

The Development of Participation of Women in Para sport: A comparison of Four IPC Sports

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RESEARCH CONTEXT

Female athletes at PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Games

- 23.6% of all competitors | Competed in 37 events and 4 'co-ed events' out of 80

IPC has prioritized the development of pathways to participation for women

IPC created a 30% threshold goal for the inclusion of women in its leadership structures

IPC initiatives and developments

- Women and Sport Committee, new medal events, new policies (team size and composition), and sponsored events that support development pathways for women and girls



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ#1: How have women with disabilities been included/excluded from the Paralympic Movement both historically and at present?

RQ#2: What strategies have been previously used or could be implemented to create more opportunities for gender equality within Paralympic sport?



FOUR IPC SPORTS EXAMINED

Winter Sports

- Wheelchair Curling and Para Ice Hockey

Summer Sports

- Wheelchair Rugby and Para Equestrian

Four 'co-ed' sports that have taken different approaches to gender equity

Explored the various strategies being used to encourage and support the participation of girls and women



METHOD

Qualitative Interviews | $n=29$

Athletes, coaches, organizers, journalists, academics

- Represented 15 different nations
- Represented 10 different parasports

Interviews

- Average 68mins
- Ranged from 20mins to 160mins



DATA ANALYSIS | METHODOLOGY

Interviews transcribed verbatim and coded using Nvivo12

Thematic analysis

Critical disability theories paradigm

Interpretivist epistemology



FINDINGS



“Even though at first I was the ‘lady’ on the team, it didn’t take me much time to get to be a part of the team and wasn’t actually that difficult. There were times [where] I was better than those that were [in] the same class as me and I filled their position [on] the team...I didn’t feel like I was ‘the woman’ on the team”

(Female rugby player)

“Historically the major levels of participation have been through spinal injuries and I think this is reasonably [a] global statistic, that there are less women with spinal cord injuries. We think that is due to the often reckless nature of spinal cord injury...and just by nature men are often more reckless than women. So, in many ways, because of that, there actually isn’t as many women out there who [we] are able to tap into and bring into the sport”

(Male organizer, wheelchair rugby)

“The big, big trend in our game right now is being able to find that 0.5 female that’s going to be a legit player, [and] not just a pylon on the court...as far as I am concerned, the difference really [is] going going to be, ‘who can develop the best female athlete’”

(Male coach, wheelchair rugby)

RECOMENDATIONS

The development of women's-only camps in all regions

Female mentorship programs

Explore the development of a women's only game



THANK YOU



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