



“I See Myself Working”: Potential Livelihoods Development Opportunities for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities Through Participation in Sports Activities and Events



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Abstract

Background: Youth with intellectual disabilities usually experience poorer post-school outcomes than youth with any other disabilities and youth without disabilities. Youth with intellectual disabilities are often marginalized and discriminated against regarding skills development and work opportunities. Participation in sports has shown to have a positive correlation with quality of life, satisfaction with life, community reintegration, and mood as well as employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The aim of the research was to explore how youth with intellectual disabilities' participation in sports could enhance their livelihoods and enable them to become economically active.

Method: A qualitative approach using critical ethnography was adopted. The research took place at two adult vocational training centres for youth with intellectual disabilities and at three sports events. A total sample size of seventeen participants were recruited by purposive sampling, comprising six youths with intellectual disabilities, five parents, caregivers, or guardians, two sports managers or organizers, two sports coaches and two skills trainers. Participation observations, semi-structured interviewing and reflective journaling were used as data gathering methods.

Results: The youth had a deep desire to work. Potential for livelihoods development through sports participation was identified. Although the youth were learning relevant skills through sports participation, these skills were not translating into work opportunities.

Conclusion: Opportunities for skills development for youth with intellectual disabilities were identified but the youths' participation in sports needed to be intentionally organized for their livelihood's development.

Keywords: Inclusive livelihoods development; Inclusive sports; Youth development; Intellectual disabilities; Community-based rehabilitation; Zimbabwe

Introduction

Youth unemployment is one of the greatest challenges being faced by Zimbabwe [1], the landlocked Southern African country between Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers. The 2012 population census showed that youth aged between fifteen and thirty-four years constituted 84% of the unemployed population [2]. While poverty is generalized in Zimbabwe, persons with disabilities have a higher prevalence of poverty [3]. Although youth with intellectual disabilities constituted the fourth highest group of persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe [4], they are often the most marginalized groups regarding career guidance, skills development, and employment opportunities [5]. It was important to explore measures that identify best practices to create opportunities to ensure youth with intellectual disabilities participate in work.

Well-designed, sports-based initiatives are cost-effective and practical means to achieve youth development, yet the potential for sport participation amongst youths with intellectual disabilities has not been fully realized [6,7]. Traina [8] agrees that youths with intellectual disabilities are an understudied population worldwide, which supports the need to research on potential livelihoods opportunities for them to become economically active. Most research has focused on the youths' recreational, social, emotional, psychological and health benefits of sports participation. Examples include the study on promoting social inclusion through sports participation for youth with intellectual disabilities in Germany, Poland, Hungary, Serbia, and Ukraine by McConkey et al. [9]. Another study by Hudson et al. [10] identified physical and psychological benefits on community football teams for youth with intellectual disabilities

in the UK. However, these studies did not focus on the link between sports participation and livelihoods development of youths with intellectual disabilities.

In South Africa, Lorenzo et al. [7] sought to map participation of youth with disabilities in sports and other leisure activities to facilitate their livelihoods development. However, they did not establish the actual skills youth with intellectual disabilities gain through sports participation. They focused on youths with disability in general and not just youths with intellectual disabilities. Few studies have linked sports participation of youths with intellectual disabilities with livelihoods development in the African context [11]. This article intends to provide new knowledge regarding skills development and work opportunities that youths with intellectual disabilities could potentially gain from participating in sports.

The aim of the research was to explore how participation in sports activities enabled youth with intellectual disabilities to access livelihood opportunities to become economically active. The overall theme of this article is "I see myself working." The theme gives an account of how opportunities were not being fully optimized for youth with intellectual disabilities in Zimbabwe. Insight into perspectives of youth with intellectual disabilities' ambitions of acquiring work could guide skills development and work opportunities through participating in sports to counter limited opportunities for youth with intellectual disabilities in Zimbabwe.

