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A Systematic Review of the Effects of Physical Activity and Sport on the Inclusion of People with Visual Impairment

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Abstract: People who are visually impaired find it more difficult to participate in sports and physical activity, and a lack of social interaction increases the risk of exclusion. Although participation in sports enhances quality of life for persons with a variety of traits, research on how sport affects quality of life for those with visual impairment is still lacking. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceived quality of life of blind goalkeepers and football players and to compare it to that of visually impaired, physically inactive people. People with vision impairment are currently being included in physical activity and sports. Studies addressing the condition and general effectiveness of therapies in the pre- and post-COVID stages are few, nonetheless. This study aims to meet the demand for dissemination on this topic by offering strong data on the features and efficacy of interventions for the inclusion of people with visual impairment through physical activity and sport. The terms "Physical activity," "Physical exercise," "Sport," "Physical training," "visual disability," "visual impairment," and "inclusion" were used in the bibliographic search from 2018 to 2021 in the databases PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The PRISMA methodology was followed in the article selection process, and nine articles were chosen in the end. The key findings showed that the programs increased social skills, health, and social relevance of individuals with disabilities in the social environment. They also improved perception of persons with disabilities. The need for specialized training, the necessity of social inclusion and participation of people with visual impairment in their contexts, and the requirement for increased physical activity were among the most universal conclusions.

Keywords: Physical activity, Physical exercise, visual impairment, general effectiveness, social skills, health, social relevance

Introduction:

The mainstreaming of individuals with disabilities in general is expanding as a result of better public policies and initiatives. International norms like the 2030 Agenda and the Charter on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities support these policies. There were 217 million people with low vision worldwide in 2015, of which 36 million were blind, according to WHO reports. Every five years, the WHO predicts a growth of between 7% and 10%. There will be 277 million people with low vision in 2020, and there will be 587.6 million people in the world by 2050. Estimates for the number of blind people were 38.5 million in 2020 and 114.6 million in 2050. People who are visually impaired experience impairments that limit their ability to perceive their environment, some degree of psychomotor skill development, and some degree of mental, social, and physical health. Visual receptors are essential for information processing, planning and organization, and environmental recognition because 70% of the information that our brains process is visual. This explains why some people with visual impairment have limited opportunities for physical and social growth beginning in childhood. Regardless of the cause of blindness, there is no environmental feedback, affecting psychological health, personal autonomy, attitude, and life in society. There are also various changes in how one perceives their own body in space, changes to how they adjust their bodies, and changes to their basic motor skills. These changes can cause new comorbidities, such as a sedentary lifestyle, which typically results in obesity or being overweight, which adds another risk factor for the cardiovascular and pulmonary systems. Several authors mention the significance of including blind people in exercise programs to prevent the emergence of new pathologies that may affect their state of health, despite the lack of specific studies on the topic.In addition to this circumstance, another common conditioning factor is the population group's limited access to sports programs or targeted exercise, either as a result of inadequate information dissemination or ignorance of architectural facilitators. The implementation of programs and the appropriate prescription of activities or exercises are constrained by the shortage of trained educators and the absence of modified assessment methods to be used with blind individuals. Disability is a derogatory term for the sufferer because it includes impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions, according to the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health. In the case of visual sensory impairment, its commitment is related to the limitation in motor functions like balance, stability, postural control, and muscle strength, among others. This, in

turn, affects their independence and functionality and limits their participation in society as well as their performance in daily activities.

