

# PARA TAEKWONDO: UNDERSTANDING THE PERSPECTIVES OF COACHES

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**Abstract:** Sport and physical activity can play significant role in the lives of persons with disabilities. Participating in sports can improve their health and physical capacities, promote constructive use of their time, as well as provide a better way to integrate and be included in the community. The aim of this qualitative study was to gain insight into perspectives of six coaches regarding their work as para taekwondo trainers. The results present the challenges in the coaches' work, ways of dealing with difficulties related to para taekwondo training, and positive training outcomes. The challenges faced by coaches indicate acceptance of the abilities of the athletes, ascribed incompetence to athletes with disabilities, lack of trust in the abilities of athletes among people in their social environment, and aggressive behaviour exhibited by persons with intellectual disabilities. Other challenges include limited financial resources, the importance of becoming aware of one's own prejudice about the capabilities of individuals with disabilities, and building relationships with athletes with disabilities. The coaches deal with difficulties related to para taekwondo training by educating themselves and others, applying an individualised approach to training, cooperating with people from the social environment of athletes with disabilities, and considering the work done with athletes with disabilities as a reward. They recognise positive training outcomes for athletes with disabilities through improvements in bodily functioning, better self-image, and further inclusion in the community.

**Keywords:** para taekwondo, para taekwondo coaches, persons with disabilities, sports for persons with disabilities

## INTRODUCTION

Engaging in sports results in increased physical capacity and strength for persons with disabilities (Boguszewski and Torzewska, 2011), with the athlete gaining self-control, lower stress levels, higher concentration and self-confidence, developing respect for themselves and others. Sports are recommended for increasing emotional stability (Stanišić, 2012). As a martial sport, taekwondo has found a place in rehabilitation due to its self-defence system; it is part of rehabilitation therapy for people with spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, and amputations (Kasum, Gligorov and Nastasić-Stošković, 2011).

There are six components of taekwondo: "kibon-dongjang" or basic moves, "poomsae" or martial art forms, "kyorugi" or sparring, "kyokpa" or breaking objects, "hosinsul" or self-defence, and "sibeom" or demonstration (Park et al., 2007). The Para

Taekwondo Committee was formed in 2005 along with the governing World Taekwondo Federation. The first World Championship was held in 2009 in Baku, Azerbaijan, in the sparring or "kyorugi" category for competitors with upper extremity amputation. The technical part of this sport, "poomsae", was included in the World Championship program in 2014 for athletes with intellectual disabilities, and in 2015 for athletes with motor and neurological disabilities (Paralympic.org, 2019). Athletes with hearing impairment were able to compete at the Deaflympics in both disciplines, while para taekwondo for wheelchair users is still being developed (Peranović, 2017). Sparring categories are divided according to disability type and severity, the athletes age and weight, and, in the "poomsae" category, according to the type of disability observed in the competitors. There are classifications for persons with vision impairment, persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with physical

disabilities, persons with hearing impairment and persons of short stature (WTF, 2014, 2018).

Besides athletes with disabilities themselves, coaches also share credit for their success. Along with knowledge, they also possess the taekwondo spirit, which they should pass on to the athletes, together with the philosophy on which taekwondo is based in its entirety. With their behavior and bearing, the coach demonstrates the correct behaviour and attitude towards sports and life in general to the athlete (Park et al., 2007). Their role is to ensure a safe environment in order for the athlete to feel comfortable, develop trust in the coach, and find their own role within the group (Niedbalski, 2015). Communication is one of the most important working tools and skills of a coach, since they have to cooperate both with the athlete and other people from their social environment: communication is the means to motivate the athletes and set joint goals (Moffet, Alexander and Dummer, 2006).