Literature Review

Work skills development and work opportunities for youth with intellectual disabilities are generally limited. Peta [12] commented that persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe are generally at risk of being refused enrolment in schools and access to employment opportunities based on their impairment. Opoku et al. [13] conducted a study in Kenya to explore access into employment for persons with disabilities and found that persons with disabilities were often denied opportunities to meaningful work. Factors responsible for limited work opportunities included limited access to information on work opportunities, negative attitudes, an inaccessible work environment, low educational qualifications and legislation that is ineffective regarding the employment of persons with disabilities. Although this study focused on persons with physical, hearing, and visual impairment only, it offered useful insights into the access of work opportunities that could be explored for youth with intellectual disabilities. Bartniwoska et al. [14] from Poland found limited local opportunities such as an inadequate number of schools or potential places of employment and a high unemployment rate as barriers to youth with intellectual disabilities accessing livelihoods development opportunities.

Methodology

A qualitative approach using critical ethnography was performed. Critical ethnography speaks on behalf of minority

groups, in this case, the point of view of youth with intellectual disabilities, by stating what is and how it can be changed [15]. The research took place at two adult vocational training centres for youth with intellectual disabilities and at three sports events.

A total of 17 participants were recruited using purposive sampling. Six youth with intellectual disabilities participated in the study. There was only one female youth who participated in the study as the vocational training centres were mostly dominated by male youths. Table 1 shows information on the youth who participated in the study regarding their age, work aspirations and type of sports and work they were engaged in.

Five parents, caregivers, or guardians of youth with intellectual disabilities took part in the study. There were fewer parents who participated in the study as one parent was not available to participate in the study. Two sports managers, two sports coaches and two skills trainers of youths with intellectual disabilities also participated in the study. One skills trainer and one sports coach were recruited from each of the sites of the vocational training centres. The sports managers were recruited from two different golf courses. One of the vocational training centres was a boarding school and some parents, although they gave their consent, lived too far away for them to participate in the study.

Data Gathering Methods

Participation observations, semi-structured interviewing and reflective journaling were used as data collection methods. The interview guides and observation checklists were first piloted before being used in the study.

Thematic data analysis was performed using Braun and Clarke's [16] process: Data generated from interviews was transcribed and translated from Shona into English simultaneously. Notes from observations, reflective journaling and interviews, were read through several times until I, the lead author, and became familiar with the data. Inductive analysis was used. Coding was named as units of meaning, which were then grouped into categories. My three supervisors also checked the categories to ensure that what I had generated made sense. Categories with the same meaning were merged further to form sub-themes and themes.

Rigour of qualitative data was ensured by conducting preliminary visits to study sites. Preliminary visits also sought to enhance credibility of the study by building rapport and trustworthiness with participants. I spent long periods of time doing field work with participants to build rapport so that they could be comfortable with me, reveal a true picture of their situation during observations and interviews and to gather a thick description of the context in which I was conducting my study. Triangulation strategies such as participant observations, semi-structured interviews and reflective journaling were performed to ensure the study's credibility.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study at the two vocational training centres was granted by Zimcare Trust Association. Ethical approval was given by the Faculty of Health Sciences' Human Research Ethics Committee at University of Cape Town, (HREC ref 008/ 2017) and Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe (MRCZ No:A/ 2341).

Research participants were issued with an information sheet about the study and informed consent form. Special attention was given to youths with intellectual disabilities who are eighteen years and older as their ability to give consent may have been impaired by cognitive difficulties [17]. Horner-Johnson and Bailey [18] contend that although youths with intellectual disabilities are a vulnerable group, it is important to include them in research. The vocational training centres where the study was conducted had child protection policies which view youths with intellectual disabilities, even those who are above 18, as minors who require parental consent to participate in research. A parent or legal guardian therefore gave informed consent and the youth with intellectual disabilities gave assent. The informed consent forms for youth with intellectual disabilities were written in simple language and read out to them if they could not read. Informed consent forms and interview guides were translated from English to Shona for youths with intellectual disabilities and their parents. Youth with intellectual disabilities were asked first if they would like to participate in the study before their parents were contacted to give consent.

Although youths with intellectual disabilities trusted their gatekeepers, who in this case were their skills trainers and sports coaches, the gatekeepers could have also coerced the youth into participating in the research owing to their unequal power relationships with the youth [19]. To overcome this challenge, the researcher had face-to-face meetings with the youths and recruited them directly as she had no previous acquaintances with them. She assured the youths that they would not get into trouble if they chose not to participate in the research and they could stop participating in the research at any time without repercussions [19]. Sports coaches, skills trainers and sports managers were informed about the study through face-to-face meetings with them.