The foundation of visual rehabilitation programs is timely, thorough care that promotes autonomy and functional independence in daily activities; however, the promotion of physical activity and the physical fitness component are not always addressed. People with visual impairment face obstacles to participating in sport, including a lack of institutional support (from public administration, federations, etc.), restrictions in their personal and family environments, and a lack of accessibility for sport environments' information, and issues with the accessibility of sport infrastructures. The term "quality of life" refers to the extent to which one is content with one's family, romantic relationships, social life, outlook on the world, and one's own existence. As a result, each person's quality of life is unique and is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. As a facilitator factor, physical activity is typically linked to higher quality of life. Regular physical activity can promote changes in the physiological, chronic, and acute spectrum, reducing the risk of diseases and positively influencing the quality of life. Health-related quality of life is associated with the ability to live without diseases and with reduced morbidity conditions. From this vantage point, physical activity can be seen as a crucial tool to improve quality of life for individuals of all ages and backgrounds. Indeed, studies have shown that practicing physical activity improves quality of life in a variety of populations, including adolescents, college students, middle-aged women, elderly women, and people with physical disabilities, stroke survivors, MS patients, spinal cord injury patients, and athletes with cerebral palsy. Some studies, however, found no connection between physical activity and the quality of life of those who are physically disabled.The practice of sports helps people with visual impairments socialize because it promotes communication, self-actualization, self-esteem, and autonomy, which value their potentials rather than their limitations. However, it is important to make it easier for those people to regularly practice sports and physical activity. This understanding had inspired the creation of new sports as well as the adaptation of existing ones, such as goalball and blind football, respectively. There is still a knowledge gap regarding the quality of life for athletes with visual disabilities, despite the fact that visual impairment affects between 1 and 6% of the world's population, depending on socioeconomic status, and despite the growing Paralympic Movement being a favorable environment to promote social integration, health, and wellness. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to compare the perceived quality of life of physically inactive people with visual impairment to that of blind football and goal ball players.

Physical Activity as a Factor for Inclusion:

Today, there is no question that sports and physical activity, outside of a competitive model, are crucial to fostering environments that value inclusion, cooperation, and solidarity as well as health. Sports and physical activity provide settings for learning that can, in many cases, be impacted by a disability. These learning environments can support physical, cognitive, and value-based learning. People with visual impairment have historically faced prejudice from society; this prejudice, along with other factors, influences their lack of physical activity.The socio-ecological theory of human behavior must be examined because it places a strong emphasis on how the environment affects the behavior that results. But when discussing sports and disabilities, it's important to consider both the psychological and physical benefits of participation. Physical activity has been shown to be helpful for the development of strong emotional bonds, the improvement of social skills, and/or social reintegration, as was previously mentioned. In this article, we take a closer look at the documents we looked at for sport and physical activity as social inclusion facilitators in a sporting practice shared by people with and without disabilities, adjusting to the participants' capabilities and maintaining the goal of the relevant sporting speciality.

Physical Activity in People with Visual Impairment:

According to various studies, people who are blind exhibit less physical activity and a greater decline in their health than people who are visually impaired. This population experiences difficulties primarily with motor tasks that call for strength and speed, two characteristics of physical activity that raise the risk of chronic disease development (WHO). Regular physical activity has been found to improve functional independence, reduce the risk of falls, and enhance social relationships, all of which contribute to a higher quality of life for adults with blindness who are four times more likely than people with adequate vision to be impaired in performing activities of daily living and five times more likely to have limited mobility. People with disabilities may not be aware of the advantages of physical activity, and they may also experience ongoing external barriers as a result of societal barriers and prejudices. For instance, Henderson et al. found that perceived attitudes, stereotypes, and prejudices frequently prevented a group of women with physical disabilities from participating in sports. In fact, it can be said that the main reason people with disabilities don't engage in physical activity is because of how society views them. This social perception ultimately undermines the motivation of this group, which many psychologists concur is an internal factor that fuels and guides human behavior in the realm of sport and

