



# Optimizing Social and Economic Inclusion through Adaptive Sports Programs for Persons with Disabilities: A Pathway to Achieving SDGs

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**ABSTRACT:** This study explores the impact of sport on the social inclusion and economic well-being of people with disabilities in the community and its contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relating to the social inclusion and economic well-being of people with disabilities. Data is collected by purposive sampling and analyzed using a qualitative method. The patterns of results show that sports can potentially transform the lives of people with disabilities, promoting social inclusion and empowerment. However, attitudinal and structural barriers, such as ableism and a need for inclusive practices in sports clubs, often hinder this potential. To overcome these challenges, develop and enact disability-inclusive sports policies. The discussion proposes some implications for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly social inclusion, economic well-being, participation, and equality targets. Social inclusion through sport, equal economic opportunities, and encouraging the participation of athletes with disabilities in various competitions align with the SDGs' vision to create an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable society for all people.

**KEYWORDS:** Disabilities, Economic inclusion, Sports, Sustainable development goals

## INTRODUCTION

The world of sports has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years, with the inclusion and recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities. Today, sports are a way to maintain physical health and an arena for pursuing professional careers that bring new meaning to life. The trend towards professionalizing disability sports is gaining momentum as people recognize the benefits of sports for individuals with disabilities, including improved physical and psychological well-being. Coaching has played a pivotal role in raising performance standards and facilitating the development of professionalism within disability sports through intensive training and high-performance achievements [1]–[3].

Numerous experts have conducted studies to highlight the positive impact of sports on the lives of individuals with disabilities. Research has shown that sports can offer significant benefits in terms of social inclusion, physical health, and mental well-being [4]–[7]. However, challenges in ensuring sustainable participation and community integration have also been identified [8], [9]. In addition, Rum et al. have researched and developed the use of wearable technology in sports for people with disabilities. Integrating this sensory technology can provide an innovative approach to designing more inclusive sports programs that can be customized to individual needs. Despite the potential positive outcomes shown in studies, further research and program development specifically designed to improve the sports experience and benefits for the disabled population are still needed [10], [11].

This research addresses two main questions: how do sports impact the social inclusion and economic well-being of individuals with disabilities in society, and how do they contribute to achieving SDGs relating to the social inclusion and financial welfare of people with disabilities? By focusing on these issues, the study can explore the relationship between sports, social inclusion, and economic well-being of people with disabilities and its contribution towards achieving the SDGs more systematically.

## A. Literature Review

### *Dynamic Impact: Sports' Role in Catalyzing Socio-Economic Growth*

The relationship between sport and economic well-being is complex and multi-faceted. Kudinova and Kharchenko (2021) highlight sport's positive economic impact, with Kudinova emphasizing the role of sport in improving quality of life. Frey and Inoue (2020) further explored the relationship between sport and well-being, with Frey finding a strong positive correlation between sports participation and happiness. Inoue also called for a focus on well-being outcomes in sports organizations. Pan and Jetzke (2020) investigated specific aspects of sports engagement, with Pan finding a positive influence of leisure-time engagement on well-being.



Jetzke highlighted the differential effects of sports activities on well-being based on their purpose and motivation. These studies collectively suggest that sports can have a significant impact on economic well-being and individual well-being.

Various studies have highlighted the positive impact of sport on social well-being. Outdoor sports have been associated with improved physical and mental health, education, and active citizenship [15]. A prosocial moral climate in sports has been linked to positive behaviors in young athletes [16]. Sports participation has small but significant psychosocial benefits for middle-aged and older adults [17]. Sport-based interventions have been shown to improve mental health literacy and some mental health outcomes [18]. The social context of sport has been linked to cognitive and social development [19]. Physical activity, including exercise, has been shown to have a small but positive effect on subjective well-being [20].

### ***Equal rights of persons with disabilities in sport***

Research on equal rights in disability sports has highlighted the need for gender equality and emphasized the importance of sport at all levels of participation [21]. This research has also highlighted the benefits of physical activity for children with disabilities and the critical role of sport in promoting inclusion and integration [6].