Assent or consent forms explained to the research participants what the research was about, the research methods, including the amount of time required for them to participate in the research as well as risks and benefits of the research. Assent forms were given to youth with intellectual disabilities who were older than eighteen years of age and consent was sought from their parents or legal guardian because the child protection policy of the vocational training centres required me to do so,

The researcher was obligated to ensure privacy and integrity of research participants and each research participant was assigned a pseudonym [20]. Participants were not required to write their names on research questionnaires. Data of the information

gathered on paper and audiotapes was stored securely under lock and key and it will not be disclosed inappropriately in future. Data stored on the computer has a password to which only the researcher have access. Raw data would be destroyed, and the information saved on computer would be deleted five years post-publication or after the completion of the research if the research was not published.

Youth with intellectual disabilities are prone to emotional and physical abuse in institutions such as special schools [21]. The researcher therefore had a plan to refer youth with intellectual disabilities that she encountered who were being abused to the police of Zimbabwe's victim friendly unit, Child Line for emotional abuse and free and confidential counseling, and Family Support Trust for those youth who had been physically or sexually abused. She also had a plan to refer any form of abuse to the social welfare.

People who were at the vocational training centres or who were at sports events where research was taking place and who were not necessarily partaking in the study were informed by placing a notice at the vocational training centres and at sports events and issuing them with letters to inform them that a study was taking place which involves participant observation.

Findings

The theme of this article is, "I see myself working", as the youth had a deep desire to work. The sub-theme and categories of this theme are given here.

Sub- theme: Unveiling potential untapped livelihoods opportunities

This sub- theme explains potential livelihoods opportunities in Zimbabwe that were discovered for youths with intellectual disabilities, yet they had not yet been fully realised. The youths' capabilities were also identified.

Discovering livelihoods opportunities in sport

Parents were asked which livelihoods opportunities they believed their youth had in sports. They aspired for their children to become professional athletes, sports commentators, or sports coaches:

"At least if he plays the soccer that he likes, he can be like the Ndlovhus, Pele and Diego Mara Doña." (Lisa parent, 04/ 02/ 2019).

Another guardian realised that her nephew could be a good sports commentator. However, these opportunities did not exist:

"If you want him to do anything with normal people, you can make him analyze soccer that is played with normal people because he can speak English and he can say sensible things. If only they would record what they were doing at sports, he could be a good sports commentator." (Emily guardian, 3/ 02/ 2019)

Susan realised that her son's talent was playing soccer and playing professional soccer could be a possible potential work

opportunity that was yet to be realised. She was not sure how her son was going to access work opportunities such as becoming a professional soccer player. There was despair in her tone as she sighed whilst expressing her wish for Zimbabwe to create work opportunities in sport for youths with intellectual disabilities:

"Soccer is his main thing so I feel that somewhere somehow, like other countries where they do things for others, they can make these games for them and support them." (Susan parent, 18/ 02/ 2019).

Although parents believed that their children could gain work opportunities in sports, I had noted there were limited efforts, activities or support structures aimed at ensuring that youth with intellectual disabilities could gain livelihoods' opportunities in sports (Journal entry, 20/ 02/ 2019).

Possible work opportunities at sports events and organisations were also revealed. Sports managers identified the following possible work opportunities:

"There is the maintenance of the golf course, working in the workshop and catering." (Mason sports manager, 22/ 11/ 2019).

"We need catering, maintenance of the grounds, events planning and hospitality, caddies, till operators and salesmen. We also need people who do repairs. We do need carpentry services from time to time." (Jack sports manager, 29/11/ 2019).

Opportunities to socialize at sports events were viewed as opportunities to meet businesspeople for enhancing livelihoods opportunities:

"For others, they play golf as a way to meet with other cooperates or businesses." (Jack sports manager, 29/ 11/ 2019).

