

The Benefits of Having Children With Disabilities Play Sports: A Literature Review

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I. INTRODUCTION

Physical activity is essential to a healthy lifestyle. It is highly recommended to exercise at all stages of life. There are many positive effects of physical activity, especially for children. As they develop and grow, it is important to continually demonstrate the benefits of staying active. The most common way to help children stay active is by playing sports. The valuable aspect of sports is not only the physical aspect but also the many other benefits that emerge, like social skills, psychological benefits, and life lessons, including the importance of sportsmanship, teamwork, and winning and losing. Children can gain an abundance of information when playing sports that help them throughout their lives.

While sports are vital for all children, there is a population that benefits from them even more. Children with disabilities are often overlooked and not thought of when it comes to sports. However, the benefits that sports contribute to a child with disabilities are astronomical and can change their lives. In Chapter VII of *Researchers in Education* by Turan Başkonuş (2023), he states, “Sports and physical activities act as therapeutic and rejuvenating instruments, aiding in the mental, physical, emotional and social growth of individuals with special needs” (page 120). There are many positive effects of sports for children with disabilities, including physically, socially, psychologically, and within their community. The specific research question that will be addressed is: What are the benefits of having children with disabilities play sports?

Overview of Study

This review of the literature will contain information from academic journals, articles, and books to understand the benefits of having children with disabilities play sports. This study will analyze the information found in over twelve sources. It will focus on areas such as the social, physical, psychological, and societal benefits. Furthermore, this study will analyze the

data found for each focus area and provide multiple examples of the benefits of having children with disabilities play sports.

Purpose of the Study

This thesis aims to critically analyze the literature to determine the benefits of having children with disabilities play sports. Often, children with disabilities are seen differently in society in a negative way. They aren't able to do the same things as their typically developing peers, which often causes dismissal of their potential and can create negative connotations of their capabilities. If given the opportunities to improve their skills in a competitive atmosphere, they will not only see physical and personal growth, but it "...tends to modify how other people see them. They are no longer physically or mentally limited people, they become full-fledged athletes" (Roult et al, 2015, p. 5). These children are athletes in their own eyes and being able to be seen that way by others is motivational. They are no longer defined by their disability but by their passion and activity.

For these children to be included in society is immensely important for their social and emotional well-being. Their physical well-being is also necessary, which is another aspect of sports that children with disabilities benefit from. This thesis will compile all the benefits of sports and the importance of participating in sports for children with disabilities. There is no one disability or sport that was focused on in this thesis. Instead, many different sports and disabilities are talked about in order to analyze the wide range of present literature. The examples and information collected will be used to emphasize the significance of sports for children with disabilities.

Definitions

Disability: “... any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions)” (CDC, 2024).

Intellectual Disability: “...when a person has certain limitations in cognitive functioning and skills, including conceptual, social and practical skills, such as language, social and self-care skills. These limitations can cause a person to develop and learn more slowly or differently than a typically developing person” (Special Olympics, 2023).

Sedentary: “...a lifestyle with a lot of sitting and lying down, with very little to no exercise” (MedlinePlus, 2020).

Child with special needs: “...an outdated term for a child with disabilities who requires special education, specialized healthcare, or other functional needs or services. Such children may have developmental, learning, intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional, and/or behavioral disabilities” (APA, 2023).

Limitations

The limited amount of databases provided by the Anna Maria College library made it difficult to conduct an accurate and exemplary study. Some sources would be outdated or unable to be accessed through interlibrary loan or not available at all. It was also only based on secondary sources, as a study was not able to be conducted. Another limitation was the time constraint, as this thesis must be completed within a semester. Lastly, it was difficult to find comparable combinations of keywords. Using three words/phrases that had to be changed one at a time to keep similarity between sources was hard to find the right sources to benefit the thesis.

