maintain solid anti-discrimination policies, where people with disabilities are fully considered as "beings with full civil rights." With this background, Vela-Llauradó (2020), within her research, expresses the importance of the type of government policies that are maintained within the different societies regarding disability issues. She mentions that sports and physical activities serve as elements of cohesion for the entire family structure.

Sport can be conceptualized from different edges, according to López-Bastías (2019), from a vision of educational inclusion. In Spain, this activity practiced by people with specific impairments allows the development and acquisition of individual autonomy, respect, equality, freedom, dignity, and identity. Garay-Ordoñez and Carhuacho-Mendoza (2019) highlight the results produced by sports activities considered from a social perspective of the phenomenon of disabilities, evidently reinforcing the positive changes of the conglomerates towards inclusion and active acceptance of people with specific impairments.

With this brief frame of reference on disabilities and the beneficial products represented by the practice of recreational, physical, and sports activities, Blogna-Tistuzza (2020), in her doctoral exploration of human rights and democracy, highlights the importance of the creation of solid public policies aimed at conglomerates with disabilities. Based on the regulations created by different societies, it will be possible to demonstrate effective responses to problems, needs, and demands to which people with disabilities are entitled, including education, recreation, and sports, health, employment, to be an active part of the environment, in general, to lead and maintain a dignified life, this throughout the course of life.

The report presented by Arriola (2021) alarmingly indicates that 76% of people with disabilities in Ecuador do not practice any type of recreational or sports activity. He notes that one of the difficulties that the Ecuadorian population faces is precisely related to the issue of public policies and reflects the deficiencies that exist in this country regarding the issue of mobility since physical spaces are not only not adapted for people with physical disabilities, but also for people with hearing, visual, cognitive and social impairments. At the sports level, these deficiencies are more visible since there are extremely few public and recreational spaces with inclusive designs.

At the level of the Ecuadorian government, it is possible to observe on its official website of August of this year the investment made for the XI Pre-Youth Games, highlighting that "physical activity is a State policy." However, at no time is there any emphasis or mention of adapted or Paralympic sport, despite the fact that in Tokyo XX, medals and diplomas were obtained for the first time in the history of Paralympic sport in this country. There are also no references to investments or achievements obtained by the Ministry of Sport regarding the massification and promotion of inclusive, adapted, or Paralympic sports activities (Presidency of the Republic of Ecuador, 2022).

The documentary exploration carried out by Castro-Cevallos (2021) within the Ecuadorian Paralympic sport highlights the existing shortcomings at the leadership level, the lack of investment by the State to this plot, the technological and implementation difficulties to which a large number of athletes are exposed. He also differentiates sports of a particular economic elite, such as tennis, cycling, and others, which have obtained results due to the family and personal investment of these athletes. He notes the scarce creation of programs for the expansion of adapted sports and raises the difficulty of finding adequately trained coaches in these sports.

Vera-Alarcón and Enríquez-Caro (2022) state that the processes of inclusion, respect and equity for people with different abilities in Ecuador should be addressed from childhood to adulthood and in a structured manner within all educational methods at all levels. They also mention the importance of incorporating adequately planned physical and sports activities through the material culture area of the different public and private establishments. They encourage early sports practice in the case of children with functional diversity since Ecuadorian sports inclusion occurs from the adolescent stage, data that are reflected in the life stories of competitive athletes. They highlight the positive impact of the National Plan for Good Living and the Plan for a Lifetime, elements that have promoted awareness in the country about the importance of social inclusion, respect for diversity, and a consolidation of human rights.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) proposed by the United Nations stands out as one of the main conclusions obtained in this research since it emphasizes that different countries should consider persons with disabilities from an active perspective within the social environment, the right to culture, sports, recreation and free time, both at an individual and collective level.

Another of the evident results exposed by the great majority of authors is that the practice of physical and/or sports activities is constituted as mechanisms for the development and strengthening of socio-integrative behaviors, starting with the closest environment, which is the family. In this aspect, it is important to mention that the link to sport at an early age will bring great benefits for the development of the personality, not only with regard to the creation of healthy life habits but also as "life projects" for people who suffer from some type of functional diversity.

Educational inclusion through sport is a strategy on which developing European countries are based. The case of Spain is mentioned, where projects have been included from the school context, which has allowed the creation of environments where respect, freedom, and dignity prevail. In short, the integration and active acceptance of people with specific impairments have been improved at a socio-cultural level. It is necessary to differentiate that the public policies contemplated in certain countries will completely affect the processes of integral development of people with different disabilities linked to that environment.

In Ecuador, there are deficient levels of physical-sports practice among people with functional diversity, highlighting the lack of physical structures designed for adequate integration of people with different disabilities. In addition, there is no real support and use of the profitable products that emanate from sport, despite the fact that this country already has athletes in stellar positions in the last Paralympic Games. There are adapted and/or Paralympic sports that are practiced only by certain economic elites, and it is the government's responsibility to improve access and promote the physical-sports involvement of the population with disabilities.

Finally, there has been an evolution of inclusive, Paralympic, and adapted sports. However, there is still a long way to go. The 2008 Constitution, the National Plan for Good Living, the Plan for a Lifetime, and the creation of the Ecuadorian Paralympic Committee are some of the intangible policies that have allowed Ecuador to initiate a process of massification and growth within the sports area for people with disabilities, improving the integrative environments at all levels within this country. There is still a long way to go in demolishing a series of stereotypes and existing barriers against functional diversity and promoting respect for human rights.

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Marco Vinicio Sánchez-Salinas: Conceptualización, análisis formal, investigación, metodología, administración del proyecto, escritura -preparación del borrador original, escritura -revisar & edición.

José Ernesto Garcés-Mosquera: Conceptualización, análisis formal, investigación, metodología, administración del proyecto, escritura -preparación del borrador original, escritura -revisar & edición.

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