At golf courses, they had shops that sell sports attire and equipment and they required salespeople and till operators. At Unified Games for Special Olympics, there were potential work opportunities of maintaining and preparing the grounds for the venue, catering, music, and entertainment. There were sports coaches, score keepers and referees. Skills trainers were required to train youth art and beading. However, all these potential livelihoods opportunities were not being availed to youth with intellectual disabilities (Journal entry, 4/ 12/ 2018).

Work opportunities at Paralympic Games included cleaning and maintenance of the sports venue, although this task was being performed by non-disabled people. Sports coaching opportunities were available although youths with intellectual disabilities were not involved in these. There were a few coaches, referees and score keepers with physical disabilities. At various corporate stalls, they were advertising or giving out pamphlets and educating potential consumers on different products, but only non-disabled youth were involved. Vendors were selling food items and clothing. Some parents of youth with disabilities participated in vending but they did not involve their youths with disabilities. It was not clear as to why the youth with disabilities

were excluded from economic activities. At least the parents' involvement in economic activities that were brought on by the sports event could mean that the income and quality of life of the family of youth with disabilities would improve (Journal entry 02/ 01/ 2019).

Ironically, the theme for the Paralympic Games was 'My abilities are nothing without opportunities', yet the opportunities given to youth with disabilities were scarce. Although these youths with intellectual disabilities were involved in participating in sport, they were not involved in the economic activities that were taking place at the Paralympic Games. These attitudes of exclusion for youth with intellectual disabilities were worrisome as they highlighted their exclusion in work opportunities in the greater community. Youth with intellectual disabilities were excluded even more than youths with other disabilities (Journal entry, 2/ 01/ 2019).

Despite the youths' exclusion from economic activities, they expressed a deep desire to access work opportunities:

"Please ask them to find work for me?" (Joseph, 19/ 11/ 2018).

"I see myself working. Please help me to look for a job" (Benjamin, 20/ 10/ 2019).

"I just want to say if only we could also get jobs that suit us and what we will be learning." (Tsitsi, 3/ 06/ 2019).

The youth expressed the following about their work aspirations:

"I would like to work at the golf course and coach." (Joseph, 19/ 11/ 2018).

"I want to play soccer. I would love to do woodwork." (Tendayi, 04/02/ 2019).

"I love cooking!" (John, 3/ 02/ 2019).

"You can coach children. Whilst you are coaching other children, you might not know what your future holds because you might be called again to coach if you have performed the job well." (Jason youth, 18/ 02/ 2019).

Tsitsi was passionate about the possibility of playing bocce as a professional and working in the laundry department. At the time of the study, she was going for driving lessons. She had this to say about her work aspirations:

"Working in the laundry and to play sports as a career, doing a career in sports whilst I play sports. I also see myself as a driver." (Tsitsi, 3/06/ 2019).

Benjamin enjoyed playing golf and woodwork and he wanted to pursue these as careers. Benjamin also aspired to work as an assistant at a golf course:

"I would like to pick balls at the golf course." (Benjamin youth, 20/10/2019).

From my observations, Benjamin was also good at both golf and woodwork (Journal entry, 21/10/2019). John wanted to

play tag rugby.

The scarcity of work opportunities for youth with intellectual disabilities will be presented in the next section.

There is nothing!

This category reveals that livelihood opportunities for youth who participate in sport were still a concept that needs to be explored. Whilst parents and youth could identify possible potential work opportunities in sport, they had not seen these opportunities becoming available to youth with intellectual disabilities in the Zimbabwean context:

"I've never seen exposure of people with disability, so I had never seen them doing anything of substance. I have heard of one or two athletes, but I don't know how they did their things so that they reach where they are now." (Susan parent, 18/ 02/ 2019).

There was not much recognition for sports for youth with intellectual disabilities:

"I have not yet heard about a lot of fame. I think with time, children with disabilities will get more exposure." (Susan parent, 18/ 02/ 2019)

The youth confirmed that they were not being given work opportunities:

"We are not given any work!" (Tendayi youth, 04/ 02/ 2019).

"There is nothing!" (Jason youth, 18/ 02/ 2019).