II. METHODOLOGY

The information used to create this thesis came from databases provided by Anna Maria College library. Databases included in this research paper were Google Scholar and Gale Academic OneFile. The majority of sources were found using Google Scholar because it has a wide range of sources from many different databases. Different terms were used to search for the information used in this thesis. Different combinations of the following words/phrases were used to find the most relevant information: “positive effects,” “benefits,” “sports,” “special needs children,” “children with disabilities,” “mental benefits,” and “emotional benefits.” No specific sport or disability was searched, so a broad array of sources could be reviewed.

After an initial search with the above terms, inclusion criteria were provided to allow for the most relevant and consistent sources to be reviewed. To begin, peer-reviewed and full-text articles were required, if applicable, to ensure that all information was available and trustworthy. Most importantly, all articles had a publication date of 2013 to present, so that all information was most up-to-date and could be relevant to today. The focus was to interpret the benefits of sports on children, so any articles about adults or anyone over the age of 25 were not used. Articles that were not peer-reviewed, not full-text, published before 2013, and contained participants over 25 years of age were excluded from the research.

After accounting for all the inclusion criteria, the number of articles did diminish, however, it allowed for the most relevant information and data for my thesis, and there was an abundance of information. However, some of these articles only were abstracts, and Anna Maria College did not have access to the databases so we could not use the information that was found. These articles most likely could have been provided, however the time constraints of finishing this thesis in one semester did not allow for waiting for certain articles. Limitations for this thesis

included the databases provided by Anna Maria College and the time constraint of one semester to finish the research and writing of the paper. (See Figure 1 in the Appendix).

III. RESULTS

More than 1 billion people with disabilities live worldwide (Ayyildiz et al., 2024) and nearly 240 million of them are children (UNICEF data, 2024). Not all disabilities are the same, and not one person with the same disability is affected in the same way. Each child must be taken care of individually and be given the chance to succeed. Oftentimes, negative perspectives are created about children with disabilities, and they are not given the same chances as their typical developing peers. It is important that these children are given guidance and the opportunities to be seen within their communities.

One way that children develop a variety of skills is through playing sports. While sports may not be for everyone, there are an abundance of benefits, and most children have played at least one sport in their lives. Unfortunately for those with disabilities, sports are not as common for them. It can be difficult to find an inclusive sports program for children with disabilities, however the benefits are astounding. This literature review analyzes the different benefits of having children with disabilities play sports. Physical benefits are the most obvious since you are being physically active. It is especially necessary for children with disabilities to be physically active, and sports are a great way to do this. The social benefits are another crucial area of focus of sports. Children with disabilities are not often social in school or could be isolated in the community, so it is important that they are socializing with peers just like them, different ages than them, and those who are typically developing. The psychological benefits of sports are probably the most important but often most overlooked. The positive emotional and mental effects that sports have on a child with disabilities are astronomical and extremely vital to the child's development. Finally, the societal benefits of having children with disabilities play sports is encouraging. Not only do sports help those playing them, but there are also those involved or watching from the outside that are positively impacted.

Physical Benefits

Children with disabilities are encouraged to be physically active as much as possible. There have been studies that show children with disabilities are less physically active than children without disabilities resulting in a sedentary lifestyle. If a child is less active and creates habits of a sedentary lifestyle, then they are more likely to continue those habits into adulthood. A sedentary lifestyle of disabled individuals can cause higher health problems, so it is important to make sure children with disabilities are staying active (Ayyildiz et al., 2019). Sports are a great way for them to stay active while also having fun. “A number of positive effects of PA [physical activity] in persons with intellectual disability (ID) include improvements in general health, such as physical fitness, bone metabolism, increased cardiovascular and respiratory muscle functions, and the control/prevention of obesity and coronary artery disease” (Scifo et al., 2019, p. 1). If children with disabilities, specifically intellectual disabilities in this article, are not getting the right amount of physical activity it could create an increase in health problems.

Research also shows a close relationship between physical activity and brain development. This includes information processing, working memory, planning and behavior control strategies (Scifo et al., 2019). Children with disabilities may have difficulty in the area of cognitive functioning so it is a different or more fun way for them to work on these skills rather than through academics. Playing sports will allow them to use these skills in other ways, resulting in the development of the child’s skills improving. It will enhance these skills in a different setting and allow them to be physically active as well.