Despite these benefits, barriers to participation still exist, such as lack of awareness and inadequate resources [22]. Additionally, the experiences and voices of children and youth with disabilities in sports are often overlooked [23], and ableist attitudes and practices can still exclude individuals with disabilities from mainstream sporting activities [24]. Therefore, further research and action are needed to overcome these barriers and ensure equal rights in disability sports.

### ***The life of socioeconomic inclusion of people with disabilities***

Various measures have been found to improve social inclusion outcomes for people with disabilities, including social and communication training, personal mentoring, and group social skills interventions [25]–[27]. However, the effectiveness of these interventions may be affected by several factors, such as behavioral topography, interventionist, and intervention components [26]. Changes in eligibility criteria for disability benefits were not found to affect employment significantly [28]. Cross-country differences in inclusive education coverage are influenced by the structural conditions of the school system and the definition of special educational needs [29]. Interventions for students with autism in inclusive environments, such as function-based interventions and visual supports, are effective [30]. Inclusive education for students with generalized learning difficulties has been shown to have minor to moderate positive effects on cognitive outcomes [31]. Exercise programs effectively improve performance, health, and psychological measures for individuals with intellectual disabilities [32].

In their study, Uršič (2022) and Taylor et al. (2022) illustrate the challenges encountered by individuals with disabilities in attaining economic stability, underscoring the significance of employment in fostering their well-being. Uršič delves into social enterprise, whereas Taylor et al. focus on competitive integrated employment. Hutchinson et al. (2020) and Malli et al. (2018) delved into the repercussions of economic variables on individuals with intellectual disabilities, with Hutchinson exploring the potential of micro-enterprises and Malli scrutinizing the ramifications of austerity measures. Kubenz (2022) shed light on the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals with disabilities, with Kubenz concentrating on nations with low and moderate incomes and Saran providing an evidence-based overview and identifying gaps in interventions for individuals with disabilities in these nations. Tefera et al. (2018) and Bright et al. (2018) delve into the hurdles faced by women with disabilities in countries with low and moderate incomes. Tefera addresses impediments to education, employment, and motherhood, while Bright scrutinizes the accessibility of rehabilitation services.

## **B. Method**

This research aimed to examine the impact of sport on the social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities in Indonesia. To achieve this objective, a literature review method and qualitative approach were used to gather informative data during the exploratory stage of the research.

For the study, purposive sampling was employed to select participants or data sources that could provide relevant and in-depth insights related to the research focus. This method allowed researchers to selectively choose research subjects or data sources that were considered the most informative and could contribute maximally to understanding research questions. As a result, the research was more focused and efficient in exploring the answers needed by the objectives and conceptual framework that had been identified.



## C. Informant

In this study, the primary informants consisted of representatives from three groups crucial in optimizing social and economic inclusion through the Sports Programme for Persons with Disabilities: The National Paralympic Committee (NPC), coaches, and participants (athletes with disabilities).

The NPC has a strategic role in managing and coordinating adaptive sports activities and formulating policies that support social and economic inclusion for persons with disabilities. Trainers, as the main facilitators in implementing this sports program, can provide insight into the challenges and opportunities faced by athletes with disabilities in achieving social and economic inclusion. In addition, participants who are athletes with disabilities are a direct source of information about their experiences in the sports program and its impact on their daily lives, social inclusion, and economic well-being. Through the collaboration of these three groups of informants, this research aims to thoroughly investigate the key aspects that contribute to the optimization of social and economic inclusion for people with disabilities in sports.

This research applied an interactive analysis method in which activities were carried out continuously to collect the necessary information (Miles & Saldana, 2014). This process involves an interaction between the researcher and the data constantly explored to achieve a deep understanding. This approach aims to make the collected information more precise and more detailed. Furthermore, the results of the data analysis are described in detail so that the researcher can better explain the observed phenomena, which then helps in making conclusions.