"No, I have never been given any work." (Tsitsi, 3/ 06/ 2019)

In contrast, a skills trainer provided examples of youth with intellectual disabilities that he has taught who have managed to find employment:

"Then there are some, like now we have a girl who left here just now who now works at a nursery. There is also a boy who used to work here. The family opened a workshop for him." (Kevin skills trainer, 3/ 06/ 2019)

However, these work opportunities were not directly linked to the youths' sports participation, and they were the exceptions and not the norm. From the observations during the study, the youth were having difficulty securing employment. During the participant observations, there were some work opportunities being offered to youth with intellectual disabilities in sports, but these encounters were few. I observed Joseph who was a research participant and who had been employed by Zimcare Trust. Joseph coached other children with intellectual disabilities in sports as part of his duties. Jason coached other youth with intellectual disabilities on a voluntary basis during sports training. I also observed that at one of the golf courses where the youth with intellectual disabilities train, they employed two individuals with intellectual disabilities who were not part of the study as grounds men. One was employed on a full-time basis

whilst the other one was employed on a part-time basis:

"Well, there is a guy who works for us, you know. He has been with us for a long time. He is responsible for maintaining the golf course, picking up golf balls and preparing the golf course for sports events. He also plays very good golf." (Mason sports manager, 22/ 11/ 2019)

However, the other golf course where youth with intellectual disabilities who participated in the study also train did not employ youths with intellectual disabilities at all. A major difference between the two golf courses was that the manager of the golf course who offered employment to youths with intellectual disability also coached them and had more exposure to, experience and awareness of their capabilities, whereas the other manager had limited exposure to these youths.

The two youths who had been employed at the golf course were recruited because they used to practice golf at that golf course through the Special Olympics programme:

"I guess we sourced them through working with schools that cater for children with special needs. I'm sure you noticed on Thursday that we work with quite a number of schools." (Mason sports manager, 22/ 11/ 2019)

Mason provided proof that work opportunities through sports participation were possible to attain for youth with intellectual disabilities. The youths' capabilities that could have enabled them to access work opportunities are now discussed as follows.

The youths' potential enablers for employability

The youths demonstrated that they had many capabilities which could be useful as work skills. Joseph was a project participant at his school. His hard work and motivation had resulted in him being recognised by his school that employed him as a project participant. He received a small stipend for his work (Journal entry, 20/ 11/ 2018).

While Tendayi was rather passive and required others to direct him for his participation, when he was given an instruction by his skills trainers, he would follow. During a cookery festival to which athletes who were youth with intellectual disabilities were invited, he was asked to watch over the bags of the skills trainers, sports coaches, and other youths. He did this diligently. He also followed instructions in the woodwork workshop where he was being trained (Journal entry, 29/05/ 2019).

Lisa had this to say about her son Tendayi's capabilities:

"He does the cooking every Sunday! He can cook spaghetti, sadza, rice. I get home and he will have cooked for me. He can now shave and bath himself. "He can now wash his clothes, with minimal difficulty" (Lisa, parent, 04/ 02/ 2019)

John was motivated and full of life. He was articulate about his dreams of wanting to become a cook. He worked hard on the sports field, despite having a mild hemiplegia and a limping

gait when he walked and ran. He tried hard to do just as much work, both on the sports field and during vocational training, as other youth with intellectual disabilities who do not have a physical disability. He was also passionate about playing soccer (Journal entry, 3/03/2019). John’s aunt had this to share about his capabilities:

“Yes, he can read! When you give him a book or even a bible, you will not speak to him. If someone likes soccer, he may fail to see or know that he is like this because he talks sense so much that another person who hears him speaking and who does not know his mental state will not know that John is a ‘Downs syndrome.’” (Emily parent, 3/03/2019).

I also noticed that John was surprisingly very articulate and provided abstract reasoning to his answers in the interview (Journal entry, 19/11/2018).