In a capstone and thesis project at California State University, Monterey Bay, author Dori Powers (2014) writes about sports equality for children with special needs. They touch on many different topics, but specifically they do touch upon the physical benefits for children with special needs who play sports. They mention the importance of gross and fine motor skills that

sports provide children outside of the classroom. These skills are essential for all children's development, furthermore, playing sports will enhance these even more. The motor skills that the children learn from sports can be used throughout their daily life. If they are practicing them every day or many times a week, their muscle memory will increase, as well as their strength. The ability to do these tasks daily will improve the child's development, will learn to grow, and overall create a healthier lifestyle.

These gross motor skills are important to gain muscle and keep the body moving. Sports are also able to "...enhance their balance, confidence, muscle control, mobility, and coordination abilities" when it comes to children with disabilities (Başkonuş, 2023, p 120). Being able to kick the ball or run the bases requires control of their muscles, balance and coordination so that the ball is going in the right direction, or they are not running into anyone. These skills can often be taught and practiced at home, however, a child with disabilities is going to be more invested to playing a sport and not even realize all the positive effects it is having on them. Being able to play games with friends, be outside or in a different environment and most importantly have fun, will build the child's confidence and make them enjoy the physical activity instead of it being forced upon. It will also provide them an opportunity to socialize and build their social skills while participating in sports.

Social Benefits

Another major benefit of sports, is the ability to socially interact with children that are similar and different than they are. Social skills and cues are often difficult for children with disabilities, so being able to practice these in an environment that is fun and competitive can be extremely useful to them. Sports get rid of the narrow worlds that these individuals are often limited too and contribute to establishing and reinforcing friendships and social cohesion. One

study compared individuals with intellectual disabilities who did sports to those who did not, and results found that those who participated in sports exhibited more social behaviors (Kizar et al., 2015). These studies are important, because they create data that be used to show how sports are able to benefit children with disabilities.

Adapting to social life can be difficult, especially for children with disabilities who communicate with their peers in unique ways or not at all. Participating in sports is a great way to ease into their social interactions with peers that are similar and different than they are. Sports allow personal development and builds self-confidence which children with disabilities often lack because of their limitations seen by society. Sports “...serve as a platform for social engagement, facilitating connections, fostering friendships...” (Başkonuş, 2023, p. 121). Organized sports, especially, are a guide to social interactions and can help facilitate conversation and create lasting friendships. They work as a great foundation for children with disabilities to try new things and connect with new people. Children with disabilities that play sports “... adapt to their social environment and to feel dynamic and strong both spiritually and physically” (Başkonuş, 2023, p. 121). They are able to feel stronger physically and within themselves. Their confidence will increase, resulting in a better overall sense of self. Sports contain many values for children with and without disabilities. Some of the most valuable life skills include teamwork, cooperation, and mutual support (Başkonuş, 2023). These skills may be learned in sports; however they can be used throughout daily life. It’s important that children with disabilities learn these skills and if they don’t play sports, they would not have the opportunity to grow these skills and be able to interact with their typically developing peers.

In a study conducted in Malaysia, researchers surveyed teachers who were involved in the Buddy Support System, a sport intervention program for children with special education

needs (SEN). “These findings suggest that teachers perceived students’ acceptance by classmates as the most important construct on social inclusion for students with SEN” (Adams, 2017, p 695). Children with disabilities are often left out or seen negatively through the eyes of their typically developing peers. Being able to participate in sports with classmates that were different was important for them. They weren’t seen as a student with disabilities, but instead a student. The study also found “...that the strongest relationship is between the benefits of the Buddy Support System on students’ social inclusion” (Adams, 2017, p. 696). Inclusivity is vital for a child’s emotional well-being, especially children with disabilities. There are times throughout the school day where they may have to be pulled out of the classroom, or need extra help on assignments that create more eyes on them that they don’t necessarily want. If able to participate in sports with their typically developing peers, they are able to just be a kid and participate with their friends in a fun way.