physical activity. The study of this internal factor enables us to understand why some people choose to engage in certain activities and not others, the factors that influence this choice, and the factors that determine whether they continue in these activities or stop doing them. Especially in the area of physical activity, research on blind people is clearly lacking. The insecurity of not being able to see their surroundings and the influence of other socio-demographic factors like age, gender, and type of blindness have been shown to cause people with blindness to be less physically active than sighted people, even with the scant published evidence. Sedentary behaviors, such as watching television, listening to music, and other activities that don't require a lot of energy expenditure, are noticeable in the daily activities of blind people. They also increase their caloric intake while engaging in these activities, which results in the comorbidities mentioned above.Although the aforementioned behaviors are already present in this population, it is important to remember that blind people share many of the same physical capabilities as sighted people. The main difference is that due to acquired or congenital changes in the visual system, blind people exhibit a limitation for learning. To avoid ignoring the motivation towards motor activity due to the fear of the unknown, which can result in the rejection of the practice of physical activity, it is necessary to look for other learning strategies based on the experimentation of other information channels, such as the tactile, auditory, proprioceptive, kinaesthetic, and affective senses. Research on the reality of including people with visual impairment in both educational and sporting environments with regard to physical activity and sport is currently lacking.

Materials and Methods:

Search Strategy:

The study was registered on the PROSPERO platform under registration number 299,414 and adhered to the PRISMA protocol checking list. Based on studies found in the PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases that were published in journals with English as the main or secondary language, this systematic review of the impact of physical activity and sport for the inclusion of people with visual impairment was conducted. Physical activity, physical exercise, physical training or sport, inclusion, and visual impairment were the search terms, and a synthesis of these operators was always used to locate related articles. The PRISMA protocol's guidelines were followed during the article selection procedure.

Eligibility Criteria:

Any empirical, conceptual, or peer-reviewed perspective was covered in this scoping review. The involvement of persons with visual impairment with sport as a mediating element is specifically addressed in the chosen research.The first search yielded a total of 2539 articles. A temporal filter was applied to this selection of articles, taking only those published between 2018 and 2021. The eligibility criteria established followed the quality criteria are detailed below:

- ✓ Peer-reviewed publications, final papers, theses, systematic reviews, and dissemination documents (341) were subtracted, leaving 2198 articles;
- ✓ 1322 articles remained after removing the 876 duplicates found throughout the various databases;
- ✓ 579 articles remained after removing the 743 articles for which just the abstract was available;
- ✓ After applying the final filter, which required that at least the abstract be written in English, 251 articles remained.

Two researchers (A.M. and G.F.) examined the publications that met the eligibility requirements during the literature review and evaluated the study titles and abstracts for relevance to the current work's research goal. Following this final section, a total of 9 articles that met all the eligibility requirements were examined and thoroughly analyzed.

Data Analysis:

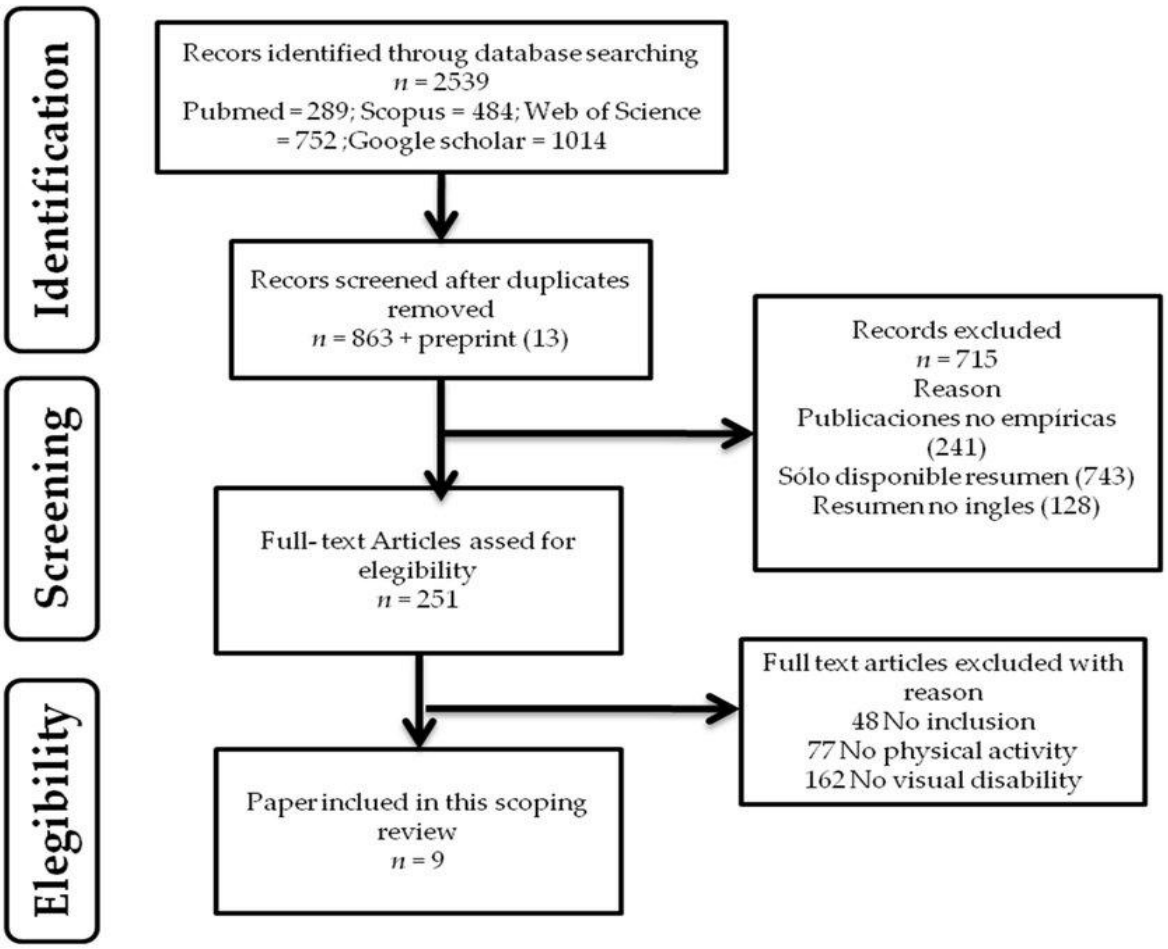
Traditional content analysis was used to analyze the primary studies' text data. Following repeated review of the outcomes, the key codes were identified and divided into various groups based on how similar they were.

Synthesis of Results:

The fundamental and central ideas addressed were included in an interpretative quadrant that was designed for this synthesis. The review texts that were fully available for analysis were used to complete this qualitative synthesis. The analysis of all the data and findings from the publications in this case revealed that the same topics and material were covered. Particularly, because they were irrelevant to the research purpose it, quantitative data were not numerically aggregated with data from other quantitative papers.Finally, the synthesis explicitly mentioned some study features, demographics, or any numerical findings when applicable. This

helped the reader distinguish whether the reported material came from empirical or viewpoint pieces. As stated in the study protocol, we then performed a last round of consultation using an early version of the findings and their analysis.

Results:



Above Figure provides the flowchart of this review and how it transitioned from 2539 initial references to the nine articles included in the final analysis

Thematic Analysis: General Description:

Thematic analysis of the examined literature revealed many sorts of advantages and impacts of sport and physical activity programs on inclusion and social involvement in the proposal's immediate and local area.Participation in physical activity as a factor in improving physical health and enhancing social skills through sport were two of the key themes discussed. The issue of accessibility and availability to leisure-time sport activities was a recurrent concern. The lack of disability inclusive responses and preparedness for the care of people with disabilities, the drawbacks of physical activity before and during the pandemic, emergencies, and the drawbacks faced by those with visual impairment were the central issues that all of these themes ultimately stemmed from.

Primary Themes:

The primary topics covered in the articles analyzed were school physical education as a factor of inclusion, professional specialization as a means of inclusion, club and association sports programs, health improvement through inclusion, and improvement of psychosocial factors through participation in physical sport.

School Physical Activity as a Factor of Inclusion:

Physical education for inclusion aims to include students into socialization and integrated education as well as the system. Not only is it inclusion in education, but inclusive education as well. Exclusion from the classroom and from sporting events is the fault of educational institutions and professionals. The perception is that the school doesn't change despite the fact that the context is always shifting. There is a notion that learners are not feeling empowered since teachers and professionals lack the means to respond to these developments. Students who experience visual educational hurdles lack the tools necessary to participate in class and are thus excluded by their peers and even the teacher. It has been determined that ignorance of the topic is what has led to this reality. Both students and teachers are ignorant of the inclusion of and the characteristics of people with impairments. Raising awareness makes things simpler and more logical.