John was functionally mobile as he was able to travel from his home to his school independently. He also had no difficulty with checking the correct change when he paid for his bus fare. John was always punctual to get up in the morning and bath to go to school. Punctuality is an essential attribute to have in a work environment:

“He can go to school by himself! He knows the Maths about his change.” (Emily parent, 3/02/2019)

Susan had this to say about her son’s capabilities:

He is a sociable guy. He knows how to cook. He knows how to bake. He knows how to sew. He knows how to clean the house. He does the garden through and through. He does garden at home. We can eat vegetables from the garden because of him. Like this summer season where people are planting crops, he can plough and even get 2-3 hundred dollars. He will be going to school and at the same time working during the weekend. At home when he is given jobs to plow, he ends up plowing with the other youth in

the neighborhood that do not have jobs. You end up finding them helping him to plow if the money that he is getting is good such that they benefit from learning and from the jobs that he acquires. (Susan, parent, 18/02/2019)

Jason’s contribution towards the family’s food production and income was especially important as Jason’s mother was a widow and unemployed. I also observed Jason’s leadership skills during a soccer training session where he led the warm-up session at their training school. He instructed other youths as to what exercises to do during the warm-up and they followed his instructions (Journal entry, 20/11/2018).

Tsitsi was motivated and goal oriented. At her training school, she was responsible for doing laundry, ironing and packing clothes for other youths. She did her work at the laundry department very diligently and wholeheartedly. She was motivated to achieve in bocce. The opportunity to go to Abu Dhabi to play bocce in the 2019 Special Olympics Games led her to believe that she could achieve more. Tsitsi was able to read. She was going for driving lessons at the time of the study. She had written the provisional driving test three times and failed but her marks kept improving. She could perform activities of daily living such as bathing and grooming independently. She was very articulate in her speech (Journal entry, 2/06/2019).

Benjamin was motivated in what he was being trained in at the vocational training school and in sports. He was being trained in carpentry and he produced a beautiful cup holder. He also won a gold medal at the Special Olympic Games in Dubai in 2019 (Journal entry, 21/10/2019). Mary had this to say of her son:

“Benjamin is able to pack his things nicely and he is actually smarter than his younger brother. He came home with a cup stand that he had made. At home he is able to clean the house and cook. And the garden! He is able to plough the garden and plant vegetables.” (Mary parent, 20/10/2019).

Table 1: Information of youth with intellectual disabilities.

| Pseudo Name | Age and Gender | Duration of Sports Played | Sports Achievements | Work Skills Training | Work Aspirations |
|-------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Joseph | 24, male | Soccer, rugby, golf; 10 years | Received sports prizes at school and represented Zimbabwe in Abu Dhabi in 2019 for playing golf. Won a bronze medal at the Special Olympic games | Project participant at his vocational training centre. Duties include maintenance of the grounds, cleaning, coaching other youth in sports and activities such as dance, music and drumming, assisting younger children with intellectual disabilities to get ready for school, performing errands for the school where he is employed. | To be a professional golfer and work at a golf course as a sports coach. |
| Tendayi | 23, male | Soccer, sitting volleyball; 4 years | Scored goals whilst playing soccer | Training in carpentry and growing vegetables and rearing chickens | To play professional soccer and be a carpenter |
| John | 23, male | Sitting and standing volleyball, soccer; 3 years | | Training in cookery | To be a cook |

| | | | | | |
|----------|------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jason | 25, male | Bocca; 10 years | <p>Won a gold medal locally for athletics and soccer.</p> <p>Won a bronze medal locally for Bocca.</p> <p>Won a bronze medal at the Special Olympics in Abu Dhabi in 2019.</p> | <p>Training in carpentry. Training to make coffins. Receiving training in growing vegetables and rearing chickens</p> | To do agriculture and carpentry |
| Tsitsi | 24, female | Bocca and Athletics; 3 years | <p>Won a gold medal for Bocca in Special Olympic games in Abu Dhabi in 2019.</p> | <p>Training to perform laundry duties</p> | To work in a laundry mat and perform laundry duties, to be a driver and a professional athlete |
| Benjamin | 21, male | Golf; 2 years | <p>Won a bronze medal for golf for Special Olympics in Abu Dhabi in 2019.</p> | <p>Training in carpentry in how to make coffins</p> | To be a carpenter |

The youths' achievements in sport are mentioned in Table 1. At the unified games sponsored by Special Olympics, I made the following observations:

- a) Joseph playing unified golf with a non-disabled youth and their performance was on the same level (Journal entry, 10/11/ 2018).
- b) Jason playing bocce with non-disabled youth and in fact played better than the non-disabled youth.
- c) The interaction between youths with intellectual disabilities and non-disabled youths was good.
- d) Tsitsi conversed well with the non-disabled youths (Journal entry, 4/12/ 2018).

