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Turning around university Paralympics in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This study establishes the challenges in the implementation of sports programmes for physically challenged students in Zimbabwean universities and ways of turning around these games. A mixed methods approach was used. The research design was a survey. The target population was the physically challenged students and sports managers in universities, including Sports Directors. For the survey, the purposive sampling technique was used while for interview respondents, the researcher adopted the judgemental sampling technique. Quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences and excel while thematic data presentation and analysis was done for qualitative data. Data presentation was done using tables, figures and themes. The key findings are that there are several challenges in the implementation of sports programmes for the physically challenged athletes in universities in Zimbabwe. Running university Paralympics was found to be more complex and expensive than the main-stream university sports programmes leading to a number of challenges. In order to turn-around university Paralympics in Zimbabwe, technically qualified officials from the National Paralympics Committee should be consulted during planning and managing of sports programmes for the physically challenged athletes. Investment was necessary in the acquisition of adapted sports equipment and sports facilities for use by the physically challenged athletes. Use of emerging technologies in training and managing sports programmes was found to be quite critical in turning around university Paralympics in Zimbabwe. In addition, there is need to widen the sports programmes, and enacting policies that will make it possible to develop university Paralympics.

KEYWORDS:

Physically challenged, mainstream sport, inclusivity, assistive technology.

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1. Introduction

Physically challenged students take part in sport, including annual tournaments that are run by the Zimbabwe Universities Sports Association (ZUSA), commonly known as the ZUSA Paralympic Games. These games determine the athletes that will proceed to the next level in the sports calendar, which is called the Zimbabwe Tertiary Institutions Students Union (ZTISU) Paralympic Games, where they compete with students from teachers' colleges and polytechnic colleges. Usually, the tertiary sports calendar for the physically challenged students ends with the ZTISU Paralympics Games. Preliminary investigations have, however, shown that there are challenges encountered in these games. These sentiments have been expressed by the athletes and members of staff responsible for the games. The purpose of this study was to establish the challenges in university Paralympics in Zimbabwe, how to overcome these challenges and turn around university Paralympics in Zimbabwe so that the physically challenged enjoy their right to sport.

2. Theoretical framework

The research was informed by the Human Rights Model, which recognizes that disability is a natural part of human diversity that must be respected and supported in all its forms (Disability Resource Advocacy Unit, 2022). Also relevant is the Social Model Theory which proposes that what makes someone disabled is not their medical condition, but the attitudes and structures of society (National Institute of Health ,2021). It is a civil rights approach to disability. As such persons with disabilities need to be a part of all inclusion initiatives in and through sport (Wolff and Hums, 2020). In this respect, Article 1 of the Revised International Charter of Physical Activity (2017), reads:

> Every human being has a fundamental right to physical education, physical activity and sport without discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or any other basis.

In the same vein, Lord and Stein (2014) state that persons with disabilities have a right to enjoy equal access to sport at all levels, to facilities, and to be reasonably accommodated. Persons with disabilities should, therefore, have an opportunity to organize and participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities on an equal basis with others, of appropriate instruction,

training and resources (Lord and Stein, 2014). Athletes with disabilities should enjoy the right to participate in the sport of their choice and be assisted to do so.

When one considers the disadvantages that the physically challenged students experience on account of their physical deficiencies, one is tempted to think that they need more of sport than their counterparts (who are not physically challenged). In this regard, Lakowski and Long (2011) argue that physical activity and sport hold the potential to serve as a unique conduit to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities within the mainstream community. They go on to add that physical education and sport help in improving physical health, psychological and social aspects of life. In concurrence, Brittain (2012) refers to the psychological value of sport. The Department of Health and Human Performance at Radford University (2022) in this vein, say that research has consistently shown that adaptive sport enhances an individual's health and quality of life.

It is important to note that in 1981 the United Nations declared that year as the year of the people with disabilities; focusing attention on the disabilities, their special needs and how they could make contributions in society (Beashel & Taylor, 1992). The purpose was to encourage people with disabilities to take part in a variety of physical activities like the non-disabled people.

3. University Paralympics

Generally, the physical disabilities common in universities in Zimbabwe are visually impaired (partial or complete), loss of limps or limb deficiency, leg-length difference and short stature, among others. There are also some athletes who are affected by albinism. Normally, there are no intellectually challenged athletes in universities because all students qualify to enter university after passing Advanced Level or Form Six like any other student. These are students who are capable intellectually, conscious about their rights and what they want. Before tournaments the athletes are classified by a group of classifiers to their respective categories in which they will compete. Concerns have been raised over the classifiers' qualifications.

The sports codes in which athletes with physical challenges related to lower and upper limps take part in are chess, swimming, athletics and wheel chair sports. Men in this category also play five-aside football. The visually challenged athletes take part in athletics and normally they run with guides. They also play goal-ball, which is played indoors. The ball has a sound producing jingle in it

which they should listen to so that they catch it. They are always blind-folded when they play goal ball since some are partially blind.

Those with albinism can take part in any sport of their choice since theirs is a skin related condition that is only affected by the weather. However, the number of sport codes for the athletes in Zimbabwe is smaller than that in countries like South Africa. According to Chiwandire (2021) sports that are commonly available for people with disabilities (PWDs) in South Africa include track and field, table tennis, wheelchair tennis, wheelchair dance, chess, judo, five-a-side soccer (for the athlete with visual impairment), seven-a-side football for athletes with cerebral palsy, swimming, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby, and cycling.

When comparing the mainstream sport (sports for the students who have no physical challenges) and the sports for the physically challenged students in Zimbabwean universities there are some glaring differences. For instance, while the mainstream students take part in sports leagues and travel beyond boarders and overseas for sports activities, sport for the physically challenged university students is confined to Zimbabwe, and to the four annual tournaments referred above. This is indicative of a bias towards the mainstream sport, which negates the fairness in sport advocated for by the Human Rights Model.

