Parent and Child Perspectives: Applying MOHO to Assess Inclusion Outcomes in Unified Sports®

Hannah Beatty, OTS & Lauren Helmig, OTS

Background
For all children, being a participant in recreational programs is important for well-being and quality of life. Children with disabilities have limited access to sports programs. Unified Sports® is a Special Olympics® inclusive team program that aims to break down stereotypes about children with disabilities. Previous research failed to explore outcomes of non-education-based inclusion programs from the perspectives of the two main stakeholders: children with disabilities and parents. These perspectives are key to analyzing current inclusion programs and developing future ones.

Purpose

Methods
Sampling Procedures
- Convenience/snowball sampling
- Coach selected appropriate parents & participants

Participants: 2 male athletes (ages 18 & 19); 3 mothers

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria: Families were actively participating in Unified Sports®. Athletes had a physical or mental diagnosis and were between ages 14 and 21.

Survey
- Semi-structured SurveyMonkey® interviews
- Surveys (i.e. parent and child) consisted of 7 different questions – 5 multiple choice questions with likert scale and 2 open ended questions

Preliminary Analysis: Themes were coded and applied the Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) via framework analysis.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athlete Questions</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Parent Questions</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being on the US team makes school more fun</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>I feel my child is gaining confidence due to involvement in the US Program.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have made good friends with others on the team.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>I feel the US coaches and staff are supportive</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel supported by my teammates and coaches</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>I feel my child enjoys school more since joining US</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I’m an important member of my school</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>I feel the US program has an overall positive impact on my child</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy being partnered with another student at US</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>I feel my child enjoys their partnership with their teammate at US</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Athlete perspectives on inclusion in US

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Questions</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel my child is gaining confidence due to involvement in the US Program.</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the US coaches and staff are supportive</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my child enjoys school more since joining US</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the US program has an overall positive impact on my child</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my child enjoys their partnership with their teammate at US</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Parent’s perspectives on inclusion in US

Discussion/Conclusions
Study results demonstrated that Unified Sports, may help athletes with disabilities build relationships, grow personally, and integrate into positive environments. Growth in these three areas may improve the athletes’ sense of occupational identity, competence, and adaptation, which leads to increased occupational performance. Creating more recreation-based inclusion sports opportunities for children with disabilities is encouraged. Additional research is needed.

Limitations
- Sampling bias
- Reporting bias
- Response bias

Acknowledgements
Thank you to Elizabethtown College OT Department, Dr. Nancy Carlson, and the participants of our study for making this possible!

References
For references, email beattyh@etown.edu or helmigl@etown.edu

Quotes
R2: “Cheering on my teammates” in response to “What is your favorite part of being on the Unified Sports Bocce Team?”

R4: “My son is getting together with friends outside of school (going to the movies, out to eat) more than previously. This in turn has helped him become more social and confident. I believe Unified Sports has been a ‘game changer’ at our high school. So many good thing come from being a part of a team. Athletes learn about teamwork, friendship and selflessness.”

R6: “He feels he has friends now. I’m so thankful to those kids who take the time to be with those who need extra help and create friendships!”