Additionally, children with disabilities will develop problem solving skills, interpersonal skills and learn social cues (Powers, 2014). It’s important that these children are able to gain these skills and being able to practice them in a different environment, outside of school is even more beneficial. There are many situations in school, in which they will need to learn and practice these skills. On the other hand, it is just as important, if not more, to practice them outside of school and in society. Oftentimes, they are not able to have as many opportunities to socialize as their typically developing peers and sports is a great way to add these skills into their everyday lives. A study by Scifo et al. (2019) found that, “Individuals with ID [intellectual disability] who regularly attended SIP’s [sport intervention programs] reported having higher opportunities for social interaction and more frequent outings in the community than sedentary peer” (p. 15,16). Social inclusion was a benefit that resulted from this study as well as functional

independence. Children with disabilities are often waited on by others or have limited independence, so if sports allow them to have some independence even just for an hour a day their overall health will be of higher quality. Social interactions are fundamental for all children and is a major part of their development. Especially for children with disabilities, social interactions are a valuable skill that sports can help develop.

Special Olympics is one of the most well-known competitive programs for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID). Activities run by the Special Olympics “...facilitate individuals with ID to practice their social skills, learn the norm of the peer group and maintain friendships and thus enhance social competence” (Özer et al., 2015, p 236). They use sports to develop these skills and let the individuals feel like an athlete. They are able to participate in a wide variety of sports, no matter than skill level, while also being able to work on social skills. A study to learn the effects of a Special Olympics Unified Sports soccer program, found that that those who participated in the unified sports program compared to the control group who did not, challenged their social capacities and therefore increased their perception of social competence. This opportunity provided them with the ability to find friends and establish social relationships (Özer et al., 2015). Sports allow children with disabilities to interact socially with many different individuals that can relate to them and that cannot. It is a great opportunity for them to develop many social skills that they may not have the opportunity to increase if sports were not a part of their daily lives.

Psychological Benefits

Physical and social benefits are very important for the development of a child, however one of the most important benefits that is often overlooked is the psychological benefits, which include the emotional, mental, and overall well-being of the child. Turan Başkonuş (2023)

mentions in his chapter from *Researcher in Education*, “Participation in sports...notably influences mental well-being” (page 119). Children with disabilities can face various psychological challenges and being able to cope with them and manage the many feelings that are brought up can be difficult. Research shows the many benefits to a child’s mental health by playing sports. They are able to formulate an identity and pursuit individual autonomy (Başkonuş, 2023). These values of oneself are important for a child’s develop and will influence their view of themselves, whether positive or negative. Sports will allow more opportunity to create positive outlooks on life and within themselves. Sports also trigger various emotions including discipline, competition, and camaraderie, thereby contributing to a great sense of growth and emotional well-being (Başkonuş, 2023). These emotions may not be seen often in school or in their daily lives, so it’s essential for children with disabilities to play sports so they are able to practice these skills.

According to Kizar et al. (2015), “Playing games, children can develop their creative thinking and creative potential, and recognize the world around them more easily, and this way become more interested, talkative, and friendly” (p. 3). Children are always playing games in school because there are so many benefits to them socially and creatively. The same thing goes for sports. Children with disabilities need the opportunity to play sports so they are able to use those creative parts of their brain to think of the rules and how to play the game. If it is not a structured game, they may be able to create their own rules as well and make a new game that everyone can play together. With the help of sports, they are able to use creative thinking to develop creative ideas. If they are able to have a say in the game they play, they are going to be more interested and excited to play the sports. This will result in them being more talkative and creating more opportunities to make friends and overall feel self-confident. In the Special

Olympics unified sports program study, results were found that borderline behaviors of the individuals in the control group and the manipulative group were better than the beginning of the study. The individuals that participated in the unified soccer program and those that did not saw a positive increase in behaviors (Özer et al., 2015).