The resources that are committed to the sports programmes for the physically challenged students are far less compared to what is allocated to the main stream students' sports. A sample of one university sports budget showed that the budget allocation for the mainstream sport compared to that of the physically challenged is 70% and 30%, respectively. This is in spite of the fact that the students pay the same sports levy. Some may argue that the budget for sports programmes for the physically challenged is small because of their small numbers, but the complex nature of the Paralympics' sport and the expensiveness of equipment should be considered when budgeting. There is need for equitable distribution of resources in university sport if the disabled athletes' rights are to be upheld.

There are factors that have been identified as affecting participation of people with physical challenges in sport. Chiwandire (2021) observed that students with disabilities (SWD) have low participation opportunities in sport in comparison to their non-disabled peers in sport and recreational activities on campuses, with universities focusing more on the academic needs of SWDs than on their social needs. According to the Department of Health

and Human Performance at Radford University (2022), persons with physical disabilities face a variety of physical and social barriers to sport and physical activity. Lakowski and Long (2011) cite limited opportunities in educational institutions and say that individuals with disabilities are almost three times as likely to be sedentary compared to individuals without disabilities. They say that fifty-six percent (56%) of the people with disabilities do not engage in any physical activity compared to thirty-six percent (36%) of people without disability. In other words, if the physically challenged people are not motivated well enough, they are likely to be quite inactive. They argue that the limited sporting programmes that exist are often created as a result of the advocacy efforts from non-profit organisations who partner with athletic associations to provide adapted programmes, a notion related to what is termed the Charity Approach (The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Training Guide Professional Training Series No 19:7). In particular, reference to the participation in sport by students with physical challenges Lakowski and Long (2011) argue that lack of policies, resources, programmes and advocacy are some of the barriers to participation.

Stigmatisation and stereotyping have been quite topical in the lives of the physically challenged people and this has been affecting the way they take part in various activities including sport. Falola and Hamel (2021) say that barriers include negative psychosocial factors. These include non-disabled persons negative attitude, prejudice, stereotypes and stigma towards people with disabilities. They also say there is limited information on disability sport, lack of funding because of the belief that disability sport is costly. Falola and Hamel also cite architectural barriers such as inaccessibility of sports facilities which are prevalent in developing countries. In addition, they cite lack of sport specific equipment and limited capacity to host sporting events.

The aforementioned challenges are very unfortunate because the physically challenged athletes like and enjoy their games. One should visit the venues for the sports activities of the physically challenged such as the Danhiko in Harare (Zimbabwe) during the games to see how the physically challenged athletes of all ages enjoy the games.

There is so much that needs to be done so as to realize inclusivity in sport. This should be in complement of the other efforts being made in attaining inclusivity in all other sectors like education. Other countries have done quite a lot in making sure that physically challenged athletes take part in sport like their non-disabled counterparts. Falola and Hamel (2021) say that in Australia

sport has been identified as a low-cost and effective means to foster positive health and well-being, social inclusion and community building for people with disability. With such a perception sport for the disabled could be supported. In fact, developed countries have made considerable progress regarding inclusivity through federal legislature and political pressure (Falola and Hamel, 2021). All this aims at maximising participation in sport by people with disabilities.

Governments are obliged to facilitate participation in physical education and sport by their subjects, hence the availability of sports in educational institutions from the early years to tertiary level in Zimbabwe. This is in compliance with the dictates of the Revised International Charter of Physical Activity (2017). In this regards, Chiwandire (2021) notes that the South African government has enacted various policies that oblige universities to provide conducive environments for the equal participation of students with disabilities (SWDs) in sport and recreational activities (SARAs). This is quite an important starting point as it shows government's commitment to sport for the physically challenged. The Government of Zimbabwe has laws that support inclusivity and rights of the disabled. According to the National Disability Policy (2021:19) "Zimbabwe made great strides towards recognising the rights of persons with disabilities by duly ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol". However, more should be done to enforce these laws across the board. At institution level university management should have strong policies that support inclusivity in sport in line with the national policies. Not only policies, but action is required to support sports for the physically challenged.

Modifications on equipment and materials are quite critical in ensuring that athletes with disabilities take part in sport. According to the Department of Health and Human Performance at Radford University (2022) these modifications include use of chalk to determine the starting point of a long jump for visually impaired athletes, not the toe board.

Field implements such as a shot-put, javelin, and discus are generally lighter compared to typical sports. When visually impaired runners are performing, they run with sighted guides. Athletes race in specially-designed racing wheel chairs and throw from field chairs. Archers can shoot at shorter distances compared with typical tournaments, they also shoot at a larger target, and are permitted to use adaptive equipment. Further, carbon fibre prosthetics and braces may benefit athletes who have limb differences (Department of Health and Human Performance Radford University, 2022). Athletes with disabilities

use specialised equipment called assistive technology in both training and competition (Disability Sport, 2014).

Several types of modified and specially designed equipment are currently available but most of them are created to help athletes overcome mobility issues. There are also adaptations on facilities. These can be universal designs, which according to the National Disability Policy (2021 p. 17) are "…the design of products, environments, programs and services, making it possible for them to be used by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design." The idea is to enable the physically challenged athletes to use facilities used by the non-disabled.

4. Methodology

The study aims to:

- Identify the challenges that compromise the implementation of sports programmes for the physically challenged in universities in Zimbabwe.
- Find solutions to the challenges affecting university Paralympics in Zimbabwe
- Coming up with strategies to turn-around university Paralympics in Zimbabwe.