Inclusion in Physical Activity as an Element of Barrier Removal:

One of the most important components of a healthy existence is regular physical activity. So that they can also enjoy the physical and social benefits, barriers that impede children and young people with disabilities from being more active must be removed. The majority of young people and children with visual impairments wish to engage in more sport and physical exercise, but lack motivation as a result of accessibility issues. To address this requirement, it is crucial to give clubs, sporting facilities, and families the support they need. Sports organizations should broaden their offerings and improve their appeal to kids and teenagers with disabilities. At the same time, parents and their kids need to be informed about the importance of proper programs. One way to do this is by encouraging collaboration between special schools and sports teams. Professional coaches should also make a bigger effort to educate parents about the advantages of sports and their positive impacts in order to allay their worries about their child doing organized sports.

Sports Programmes of Clubs and Associations:

Most visually impaired people experience feelings of exclusion occasionally when participating in sports and physical exercise. At comparison to adults, children and teenagers in educational institutions face an additional element of helplessness because of the possibility of rejection there. Participants with vision impairment in clubs must be independent and in charge of the support they want or need for inclusion to be genuine. Sports participation motivation is increased when individuals are in environments that value autonomy, mastery, and higher levels of enjoyment. Those with visual impairment or other disabilities may feel excluded if the environment does not foster diversity awareness or mastery experiences among a diverse group of people.It is crucial to consider how to modify how physical activity and sport are constructed in response to needs rather than excluding those who are different if we view disability as the result of the interaction between personal characteristics and environmental factors, as in the interaction approach to disability.

Improving Inclusion with Trained Professionals:

Sports, physical education, and inclusive physical activity all largely rely on professional training. In the case of the articles that were analyzed, the emphasis was on the viewpoint of students with disabilities and how they saw the teachers' and coaches' involvement in sport and physical activities. Students with visual impairment believe that while their participation in sports and physical activities is not lacking, it may be made better with teacher preparation.

They also believe that educational institutions do not offer the material resources and assistance for inclusion in this subject, which are essential elements to carry it out. The teacher's curriculum changes are essential for the students to be able to participate without exclusion. In order to promote the inclusion of all students, it is important to consider the processes of sensitizing the entire educational community in general. Participants with visual impairment feel that they are accepted and included in the educational activities by small groups of peers rather than as a whole. Sports involvement is crucial for those who are visually impaired, especially for reasons of health, beauty, and enjoyment. These individuals are aware of the significance and advantages of physical activity for the holistic development of the human being. Although there have been changes in the area of inclusion recently, these changes have been gradual, and there are still many issues that need to be resolved, particularly those that prevent educational inclusion, such as a lack of professional development, a lack of access to the right materials, and a lack of awareness, among others.

Improving Psychosocial Factors through Physical Exercise:

People with multiple disabilities are more likely to feel rejected because of the lack of accessibility in facilities, activities, and physical activity and sports programs, which makes visually impaired people feel less accepted and accommodated because they cannot perform like the other participants. The fact that the people who work with them as technicians and those who participate in the activity have an attitude and an interest in

the understanding of persons with disabilities is something that visually impaired people respect as an element of inclusion. Another issue is that experts have knowledge of and control over the exercise performed. Personal propensity as a key enabler of social achievement and the removal of exclusionary factors are added to them. According to self-determination theory, these qualities go hand in hand with the requirements for physical proficiency, individual autonomy, and interpersonal affinity (kinship or friendship). People with visual impairment will be more motivated if they feel included in the activities and there are satisfying interpersonal interactions that meet their individual needs for respect for their abilities, independence, and interpersonal relationships—all of which are essential components of social inclusion.