Children with disabilities are facing challenges each and every day. They endure bullying in and out of school and society sees them inferior to their typically developing peers. Sports are able to create a safe place for them to escape from these obstacles that they face in their daily lives. Based on research done by Roult et al. (2015), the preparation process that the students are enduring makes them feel like regular teenagers. It builds their self-esteem and allows them to feel like their typically developing peers. A data analysis from a study done in Quebec, Canada found that, "...if youth know they are attending an inclusive sporting event soon, they tend to be more diligent and focused during school-based physical activities, and for a whole month leading up to the event" (Roult et al., 2015, p.13). This study interviewed school-based practitioners that worked alongside or in designing events that included youth with disabilities. These educators could see the differences in the children that participate in sports. Not only could they see these physical changes in their academics, but their moods were happier, and they were able to gain social skills while participating in sports. When participating at the event, students were filled with pride and enjoyment. It was something really special for them because they don't often experience anything like it. They were able to be seen as athletes and not children with disabilities. Practitioners that were interviewed could see how much more focused in school these students were and how excited they were to talk about their sports. Those that were given trophies or medals at their events were announced as champions in school the following day. Their trophies were shown to the whole school, they got printed jerseys, and had an

announcement on the intercom system. They were being treated like the other students in their school (Roult et al., 2015). These children were beyond excited to be treated like the other kids in their school. Their emotional well-being increased significantly because of the positive attention they were being shown. Children with disabilities want to be seen as athletes, students, and most importantly people. Playing sports is an incredible way for these children to gain all these benefits.

The ability for children to understand their own potential is an essential skill for children with disabilities. With all the negative stigmas that are often seen in society or the challenges they must face in their daily lives, it is crucial for them know just how unique they are. By playing sports, they are able to develop their self-confidence (Powers, 2014). When they are able to see it within themselves just how amazing they are, they will shine a whole new light on their lives. Their self-esteem is going to increase as well as their concept of self-actualization (Powers, 2014). If they really enjoy the sport they play, they will be enthusiastic about it and enjoy going to practices and games. It won't be seen as something that they have to do in order to stay in shape, or because their teachers, parent or doctor told them they had too. If they are able to have a say in what sport they play while also having fun, their mental and emotional well-being will improve tremendously.

Societal Benefits

As stated in this chapter already, the benefits of having children with disabilities play sports is astounding. It is critical to look at these key elements that children with disabilities will gain if they play sports, however, on the other hand, it is important to take a look at what it can do for a community, economy and society overall. While children with disabilities are learning life skills while playing sports, or participating in physical education, typically developing

children are also learning from their peers. Dori Powers (2014) states, "...our non-disabled students are learning how to interact appropriately with these students. They too can learn from these students about how to be encouraging and accepting to anybody of any ability" (p. 15). Society often has negative connotations to people with disabilities, so if we can teach students when they are young to accept one another and treat people with respect, it will hopefully follow them through adulthood. Children's brains are still developing throughout their childhood, so it is important to fill them with as much information as possible, because it's easier for them to learn and remember when they are kids than when they are older.

Research has shown that typically developing children are better able to socially integrate and their attitudes are more positive towards their peers with disabilities. In the study that compared children with and without disabilities who participated and did not participate in the Special Olympics unified soccer program, found that the attitudes of those without intellectual disabilities (ID) improved throughout the experiment (Özer et al., 2015). The students without ID who participated alongside students with ID, had better attitudes compared from the beginning of the study than at the end. Being able to play sports with their peers allowed them to get to know them and create a bond with them. They were not seen as the kid with disabilities, but instead their teammate and classmate.

Another study also showed the effects that sports have on a community. Results from a study done by Çağrı Çelenk (2021) showed that "The students participating in the study also gave answers showing that sports are a tool that provides social integration within and between societies" (p. 9). In this study, he included 732 physically disabled individuals, 327 did sports and the remaining did not. The students were able to realize the impact that sports have not only on themselves, but all of those around them. The ability to share something with the community

is priceless and is one of the most exceptional feelings in the world. Sports can create this bond between children with disabilities and their community.