The researcher adopted a survey design in which both quantitative and qualitative paradigms were employed. The quantitative method, which, according to Walliman (2009), belongs to the positivist paradigm, led to quantification of data and provision of the much-needed objective facts which were easy to analyse. The qualitative approach, which essentially is in the constructivist paradigm, provided narrative data (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The mixed methods approach was preferred as it allowed collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single study (Abraham, 2013). This allowed for methodological triangulation (Wellington & Szcerbinski, 2007). A mixed methods approach allowed researcher to have a complete picture of university Paralympics.

Population and sampling

A total of 100 athletes were purposively chosen and were involved as questionnaire respondents. Seven (7) coordinators, eight (8) Sports Directors, seven (7) Deputy Sports Directors and six (6) Sports Officers making a total of 28 were interviewed. They were chosen through judgemental sampling.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher sought permission to carry out the research from the Executive Board of the Zimbabwe Universities Sports Association (ZUSA), which had the constitutional mandate to run the games. Informed consent was sought from the interviewees and questionnaire respondents. An explanation of the purpose and use of the study was done and they participated with full understanding and appreciation of the spirit behind the study. The researcher also assured the participants of anonymity and strictly using the study for the purpose of improving Paralympics in universities in Zimbabwe.

Data collection and analysis procedure

Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected at the same time, making it concurrent timing. In this procedure the researcher implemented both quantitative and qualitative strands in a single phase of the study. The questionnaire was administered concurrently with conducting of interviews. The time horizon was cross sectional. The questionnaire had closed and open-ended questions. It was pre-tested with selected respondents to check on their effectiveness as data collection instruments on the perceptions of the respondents on the challenges that affected university Paralympics in Zimbabwe and how they could be solved in an attempt to turn the games around. Pre-testing the instruments was an important exercise (Kumar, 2005). It helped with removal of ambiguity of questions, clarity of questions, removal of unnecessary repetition, and ensuring proper wording. Pre-testing of the questionnaire was done at one university that was selected by convenient sampling out of the eleven universities that were affiliates of the Zimbabwe Universities Sports Association. As Walliman (2009) says, a questionnaire should be pre-tested on a small number of people. It was tested on a population similar in type to that of the intended sample of the respondents to check for any areas that needed improvement to ensure comprehension by the respondents. This assisted the researcher in making necessary corrections to the instrument. The administration of the questionnaire for the main part of the study was done physically. Quantitative data was presented in frequency tables, graphs and pie charts. Description and interpretation were done immediately after the presentations. To analyse the quantitative data the researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and Microsoft excel. A semi-structured interview (SSI) schedule was designed. The schedule had the advantage of ensuring that important

information was not missed in the physical interview. Generally, the SSIs are highly appreciated in their power to engage in deep conversation, flexibility, and generative nature, hence stimulating new ideas (Kakilla, 2021). This was used to collect the perceptions of the interviewees. In order to refine the guide, it was shared with colleagues who gave suggestions on how to improve it. The interviews were done face-to-face. Qualitative data was presented in narrative form under themes in a separate section.

Data discussion

The quantitative and qualitative data was discussed in relation to the information from the literature review. Mixing of methods during interpretation was done during the final step of the research process after the researcher had collected and analysed the sets of data separately as said by Creswell and Clark (2011). Discussion was done in themes mixing the qualitative and quantitative data.

5. Results

Response rate for the questionnaire

Table 1: Questionnaire response rate

Questionnaires distributed	Questionnaire returned	Questionnaire not returned	Percentage return rate
108	100	8	92.59%

Table 1 shows that out of the 108 questionnaires distributed 100 questionnaires were returned. This translated to 92.59% which was acceptable. According to Fincham (2008), a response rate of sixty percent (60%) should be the goal of most researchers, but for survey research intended to represent all schools and colleges of pharmacy, a response rate of ≥ 80% is expected.

Demographic data of questionnaire respondents

Gender of respondents

N=100

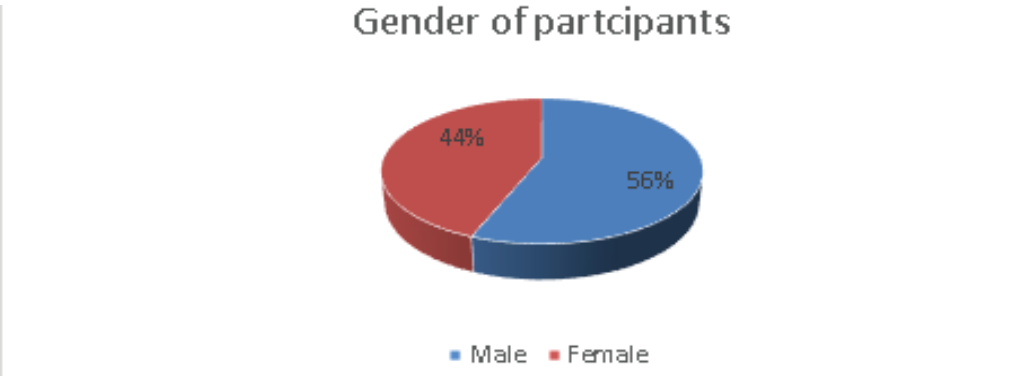

Figure 1: The gender of the athletes

Figure 1 shows that 56% of the respondents was male while forty-four percent (44%) was female. There was a difference of 12% which showed that males dominated in terms of gender. This imbalance was expected because there were some sport codes that females were not involved in; like five-aside football.

Levels in degree programmes

The researcher sought the respondents' levels of academic programmes. This was important in that it was assumed that levels would show the experiences of the respondents in university sport.