Improving Health through Inclusion:

When persons with disabilities do not engage in adequate and optimal physical exercise and sport, their health deteriorates; conversely, greater accessibility enhances the health of those with visual impairment. These findings ought to motivate both public and private organizations to create programs that support the health of those with disabilities.

Discussion:

Here the terms inclusive education and educational inclusion interchangeably when referring to physical education because it aims to include students not only in the system but also in socialization and integral training. Because educational institutions and professionals fail to take into account the unique qualities and needs of students with visual impairment, these students are excluded from classroom settings and sporting events. The environment of the classroom and society are constantly changing, but students with visual impairments believe that their attention is fixed in place. Teachers also believe that students lack awareness and training because they lack the resources to adapt to these changes. Due to lack of resources, students with visual educational barriers are excluded in different ways by their classmates and even by the teacher because the latter is unaware of the circumstances underlying the exclusion.Students without disabilities and specialized teachers lack awareness of inclusion and the traits of people with disabilities, but everything is simpler and easier with adequate training. One of the key components of a healthy lifestyle is regular exercise, and in order for people with visual impairment to benefit from these physical and social aspects, barriers must be eliminated or diminished and the opportunity to be more active must be provided. People who are blind or visually impaired want to participate in more physical activity and sport in their free time, but they lack the motivation to do so because of institutional and social barriers to accessibility. To meet this need, it is crucial to give clubs, sports facilities, and families the support they need. Sports clubs should offer a wider variety of physical activities to appeal to all individuals with visual impairment. Additionally, coordination is required between organizations, including special education facilities, organizations that provide disability care, and others. Because they are unable to participate like the other participants due to a lack of accessibility in facilities, activities, and physical activity and sports programs, visually impaired people feel less accepted and accommodated. Negative social treatment also affects those who have multiple disabilities.

Conclusion:

Compared to people without disabilities, those who have visual impairments engage in less physical activity and sports. When a person is blind, this situation is made worse, which lowers their level of physical activity and social interaction through sport and exercise.

As long as there are social policies that allow people to have optimal access to sport in school, leisure time, and performance, visual impairment should not be a barrier to people engaging in physical activity. Blindness need not be a barrier to practicing physical activity; on the contrary, it is important to take into account any obstacles that may prevent these individuals from engaging in physical activity. In this sense, the blind person can only feel more competent and autonomous in the sports environment when they believe they are capable of performing new physical exercises on their own, without the assistance of a sports guide. All facets of a person with visual impairment's quality of life are positively correlated with participation in sports. As a result, appropriate sporting activities will improve the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs and the quality of life for those participating. Throughout the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced billions of people into social exclusion, isolation, or quarantine. The weakness of this study is that no document has been created that addresses these limitations in this population. Compliance with these measures results in public health issues related to decreased physical activity, increased sedentary lifestyles, and a psychological impact associated with the state of uncertainty in the case of people with visual impairment and the possibility of physical activity was reduced.The lack of research on physical activity and sports among people with visual impairment and their significance in enhancing quality of life and both physical and psychosocial health was partially addressed by the proposal of this study. In order to advance and improve the social inclusion of people

with visual impairment through physical activity and sport, it is considered crucial to continue researching this topic. Furthermore, it is proposed here that participation in sport and physical activity has an amplified impact on people with visual disabilities' perceptions of their quality of life because those individuals' accessibility to basic social services is typically harmed. Future research with a similar methodology that assesses and contrasts individual and team sports is advised.The objective of this review was to use document analysis to find, examine, and suggest physical activity and sport-related policies to encourage the social inclusion of people with visual impairment. There is proof that participating in physical activity and sports can help with social inclusion, mental health, and physical fitness. Therefore, it should be a top priority to adhere to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Charter on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which emphasize the importance of giving special attention to vulnerable populations like people with disabilities. It is advised that people with visual impairment prioritize physical activity over other groups in the general population. This includes adopting new strategies that promote physical activity in the current environment. Future studies may therefore focus on issues such as how physical activity and sport in all of its forms can improve people's quality of life, physical health, and psychosocial well-being, among other things.

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