From the above observations, the youths also displayed enormous determination, diligence, and motivation, both in the work skills they were being trained in and in their participation in sports. Coach Nicholas highlighted their capabilities:

"They are capable of working hard," (Nicholas sports coach, 27/ 04/ 2019).

The youths were also capable of being punctual and diligent at work:

"The youth are both very hard working. They come to work on time and having this job means the world to them.

He once had his hand injured but that didn't deter him from playing golf. He still went to play at Moscow and won a medal." (Mason sports manager, 22/ 11/ 2019).

There was a time when one of the training schools did not have water. Tsitsi and other youth that she works with did not let this deter them from performing their laundry duties. They fetched water from the swimming pool and did the laundry. I also noticed that at the training schools, the youths only took breaks when it was a designated break time (Journal entry, 28/06/ 2019).

Skills trainers and sports coaches also attested that youths with intellectual disabilities can grasp work skills:

"If they grasp the work, they do their work properly." (Julian, sports coach, 28/ 05/ 2019)

"Although some of them are slow learners, they are capable that you can actually work with them and make progress with them." (Emilda, skills trainer, 3/ 06/ 2019).

"We have some of our children who can work in the gardens and in the grounds such that you are able to do landscaping with them." (Kevin, skills trainer, 3/06/2019)

The youths also showed signs of maturity and social skills, which are important requisites in work environments. When I would arrive at the training schools, the youths would always ask me whether I needed help and they would greet me. They displayed good manners that sometimes are not seen in non-disabled youth (Journal entry 3/ 03/ 2019). The parents also noticed signs of maturity in their children. Lisa mentioned that she discussed issues of inheritance with her son, namely that he must not give away or sell property when she dies. He was able to show that he remembered and understood what she had said.

"No mama, you told me not to sell" With him he listens. (Lisa, parent, 04/ 02/ 2019).

Lisa's son was also able to notify the mother's support system when she became bed-ridden because she was not feeling well:

"The neighbours reported that they were told by my son that I was not feeling well. I think he is maturing." (Lisa, parent, 04/ 02/ 2019)

When an uncle of Tendayi's mother had a habit of taking her car and not replacing the fuel, Tendayi confronted his uncle. Although Tendayi was blunt when he spoke to his uncle, he understood the concept that his mother was being taken advantage of and he needed to stand up for her:

"When my uncle asks for the car, he will say, "I want to tell you that you do not put fuel, or oil. Where do you think my mother will get the money from?" (Lisa, parent, 04/02/2019).

Emily also acknowledged that her nephew demonstrated maturity because he was able to detect when she was sad and was able to counsel her.

"He is intelligent! If you show him that you are sad, he really knows that you are sad and he just says, "mmm but this person has done wrong." When I am with John, I don't stay quiet or hurt. We really discuss all topics. He can really assist me if I share a problem with him." (Emily, parent, 03/02/2019).

At the cookery festival I also had the privilege of meeting one youth with intellectual disability who had been chosen to be the Sargent Shriver international global ambassador for the youth with intellectual disabilities at the Special Olympics. He would represent the youth with intellectual disabilities at an international platform such as the United Nations and advocate for the needs of youth with intellectual disabilities. A Zimbabwean youth with intellectual disabilities had been identified for his capabilities and was being recognised at such a global level. This youth was articulate and well mannered. He had managed to attain five O' levels after several exam sittings, yet despite his determination and achievements, he was struggling to secure employment. Although he had managed to attain such a high-ranking title, there was not much coverage of his successes in the media.

Discussion

The potential work opportunities that were identified in this study for youth with intellectual disabilities were becoming a professional athlete, referee, coach, and sports commentator. Vending such as selling food items and clothes, becoming a salesman or a till operator and advertising were also found to be potential work opportunities.