## D. Result and Discussion

Tables must be numbered using uppercase Roman numerals. Table captions must be centered and in 8 pt Regular font with Small Caps. Every word in a table caption must be capitalized except for short minor words as listed in Section III-B. Captions with table numbers must be placed before their associated tables, as shown in Table Sports can potentially transform the lives of people with disabilities, promoting social inclusion and empowerment [6], [41], [42]. However, attitudinal and structural barriers, such as ableism and a lack of inclusive practices in sports clubs, often hinder this potential [43], [44]. To overcome these challenges, developing and enacting disability-inclusive sports policies is crucial [45]. Research in this area should prioritize the voices and experiences of people with disabilities, reframing dominant discourses and advocating for their rights [46].

### *The Indonesian government supports improving inclusion in sports.*

Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia KH. Ma'ruf Amin, in 2021, confirmed that the holding of the XVI Papua National Paralympic Week (Peparnas) was an extraordinary and meaningful event. Reporting on the official page of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, [47] according to him, "*Peparnas adalah ajang untuk mendobrak batas diri sehingga bisa menjadi pemenang dan pembuktian kesetaraan*". ("*Peparnas is an event to break the limits of self so that it can become a winner and prove equality*").

Therefore, the Government of Indonesia continues to improve sports inclusion for people with disabilities through the National Paralympic Committee (NPC), which is essential in coordinating sports activities for athletes with disabilities in Indonesia. One of the concrete steps taken is the establishment of Regional Training Centres (Puslatda) in various regions to actively seek, identify, and train potential talents at the local level. These Puslatda not only aim to train athletes with disabilities but also to provide broader access to people with different types of disabilities to engage in sporting activities. Through these programs, the government hopes to create a better inclusion platform in the world of sports, expand the participation of people with disabilities, and produce quality athletes who can represent Indonesia in various international competitions while encouraging the realization of a broader vision of sports inclusion throughout the country.

In addition to establishing Puslatda in various regions, the government's support for the development of disabled sports is also reflected in the preparation of the 2024 National Paralympic Week (Peparnas), which will be held in Aceh and North Sumatra. As the largest sporting event for people with disabilities in Indonesia, Peparnas is not only a place to showcase the talents and achievements of athletes with disabilities but also a momentum to strengthen the spirit of inclusion and equality in the world of sports. The government is committed to ensuring that Peparnas 2024 runs smoothly and successfully by providing disability-friendly facilities and ensuring all participants, athletes, and spectators feel supported and valued.

Besides coordinating and managing the 2024 Peparnas event, the government is also engaged in efforts to attract prospective disabled athletes to participate in the National Training Centre (Pelatnas) program. Pelatnas is designed to offer rigorous coaching and training to promising athletes to enable them to excel at national and international levels. By including potential disabled athletes



in the National Training Centre, the government aims to expand opportunities for them to develop their athletic talents and capabilities fully. This initiative is expected not only to enhance the performance of Indonesian disabled athletes but also to bolster Indonesia's standing in the global sports arena.

### *Social inclusion*

In an interview with one athlete, he highlighted the profound social effects of joining the Regional Training Centre (Puslatda). This athlete saw a big shift in the opinions of his neighbors and relatives. His involvement in the training center has earned him the respect of his family and surroundings as an intense, persistent, and never-give-up individual. Initially, there may have been negative stigmas or stereotypes associated with his condition, but his participation in Puslatda changed these views into positive ones.

The athlete's family, who may have initially felt worried or unsure about her abilities, now see her as a source of inspiration. With the dedication and passion she showed during her training at Puslatda, the athlete became a living example of how one can achieve and transcend the limitations that society at large may place on her. More than just a change in the family's perception, the surrounding environment has also changed positively. This athlete has not only achieved sporting success but has also managed to change society's stigma and views towards individuals with unique conditions or disabilities. By achieving at the Puslatda level, he became a role model for his peers and those around him, helping to remove barriers that may have previously existed.