N=100

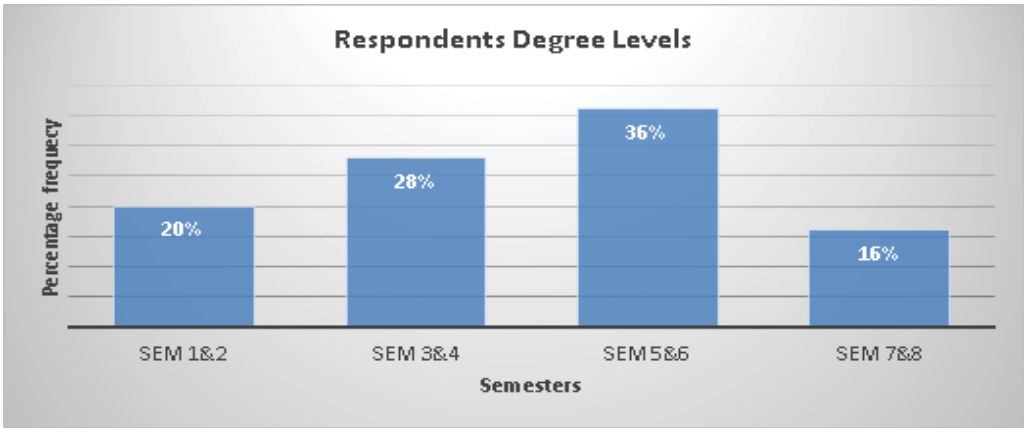

Figure 2: Levels of respondents by semester

Figure 2 shows that semesters 1 and 2 had a low percentage of twenty percent (20%). Semesters 3 and 4 had 28% of the respondents. The graph shows that the largest percentage of respondents, 36%, was in semesters 5 and 6, possibly this was because when they reach semesters 5 and 6 they would be in a position to appreciate more the need to be involved in sport and social life on campus. Semesters 7 and 8 had the lowest percentage of 16%, possibly because the pressure of academic work, especially research, would be taking most of their time.

First choice sports codes

The athletes were requested to indicate the main sport codes they participated in. The information about the codes was important as it showed the codes that were in the university Paralympics programme. The responses are presented in Figure 3 below:

N=100

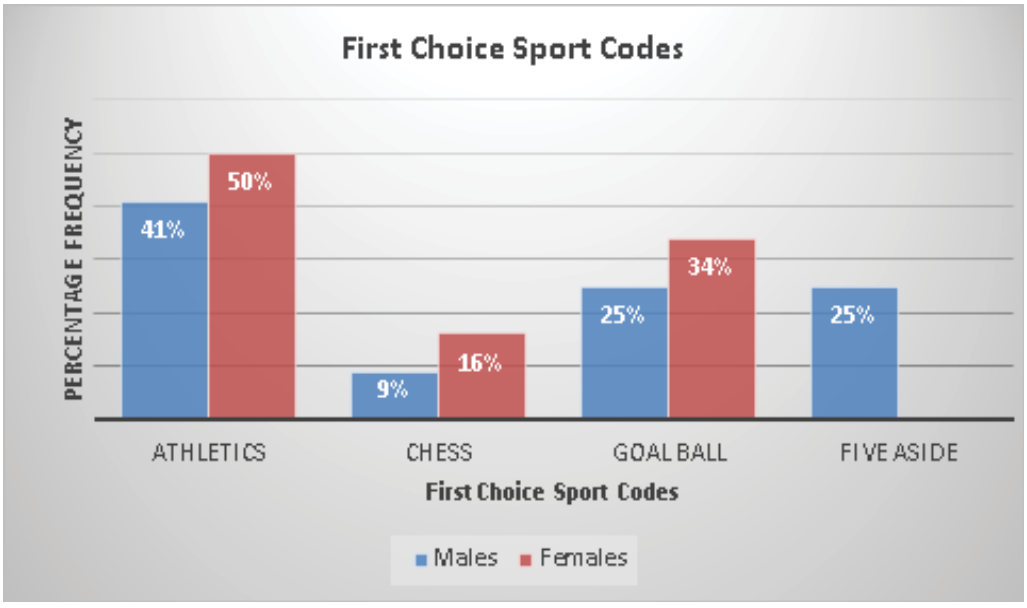

Figure 3: First choice odes of respondents

The cluster chart in Figure 3 shows that 41% of the males indicated athletics as their first-choice sport, while 50% of the females had athletics as their first-choice sport. Athletics had the highest number of athletes because it had more events than any other code. Usually, it was in athletics where universities had a chance to win more medals and so they fielded as many athletes as they could. This explained the higher percentages in athletics compared to any other codes. Chess had nine percent (9%) of the males while 16% of the females had it as first choice code. Chess had few takers because it is a bit complicated. The data shows that fewer males than females played chess. Goal ball was next to athletics in popularity. The chart shows that 25% of the males indicated goal ball as their first choice, while 34% of the females did the same. Unlike in goal ball and other codes, only males played five- aside football and they constituted 25% of the males. There was no five-aside for females in the university Paralympics. This explained why males were more than females as shown in Figure 1.

Data linked to research objectives

Perceptions about university Paralympics

The researcher collected data on respondents' perceptions of the university Paralympics in terms of how they were managed. How the respondents felt about their games was considered quite useful as a starting point for the study of the university Paralympics in Zimbabwe.