The youths with intellectual disabilities had aspired to become professional athletes, sports commentators, and sports coaches as well as drivers, cooks, carpenters and working at laundromats. However, efforts, activities, and support to ensure that the youths' participation in sports was resulting in their livelihoods development were inadequate and as a result, the youths' aspirations remained a dream.

The youths demonstrated that they had capabilities that were potential enablers for employability, including being diligent and motivated. The youth were also able to grasp some concepts of the skills that they were being taught at the vocational training centres and in sports training. They were capable of following instructions and being responsible. They were punctual for work and sports activities, and they could perform instrumental activities of daily living such as cleaning, cooking, and gardening.

The skills that were identified as being learnt through sports participation were coaching, the actual sport being played, refereeing, time management, fitness training, self-confidence,

perseverance, and determination, as well as other skills such as cleaning up shopping malls, cookery, and agriculture. The study also identified that the youths with intellectual disabilities' participation in sports gave them opportunities for social interaction with non-disabled youth, which could be a good platform to build reciprocal relationships so that they can work together in inclusive employment in future.

This study also revealed that although youths were learning important and relevant work skills through participating in sports and sports events, these skills were not translating into work opportunities. Although the youths were attending post-secondary education at the vocational training centres, their training was not resulting in adequate employment opportunities. These findings are in contrast with those of Moore & Schelling [22] who conducted a study in the USA and found that attending post-secondary programmes that focused on vocational training results in significant positive employment outcomes for the youths compared to the youths with intellectual disabilities who do not attend these programmes.

My initial assumptions at the beginning of the study were that youth had limited opportunities for work skills development and employment. These assumptions were confirmed by the findings of the study, which showed that youth with intellectual disabilities did have limited livelihoods development opportunities. McConkey et al. [9] conducted a study on youth with intellectual disabilities who were athletes from the Special Olympics, their parents, sports coaches, partners, and community leaders in five countries, which included Germany, Hungary, Poland, Serbia and Ukraine. Their study related to promoting social inclusion through Unified Sports and they also found that the youth have largely been excluded from formal education and employment. Opoku Mprah, Moitui and Badu [13] also found that people with disabilities in Kenya had a high unemployment rate and generally had limited work opportunities. They advocated that employment is a basic right for everyone, including people with disabilities, and is an important step towards their overall empowerment, independence, social inclusion, and wellbeing. Our findings revealed that youth who participated are disempowered with regards to work opportunities as there seems to be no clear pathway between the skills that they are learning through sports to work opportunities. Lysaght and Jung [23] conducted a study on perspectives on the employment of people with intellectual disabilities in Canada and found that individuals with intellectual disabilities typically have limited opportunities to be engaged in paid work.

The youth had a deep desire to acquire work yet the opportunities for employment in the environment were scarce. Kumin & Schoenbrodt [24] conducted a survey of adults with Down's syndrome in the US to find out their reason for being unemployed and over four times as many people indicated that youths with intellectual disabilities want to work but they are not afforded the opportunities to be gainfully employed. Castillo & Fischer [25] from the US conducted a study on the

self-employment of people with disability in general and discovered that issues to do with unemployment, aspirations of obtaining work and having an opportunity to earn a salary represent people with disabilities' top concerns. Most youths with intellectual disabilities aspire to work, to be independent and achieve financial independence as well as a structured life and meaningful social participation [23]. These aspirations were also evident in this study where the youth expressed needs for livelihoods' development linked to getting married and having their own families.

Although the youth expressed desires to work, they were not empowered regarding how to go about securing work opportunities. Holwerda [26] from the Netherlands commented that the attributes that youths with intellectual disabilities needed were motivation and a high self-esteem that is anchored by family involvement and support [27-29].

Conclusion

In this article, we have offered a description and explanation of the work skills and potential work opportunities youths with intellectual disabilities could gain from participating in sports. We also gave insight into the capabilities of the youth that were potential enablers for employment. Youths with intellectual disabilities were developing skills that were relevant for work through sports participation. However, these skills were not translating to a clear pathway towards the youths' participation in work. Youth with intellectual disabilities were being excluded from work opportunities at sports events and participation was not organized in a manner whereby the sports coaches, skills trainers and sports managers were aiming to enhance the youths' work skills.

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