The ability for children with disabilities to play sports is extremely beneficial for their families as well as themselves. In the article written by Roulton et al. (2015), he mentions that families may consider themselves stigmatized due to their child's disability, however when their children are participating in sports, they are able to feel valued and truly supported. A parent's hope for their child is that they are safe, respected, and taken care of. These worries are magnified when their child has a disability because of bullying and negative views in society, so for them to be able to have their child feel included and just like the other kids, is a huge accomplishment for them. This article also mentions the impact it has on typically developing peers and their views on children with disabilities. Roulton (2015) states "On one hand, pupils with a disability felt included and valued, and on the other hand, regular pupils faced new challenges and became more sensitized to the realities of their peers with special needs" (p. 11). Playing modified sports with their peers, allowed them to experience some of the challenges that their peers face on an everyday basis. It taught them to be more respectful of their peers and realize that they have difficulties even if it is not on the surface. In school announcements of children with disabilities accomplishments, also brought awareness to the incredible achievements these individuals were attaining that they may not have been made aware of. Their families and peers are impacted by the sports they play in positive ways.

Not only are sports able to connect children with disabilities to their communities but they also can provide connections internationally. There are programs, like the Special Olympics, that provide the ability to play sports for children with intellectual disabilities worldwide. Creating a foundation nationally and then expanding it internationally can create an

undeniable number of opportunities for children with disabilities. Their self-confidence and self-resilience are going to increase. Even in smaller programs, children with disabilities are able to meet children from out of their district, state, region and sometimes even country. Başkonuş (2023) writes, “Participation in sports activities helps individuals with special needs grasp the fundamental of cooperation, sharing, and social integration within the framework of societal relationships” (p. 121,122). Society can be hard to navigate for anybody, so it is important to have a foundation where children can learn these skills in an enjoyable environment where they will not be harmed. When participating in these sports, communities are promoting inclusivity which in turn benefits families, business environments and the society that they live in (Başkonuş, 2023). Playing sports for children with disabilities is enjoying and beneficial for them. They don’t realize the dramatic impacts they are having on the society around them, but they are certainly there.

IV. DISCUSSION

Sports provide an exceptional number of benefits for all that participate. Specifically, children with disabilities can gain a number of positive effects from playing sports. Children with disabilities are often seen in society in a negative way; however, they are not much different than anyone else and deserve the same opportunities. Physical education in schools can be difficult for children with disabilities because the physical education teachers are not specifically trained to accommodate all disabilities. While adapting their lessons can be financially difficult and be faced with material and technical obstacles, it is important for them to find the ability to do so (Roult, 2015). According to Başkonuş (2023), “Engaging in sports activities designed specifically for their requirements can bring about a remarkably positive influence, addressing diverse developmental facets, encouraging social integration, boosting physical health, and cultivating personal abilities within nurturing setting.” (p. 119) There are many benefits that come from children with disabilities participating in sports. It is important that they are also able to get the same opportunities as their typically developing peers are in schools. Sports that take place outside of school can be expensive and may be difficult to fit in into a family’s busy schedule, so being able to have these capabilities in a school is important for these children. If they are able to have these opportunities in school and outside of school, the benefits will only grow and the children with disabilities will feel more like their typically developing peers.

Sports can have many benefits for all individuals however in this study the population of children with disabilities was the focus. After researching and analyzing the academic articles that are out there, conclusions were made of the four major benefits of children with disabilities participating in sports. Staying physically active is imperative for children, and playing sports is a great way for them to have fun while being physically active. Playing sports also helps them learn social skills and strategies that can help them in the real world. Children with disabilities

often have trouble finding connections and understanding social cues, so sports are a great way for them to develop these skills without really having to think about it. Not only are they physically staying active and developing their social skills but mentally, emotionally, and physiologically they are growing. These psychological benefits of sports are often overlooked; however they are so essential in understanding the positive effects that sports can have on children with disabilities. Finally, the societal benefits from sports are improving. Not only do sports positively affect the children playing them, however it also positively impacts the families, friends, businesses, and community that are involved. There are so many different levels of each of these benefits, and it is critical that they are all focused on when discussing why children with disabilities should play sports.