N=100

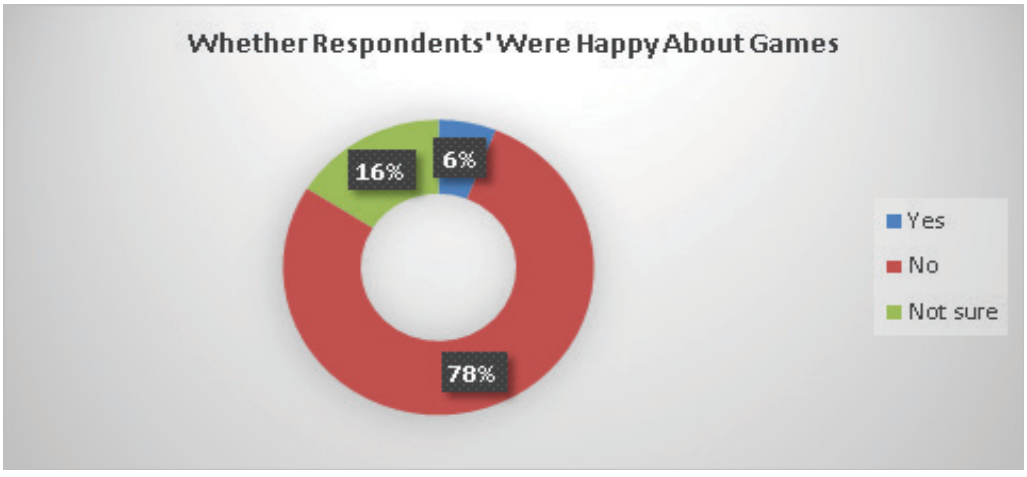

Figure 4: Level of satisfaction with the management of their games

Figure 4 shows that 6% of the candidates selected the option 'Yes'. The majority, 78% selected 'No', meaning the majority were not happy about the way the games were managed. Those who selected 'Not Sure' constituted 16% of the respondents. This showed that the majority of the respondents were not pleased with the way their games were run. This negative response confirmed the opinions that there were challenges in university Paralympics in Zimbabwe.

Rating the university Paralympics

The researcher elicited the respondents' opinions on how they would rate their activities. The responses would help in seeing if the students' rating corresponded with their perceptions of the games, when 78% chose 'No' as a response to whether they were happy about the games.

N=100

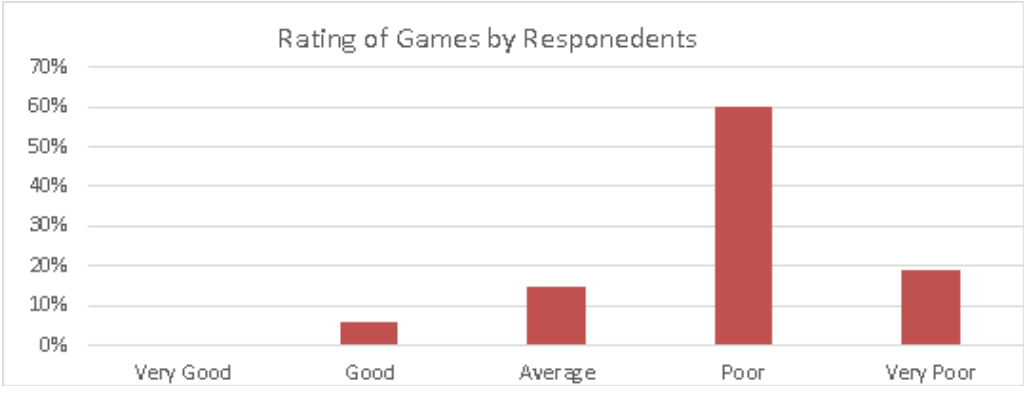

Figure 5: Rating of the university Paralympics

The four ratings selected were 'Good', (6%) 'Average' (15%), 'Poor' (60%) and 'Very Poor' (19%). The rating was about how the games were overly planned, managed and supported. The responses were mixed. However, the total of the respondents who rated poor and very poor was (79%) of the respondents. This was almost equal to the 78% that indicated they were not happy with the games in Figure 4. Their responses were in sync with the 'No' response on whether they were happy about the games. The descriptive data below shows the mean of 3.9200 and the standard deviation from the mean of 0.76118.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of responses

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rating	100	2.00	5.00	3.9200	.76118
Valid N (listwise)	100				

{Key: Very good (1): Good (2): Average (3): Poor (4): Very poor (5)}

The data shows that the mean is towards the option 'Poor' which has 60% of the respondents which is the majority. As such, on the whole, the majority rated the games as poor.

Motivation of responses

The researcher intended to have motivations from the respondents that would explain why they chose the positive or negative responses. The responses were organised in themes as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Level of respondents' motivation

Themes	Motivation for Good and Average	Motivation for Poor and Very Poor
Equipment and materials	• The facilities have been prepared although they can be better than this • Some had uniforms though this area can improve • The athletics track, goal ball, and five aside facilities were marked	• Unsuitable equipment and kits, no running spikes or suitable sports footwear • Poorly prepared facilities and materials, no proper goal ball, five-aside and track and field • Uniforms were sub-standard and old and torn sometimes.

Themes	Motivation for Good and Average	Motivation for Poor and Very Poor
Management of games	• We have been classified and we know the codes we compete in • We were given medals- • We had the opening and closing ceremonies • The officials used have an idea of the disciplines in which they were officiating	• Poor management of games, • Short duration of tournament • Poor time management like late starting of activities, • Disorganised classification activity, • Less qualified technical officials, particularly in five aside football. • Poorly organised opening and awards ceremonies • Poor dispute resolution • Inadequate medals and trophies
Preparation	• Preparation was done as seen in the hiring of facilities, making sure the hall for goal ball was ready and also the track and field facilities. • Accommodation was booked and transport availed. • We also trained although time was not enough. • Some members of staff trained us as we prepared for the games.	• We did not have qualified coaches for our training, so we had inadequate preparation • Practice and training time not enough
Programmes	• We have our Paralympics tournaments like our mainstream counterparts. • Apart from the ZUSA Paralympics we also take part in the ZITSU Paralympics. • We also take part in the Danhiko and National Paralympics	• Limited sports activities e.g. there are very few tournaments in Zimbabwe • No travelling to other countries in the region let alone abroad for games • Limited number of sports codes, e.g., there was no swimming, volleyball, tennis, martial arts

Table 3 shows that those who had rated the games as 'Good' and 'Average' cited positive issues as shown in the column headed 'Motivation for Good and Average'. The respondents who had rated the games as 'Poor' and 'Very Poor' gave their reasons under the column headed 'Motivation for Poor and Very Poor'. They stated the weaknesses in the university Paralympics in Zimbabwe under the various themes as shown in the Table 3. From the responses it can be seen that while there were weaknesses or challenges there were some positives that could be experienced in the games.