This athlete's story reflects that participation in Puslatda impacts sports and significantly changes society's perceptions and attitudes toward individuals with unique conditions. Through his dedication, perseverance, and achievements in Puslatda, the athlete has become proof that disabilities or special conditions do not prevent people from achieving and fulfilling their dreams.

### *Economic Prosperity*

According to our interviewees, participating in sports is no longer just an activity or hobby but has become a job that can provide additional income. The source explained that earning extra income through sports has become more accessible, provided athletes focus on training programs and participate in sporting events. The source emphasized that financial benefits are not just limited to salaries or prizes from events but also include sponsorship opportunities and other support that can be gained through sports success. As athletes, they feel grateful to be able to turn an activity they take pride in into a job that provides income while still focusing on developing their sporting skills and making ends meet. According to the sources, professionalism in sports brings personal fulfillment and offers financial stability, which is a great incentive to pursue a sporting career seriously.

The NPC generally applies a structured payroll system to athletes based on athletes' achievements in reaching medal targets. The system is divided into three levels that reflect athletes' salaries or wages according to their accomplishments. Level 1 athletes have achieved the highest performance and are expected to win gold medals. On the other hand, Level 2 athletes have achieved good results, although they have yet to reach the highest level, such as Level 1. Lastly, Level 3 athletes include athletes still in the developmental stage and are in the early levels of competition. By implementing this level-based payroll system, Puslatda Peparнас provides incentives that match the athletes' achievements, providing additional motivation for them to continue to improve their performance and contribute to the success of national sports. The salary and bonus amounts are usually adjusted to the regional budget post.

### *Achievement of SDGs*

The discussion results are closely related to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in the context of social and economic inclusion for persons with disabilities. The following is an explanation of the relationship between the results of the discussion and the achievement of the SDGs:

1. **Social Inclusion:** The discussion of the role of sport in promoting social inclusion for people with disabilities has significant implications for achieving the SDGs, mainly the SDG target relating to inclusion (SDG 10 - Reduction of Inequalities). By encouraging active participation in sporting activities, primarily through adaptive programs, communities can create more inclusive environments and reduce stigma towards people with disabilities. This aligns with the SDGs' vision to create an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable society for all.
2. **Economic well-being:** The outcome of the discussion on the economic well-being of athletes with disabilities, including opportunities for additional income generation through private sector support, also contributes to achieving the SDGs. In this context, the achievement of SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth is particularly relevant. By providing opportunities for people with disabilities to engage in sport and supporting them financially, society can create inclusive employment opportunities and ensure that economic growth is equitable and sustainable.



- 3. Participation and Equality:** The emphasis on the participation of athletes with disabilities in national and international sporting events, such as the National Paralympic Games, also contributes to the achievement of the SDGs, particularly in achieving gender equality (SDG 5) and equality in participation (SDG 16). Through active participation in sports, people with disabilities can overcome social barriers and reach their full potential, a prerequisite for achieving equality and social justice.

## E. Conclusion

From the results of the discussion above, the role of sport in transforming the lives of people with disabilities and promoting their social and economic inclusion has been discussed. The results highlight the importance of inclusive sports policies, overcoming attitudinal and structural barriers, and providing full government support in advancing sports for people with disabilities. Through initiatives such as establishing Regional Training Centres and preparing the National Paralympic Games/*Pekan Paralimpiade Nasional (Peparnas)*, the Government of Indonesia is committed to improving sports inclusion and creating a better platform for the participation of persons with disabilities. In addition, the discussion also highlighted the importance of the economic welfare of athletes with disabilities and a merit-based pay system, which can incentivize them to continue improving their sporting performance.

Overall, the results of this discussion generate a pattern of implications that have a considerable impact on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in achieving targets related to social inclusion, economic well-being, participation, and equality. By promoting social inclusion through sport, providing equal economic opportunities, and encouraging the active participation of athletes with disabilities in competitions, such efforts are in line with the SDGs' vision of creating an inclusive, just, and sustainable society for all. Therefore, the steps taken in this discussion can be considered an essential contribution to realizing the overall sustainable development goals.

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