Conclusion

While the benefits of having children with disabilities play sports are the focus of this thesis, it is important to look at why these benefits are so crucial. If children stick to a sedentary lifestyle, it is most likely going to follow them into adulthood. According to Kizar et al. (2015), “Physical inactivity among disabled individuals results in functional disorders such as obesity, cardiac disease, attention deficit, reaction deficit, coordination disorder and lack of strength” (p. 3). These results were found in his study, and many other studies also share the negative health conditions that can develop with the lack of physical activity. Kizar et al. (2015) also mentions, “Lack of social relationships drives individuals to loneliness...” (p. 1) which can lead to other problems. Sports offer a fantastic way for children with disabilities to socialize and make friends. It is often difficult for children with disabilities to make friends and be social, so having another opportunity, like sports, in their lives will increase the likelihood that they will not be lonely. While there are many different causes of health conditions and physical ailments, having the

capability to diminish the possibility is important, which is why children with disabilities should be playing sports.

Sports provide a great opportunity for children with disabilities to be physically active. However, it is crucial to understand that they bring forth more than just physical fitness. Başkonuş (2023), states “...it’s not limited to physical health only, it also has great emotional, social and psychological effects” (p. 119) when talking about sports for children with disabilities. These are the groups that the study is divided up into and further illustrates their importance. Sports also help those with disabilities develop life skills such as motivation and communication skills and helps them transfer these skills into their own lives (Çelenk, 2021). They are able to take what they learn in sports and use it in their daily lives. Such skills like communication and motivation are imperative in society, so it is vital for children with disabilities to be exposed to these skills at a young age and develop them as they grow up. Children with disabilities are also able to be given “...a lesson in teamwork, empathy for their teammates and respect for their opponents” (Adams, 2017, p. 692). The skills and lessons that are gained by playing sports is endless. Children with disabilities would not have the opportunity to learn the skills that are specific to sports and utilize and develop their other skills if they were not able to participate in sports.

In this thesis, recreational sports and physical education have been touched upon in order to get a wider range of information. It is important to mention that they are both beneficial to a child’s development. There were more articles than I thought that pertained to physical education in the school system, but there was also a handful of recreational sports. A common theme between them all was to make sure that the sport should be in accordance with the participants disability (Kizar et al., 2015). Physical education teachers must be able to adapt their games so

that all children are able to play it. These is where a lot of the challenges arise from because they may not be educated enough on this aspect of their job. It is also expensive to adapt equipment in physical education classes, so children with disabilities are able to participate. Another common theme between all the articles was the expensiveness of sports. A lot of children do not play sports because it can be a lot of money. Transportation or schedule to practices/games in an already busy family schedule can be difficult. Children with disabilities just want to be offered the same opportunities as their typically developing peers, so being able to create these possibilities for them is what is most important.

Limitations

A major limitation in this thesis was the time constraint. This paper had to be written within a semester of college, so I had about 15 weeks to research, write, edit, and produce this thesis. Further research could have been possible if more time was given. Research was also limited within the Anna Maria College databases. When looking for articles, there were many that were not available because access was not granted. Interlibrary loans were possible, however because of the time constraint it was not always doable. I also narrowed down articles to be after the year of 2013, so that the most up to date information could be used. Some articles did have important information however their publication date was before 2013 so it could not be used. Focusing on children also created a limitation on articles that could be used for research.

Future Research

Future research in cutting the costs of sports for children with disabilities would be beneficial for educators, families, and children themselves. The research shows that children with disabilities do not play sports mostly because of finances. If research could be done on how to diminish the cost of sports or getting rid of all together, more children with disabilities would

be able to play sports. Research on specific tools and materials can greatly benefit physical education teachers to provide better opportunities to their students.

Research on specific disabilities would allow for readers to focus more on what exactly they are looking for. If someone is trying to find a sport or an adaptation for a child with autism or down syndrome, they would be able to do so with more research. Adding this to the benefits that are already out there for these specific disabilities would be useful for those in the field. Being able to provide specific sports and recommendations to educators would not only benefit the teachers but more importantly the children with disabilities who are participating in these sports.