Suggestions on how university Paralympics could be improved

The researcher sought the suggestions of the respondents on how university Paralympics could be improved.

Table 4: Suggested solutions by interviews

Theme	Suggested solutions
Attitudes	• Changing attitudes and educating officials and others on the importance of the university Paralympics. • Games should be treated the same as main stream games. • Enacting policies that uplift the physically challenged activities including sport, in line with national and international disability policies.
Equipment, facilities and materials	• Adequate financing to enable acquisition of standard footwear, kits, protective materials and specialised equipment like sports wheel chairs. • Organisers should hire suitable facilities for physically challenged athletes. • Construction of adapted facilities.
Management of games	• Managing time well and properly drawing sports programmes considering various disabilities of the athletes. • Official opening and closing ceremonies should be well planned and more exciting. • Classification should be done by people from the National Paralympics Associations and certificates which remain valid for the duration of their degree programmes should be given. • Qualified technical officials from the National Paralympics Committee should be roped in. • Disputes should be resolved by a committee that is knowledgeable of the Paralympics. • Representatives of physically challenged athletes should be roped into the Zimbabwe Universities Sports Association Executive.

Theme	Suggested solutions
Preparation	• Hiring technically qualified coaches to prepare the athletes for tournaments and their day-to-day practice. • Ensuring adequate preparation of athletes through friendly games.
Programmes	• More sports activities within Zimbabwe and abroad. • More sports codes should be introduced.
Motivation	• Meaningful incentives in the form of monetary rewards and kits, or sports wheel chairs should be given to athletes. • Scholarships and other life changing privileges should be given. • Motivating experiences like visiting areas of interest in the hosting region should be organised. • Tournaments should be an opportunity to show-case talents for scouts to pick potential athletes for national duty.

The responses in Table 4 show athletes' suggestions on how to improve university Paralympics and what needed to be done to improve them.

Responses from interviews

The interviewees were asked whether they were satisfied with the way the games were run. This was felt to be a necessary starting point as it showed how the participants perceived the games.

N=28

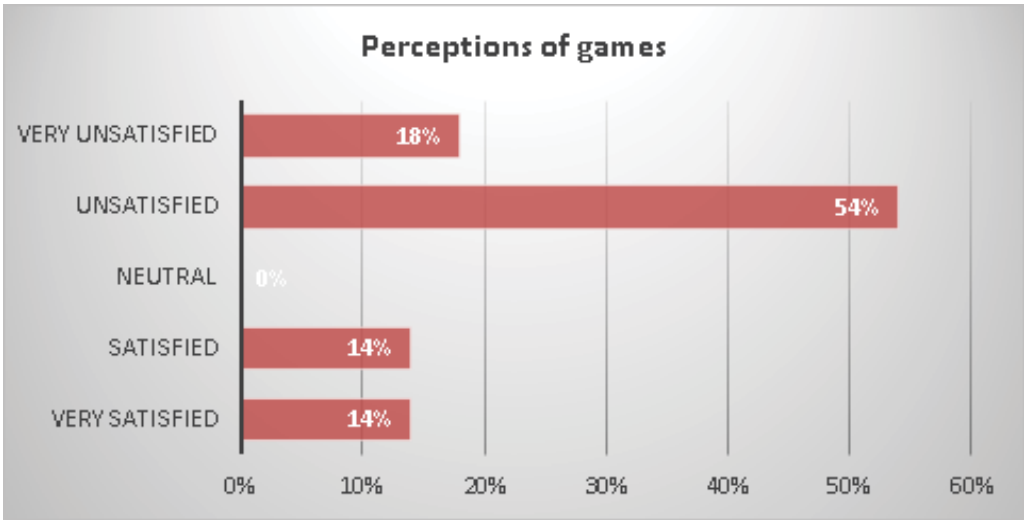

Figure 6: Respondents' perception of the university Paralympics.

The responses in Figure 4 show that 14% of the respondents said they were very satisfied with the games and 14% said they were satisfied. None were neutral. Those who selected unsatisfied constituted 54% while 18% indicated that they were very unsatisfied. The combined 28% of respondents who said they were satisfied was far less than the total of those who were not satisfied of 72%. Data was analysed by SPSS in the descriptive statistics in Table 5.

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation of responses

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Satisfied	28	1.00	5.00	3.4643	1.34666
Valid N (listwise)	28				

{Key: Very satisfied (1); Satisfied (2): Neutral (3): Unsatisfied (4): Very unsatisfied (5)}

The analysis shows a standard deviation of 1.34666 from a mean of 3.4643, which shows that the responses were within the unsatisfied and very unsatisfied choices.

The interviewees were requested to motivate their responses so as to support their opinions. That is, why they said 'Yes' or 'No' and they came up with the following reasons summarised in themes in the Table 6.

Table 6: Motivations for 'Yes' and 'No' responses

Motivation for 'Yes'	**Motivation for 'No'**
• Athletes enjoy the games. • Games have never failed to take place. • Resources are allocated to games. • Everything possible is done in an effort to make the games successful. • Efforts are made to rope in experts in the running of the games. • Games are covered in the ZUSA Constitution which means they are supported. • Athletes take part in the Zimbabwe Tertiary Institutions Sports Union (ZTISU).	• Equipment and materials are not enough and unsuitable for physically challenged athletes. • Games seem to be a formality or ritual. • One day only is set aside for the games. • Most officials used are not qualified. • Facilities are poorly prepared and not suitable • Some officials seem not to understand the needs of the athletes. • Games not exciting. • Training of the athlete is poor and inadequate. • Some disciplines have no takers making them non-events.

