

IMPACT OF RECREATIONAL SPORTS TO INDIVIDUALS WITH PHYSICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND THEIR CAREGIVERS: A PILOT STUDY

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With a growing number of individuals with disabilities in the United States, there is an increased demand for effective programs and services that address the physical, social, and emotional needs of this population. The purpose of the present pilot study was to examine the effect that sports participation has on athletes with physical and mental disabilities and their caregivers using the following four social and personal outcomes: sense of community, sense of belonging, empowerment, and self-esteem. The convenience sample consisted of 114 survey pairs (individuals with disabilities who participated in a basketball league for disabled individuals and their caregivers). In order to evaluate their experiences as participants in recreational sports, participants completed one comprehensive survey questionnaire that included qualitative and quantitative measures. The data were collected either by email or in one-on-one structured interviews. The findings strongly suggest that sports participation in this basketball league has a significant and positive effect on the four variables examined.