V. APPENDIX

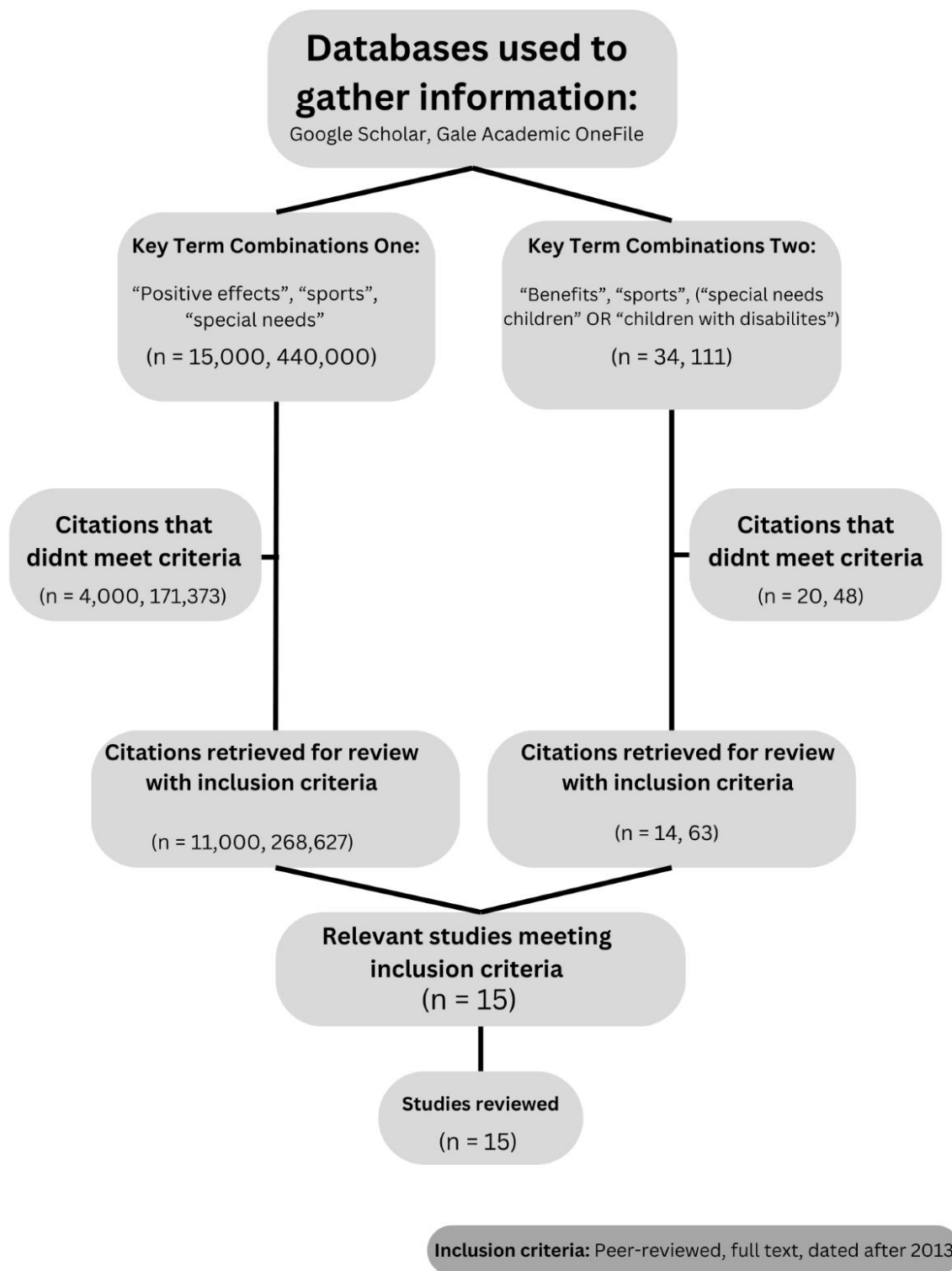


Figure 1 PRISMA Flowchart

VI. REFERENCES

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