Table 6 summarised the mixed responses showing that, while some appreciated the efforts being made to ensure that students had the opportunity to play their games, there were some who believed a lot needed to be done. Suggestions on what could be done to turn-around the university Paralympics in Zimbabwe.

Table 7: Suggested solutions by interviewees

Theme	Suggested solutions
Conscientisation of students and staff	• Workshops on the nature and needs of the physically challenged. • Motivating students to take up sport so as to increase the numbers, • Discussing sporting needs of the physically challenged athletes with university management.
Equipment, materials and facilities	• Acquisition of quality, protective and comfortable kits. • Acquisition of adaptive equipment and assistive technology. • Venues and accommodation to suit the nature of the physical challenges.
Development of games	• The Zimbabwe Paralympics Committee should be roped in to ensure international best practices. • Games to be part of the national programme for developing national Paralympic athletes. • Workshops and coaching clinics for the sport for the physically challenged. • Researches and symposiums on Paralympics sport to be carried out.
Managing the games	• Refreshments and bottled mineral water to be provided during games • Include the students in the planning and management of the games as their input is quite critical. • The students should not be rushed through games during tournaments. • Qualified officials should be used in management and officiating of the games. • Use of equipped medical teams and ambulances. • Zimbabwe Paralympic Committee officials to be present during games to ensure standards are met.

Theme	Suggested solutions
Motivation	• Better allowances and general welfare. • Rewarding deserving students. • Scholarships or reduced fees for athletes. • Recognising high performers.

Table 7 presented a summary of suggestions by the interviewees of what they felt needed to be done in order to turn-around university Paralympics in Zimbabwe. The interviewees and questionnaire respondents concurred in terms of the areas that needed attention though the details were slightly different.

6. Discussion

Questionnaire respondents and interviewees concurred that there were challenges that affected university Paralympics in Zimbabwe. Almost 78% of the questionnaire respondents indicated that they were not happy with the games, 6% said they were happy while 16% said they were not sure. Hence, the majority of the respondents said they were not happy. This was concurred with by 70% of the interviewees who said they were not satisfied with the games. Of the respondents, 25% said they were satisfied with the games, while 5% were neutral.

The questionnaire respondents and interviewees who concurred that there were challenges in university Paralympics were high in terms of percentage. In confirmation the Department of Health and Human Performance at Radford University (2022) said that persons with physical disabilities faced a variety of physical and social barriers to sport and physical activity. In the same vein, Lakowski and Long (2011) said there were limited opportunities in educational institutions and that individuals with disabilities were almost three times as likely to be sedentary compared to individuals without disabilities. Chiwandire (2021) confirmed the existence of challenges in disability sport in South Africa.

The researcher requested the questionnaire respondents to rate the games and a total of 79% rated the games poor and very poor. Their responses concurred with the 'No' response by the interviewees responding to whether they were satisfied with the games. However, there were some who were positive about the games and they cited aspects to do with welfare of athletes, equipment and materials and management of games which were done fairly well.

The suggestions by the questionnaire respondents and interviewees on how the challenges in university Paralympics could be solved were summarised under themes as given in the following paragraphs.

Conscientisation of students and staff

Because of the low investment in university Paralympics by institutions, interviewees opined that the games seemed to be a ritual to fulfil fixtures. They felt that it was a question of attitude by those who were supposed to manage the games. The solution to the attitudes issues was said to be in changing attitudes and educating officials and others on the importance of the university Paralympics so that they appreciated the games. The interviewees emphasised the need to conscientise and motivate the physically challenged students to take up sport so as to increase the numbers, uptake of disciplines and increasing competition thereby making the games more exciting. They suggested meetings with the university management to discuss the sporting needs and rights of the physically challenged athletes.

Support from the university was critical in terms of developing sport for the physically challenged. It was imperative for university administrations to enact policies that uplifted the games in line with government policies and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that re-affirmed the rights of persons with disabilities and to ensure their participation in society as equal members and subjects of rights (The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Training Guide Professional Training Series No 19:11).

Equipment, facilities and materials

The respondents and interviewees concurred that equipment, facilities and materials needed to be improved in terms of quality. This was one reason cited by the interviewees who rated the university Paralympics sport lowly. They suggested that adequate financial resources should be availed to make it possible to acquire suitable equipment and kits for the athletes. Games organisers should hire standard facilities for the physically challenged athletes, and universities should construct suitable facilities for use by the university paralympians.

In terms of equipment and materials it was suggested that there was need to ensure that athletes had suitable sports footwear, including protective materials. Specialised equipment like goal balls, jingle balls for five-aside, specialised wheel chairs for track activities, basketball and tennis should be prioritised. This

included such equipment like running blades and racing wheelchairs. In the case of shot put, wheelchair users should use special throwing frames. Assistive technology should be implemented in sports for the physically challenged students. They suggested the purchase of good quality mats for goal ball.

Preparation and management of university paralympics

The aspect of games management was cited as affecting the games. Most officials used were not qualified technically, as a result the athletes were short-changed. Some officials seemed not to understand the needs of the physically challenged athletes and got easily irritated by their demands. It was pointed out by interviewees and questionnaire respondents that the games management, led by the ZUSA, should ensure that time was well managed and the programme of the tournament was properly drawn and followed. The physically challenged athletes needed more time, including resting time, during games and should not be hurried. The official opening and closing or awards ceremonies should be well planned and start as programmed. Medals and trophies should be planned well to avoid situations where some deserving athletes fail to get medals because they were not enough.

Classification should be done by technically qualified people certified or recommended by the National Paralympics Committee. These are supposed to be technical experts in the area of classification. Certificates which remain valid for the duration of their degree programmes should be given to each athlete so that there is no classification repeated every year. Qualified technical officials from the National Paralympics Committee should be roped in so that the games are run professionally and athletes have confidence in the officiating. Emerging technologies in officiating and management should be used to make the games more exciting. Also, disputes should be objectively resolved by a committee that is knowledgeable of the paralympics sport. Representatives of physically challenged athletes should be roped into the ZUSA Executive so that they represent their interests.

Participants concurred that Universities should hire technically qualified coaches. This made sense because the physically challenged athletes require qualified coaches to train them because of the complications they have physically and emotionally. It was pointed out that preparation in terms of training the athlete was inadequate and usually done a few days before tournaments. Interviewees cited the issue of the facilities that were poorly prepared and not

suitable for Paralympics. Adapting the facilities and materials was an issue that required serious attention. Also, lots of refreshments and bottled mineral water should be provided during games. During games, there should be well-equipped medical teams and ambulances to deal with health-related challenges for the disabled and injuries.

Sports programmes

The issue of sports programmes seemed to be of interest to the questionnaire respondents. More sports activities should be availed within Zimbabwe so that the athletes had a wide sporting experience. The athletes indicated they wanted to travel for sports abroad and this should be organised. The numbers of athletes were very low making the tournaments dull as some disciplines had no takers making them non-events. Also, more adaptive sports codes like tennis, basketball and volleyball among others, should be introduced instead of limiting them to track and field athletics activities, goal ball, five-aside football and chess.

Development of games

Respondents suggested that the Zimbabwe Paralympics Committee should be roped in to ensure that the international best practices are implemented in university paralympics in Zimbabwe. Through relevant departments government should invoke policies that uplift the games of the physically challenged, including University Paralympics. University Paralympics should be part of a vibrant national programme for developing national Paralympic athletes who will represent the country at regional and international tournaments for the disabled.

Workshops and coaching clinics should be held for the sport for the physically challenged, including management of the athlete and counselling. There is need for a lot of research in the area of sport for the physically challenged so as to identify areas of weaknesses and how these can be strengthened. Studies should be carried out so that borrowing of ideas from other countries with developed paralympics programmes can be done. This made sense because universities are in a better position to do this as research is part of their core business. The Sports Directors should take advantage of the innovation hubs that were introduced at their institutions to develop sport for the physically challenged.

Motivation

Questionnaire respondents and interviewees concurred that good welfare and more meaningful incentives in the form of monetary rewards and even kits or sports wheel chairs should be given to athletes. Scholarships and other life changing privileges should be given. Other motivating, memorable experiences like visiting tourist resorts in the hosting region during games should be organised so that athletes enjoy the trips rather than confining the trips to tournament venues. Incentivising rewards should be given to deserving students, including certificates of attendance. Universities should consider giving athletes certain privileges like reduced tuition fees. High achievers in Paralympics should be given awards during graduation and colour awards. More entertaining activities should be organised for the tournaments so that athletes would be motivated to take part in sport the following season.

7. Conclusion

The conclusions from the study were that university Paralympics in Zimbabwe were inundated by a myriad of challenges that compromised their implementation. Because of these challenges the games were considered just a formality, and a lot needed to be done for the disabled athlete to enjoy the right to sport. However, there were some athletes and members of staff who felt that, despite the challenges observed in the games, efforts were being made by the Zimbabwe Universities Sports Association (ZUSA) and individual institutions to ensure that the athletes enjoyed sporting experience. However, the respondents and interviewees acknowledged the existence of grey areas that needed attention.

The conclusion was that there was need to turn around university paralympics in Zimbabwe. The turning around could not be attained by ZUSA and universities alone, but by roping in all stakeholders like the relevant government ministries and Departments, Zimbabwe Paralympics Committee and others. The development of university paralympics in Zimbabwe should not be treated in isolation, but as part of the national agenda of developing sport for the physically challenged. This should see an approach that connects university paralympics with clubs and national teams so that the student athletes can also be prepared for possible national duty.

8. Recommendations

The researcher made the following recommendations for the turning around of university paralympics in Zimbabwe:

Equipment, materials and facilities

- Suitable, adapted sports equipment, quality kits, footwear that are protective, comfortable and adapted should be acquired for athletes.
- Preparation in terms of venues, training and accommodation should consider the nature of the physical challenges.
- Investing in assistive technology for use by athletes.
- Seeking sponsorship and partnership with the corporate world, other organisations and alumni for acquisition of suitable equipment and materials.

Development of games

- The Zimbabwe Paralympics Committee should be roped in to ensure that the international best practices are implemented in university Paralympics.
- Through relevant departments government should invoke policies that uplift the games of the physically challenged, including students Paralympics, and ideas should be implemented rather than end in rhetoric.
- University Paralympics should be part of a vibrant national programme for developing Paralympics.
- Workshops on management, officiating and coaching should be held for the sport of the physically challenged.
- Symposiums, research and comparative studies should be done so as to discuss and keep abreast of international trends in students Paralympics.

Managing the games

- More time should be ensured for training the athlete.
- The games should be in clusters so that those that can be done in winter like indoor games can be held the winter, and those that can be done in summer like swimming are done during that season.
- Athletics should be done during the national athletics season.
- Involving the athlete in the planning and management of their games.
- The students should not be rushed through the games during tournaments since they need to take their time and need more rest times.
- Technically qualified officials should be used in the management and officiating of the games.
- During games there should always be well equipped medical teams and ambulances.

- Zimbabwe Paralympic Committee officials should be roped in before and during games.
- Classification should be done by experts.
- There should be serious evaluation of games.

Motivation

- Motivating athletes by better allowances and general welfare.
- Rewarding deserving athletes through meaningful awards including certificates of attendance by ZUSA.
- Recognising high performers in Paralympics during graduation and colour awards.
- Awarding privileges like scholarships and reduced tuition fees.

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