In the early stages of working with individuals with disabilities, the coach must use encouragement, for example, physical demonstrations during training such as guiding the athletes strike, so that the athlete can recognise and repeat the action. In the next stage, the coach demonstrates the strike, and helps the athlete perfect the technique using explanations based on pictures and verbal instructions. Finally, the coach should be able to relay a message by way of a gesture, leading the trainee to perform the exercise by themselves without compulsion from the coach (Yanardag, Yilmaz and Aras, 2010). The coaches set the rules, familiarise themselves with the trainee's functioning, and monitor their progress. Therefore, it is important to create a safe environment and routine in order to create conditions for easy progress (Yanardag et al., 2010). They should provide help in terms of the integration and inclusion of persons with disabilities through training sessions, public demonstrations, and competitions (Peranović, 2017).

The role of the coach has been recognised in other studies (Werthner and Trudel, 2006; Martindale, Collins and Abraham, 2007), but their experiences and perceptions of working with persons with disabilities have still not been studied in details. Martins, de Almeida and Julio (2016) study

shows that the role of the coach is significant in rehabilitation and recreation of persons with disabilities. The coach creates the program for each individual trainee, plans the exercises that could help the trainee based on their disability, and guides and teaches the trainee through expert work. Many existing sports have been adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities, and are known as "adapted or customised sports". Adaptation refers to the physical and sports activity, as well as the movement (Ciliga and Petrinović, 2000). There are also sports for persons with disabilities that are not just a version of an existing sport.

Research about para taekwondo is typically oriented towards the role of taekwondo in athlete rehabilitation. The studies' results show that taekwondo is useful and enables positive results in improving coordination and balance in just 3 months (Tsang and Ng, 2012), but at the same time, the coaches do not possess adequate knowledge on how to work with individuals with disabilities and do not consider themselves educated enough about the specificities of the disabilities (Martins, de Almeida and Julio, 2016). Para sports are still generally in their infancy in Croatia and the world. For example, the Croatian Para Taekwondo Federation was set up only in late 2016. Furthermore, only 0.1-0.2% of persons with disabilities in the world's developed countries are engaged in a physical activity of some sort (Radišić, Miletić, Berković-Šubić and Hofmann, 2016). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007, 2008) also acknowledges and promotes the right of persons with disabilities to participate in recreation and sports.

## METHODS

### Research aim and research questions

The aim of this research is to gain insight into the coaches' perceptions and experiences of working as a para taekwondo coach. The following research questions were defined:

1. What are the challenges faced by para taekwondo coaches in the course of their work?
2. How do coaches deal with difficulties related to para taekwondo?
3. What positive training outcomes do the coaches recognise for persons with disabilities?

## Participants

This study was conducted through semi-structured interviews with two female and four male coaches who teach para taekwondo classes in the city of Zagreb in Croatia. The participants' period of engagement in para taekwondo varies: two coaches have been training persons with disabilities between 15 and 20 years, one coach for four years, two coaches for three years each, and one coach for one year. They work with athletes with autism, physical disabilities, and intellectual disabilities. All coaches are qualified to teach classes. Two coaches have a Faculty of Kinesiology degree, while the other coaches have been qualified to teach taekwondo classes at the Sports College or the Olympic Academy. Three coaches have received specialist education - one through primary physician education and two through the Faculty of Kinesiology. Three coaches have also passed a para "poomsae" seminar where training methods were taught along with the rules of judging competitions. All coaches are over 18 years old and qualified to work in the field of sports training under the Croatian Sports Act. The sampling was purposive, and the saturation criterion was applied.

## Data collection

This study was conducted between May and June 2018. The coaches were invited to participate by telephone, e-mail, and in person. All participants were familiarised with the research topic and aim, as well as its ethical aspects: voluntariness, confidentiality, data anonymization, the right to refuse or terminate participation at any moment, and the right to decline to answer. They received additional explanations about data transcription and retention and the fact that participation in the study shall not be rewarded. A time and place was arranged for each interview with each participant according to their wishes: the interviews were conducted in a separate room at their workplace. Before each interview, the coaches had provided written informed consent.

The semi-structured interviews lasted for 50 minutes on average, and consisted of socio-demographic and open-ended questions related to the topic. The interviews were recorded using a

voice recorder so transcripts could be made after the interviews were conducted. At the end of the conversation, each coach was given the option of meeting and discussing the research topic again, but none chose that option.

## Data analysis

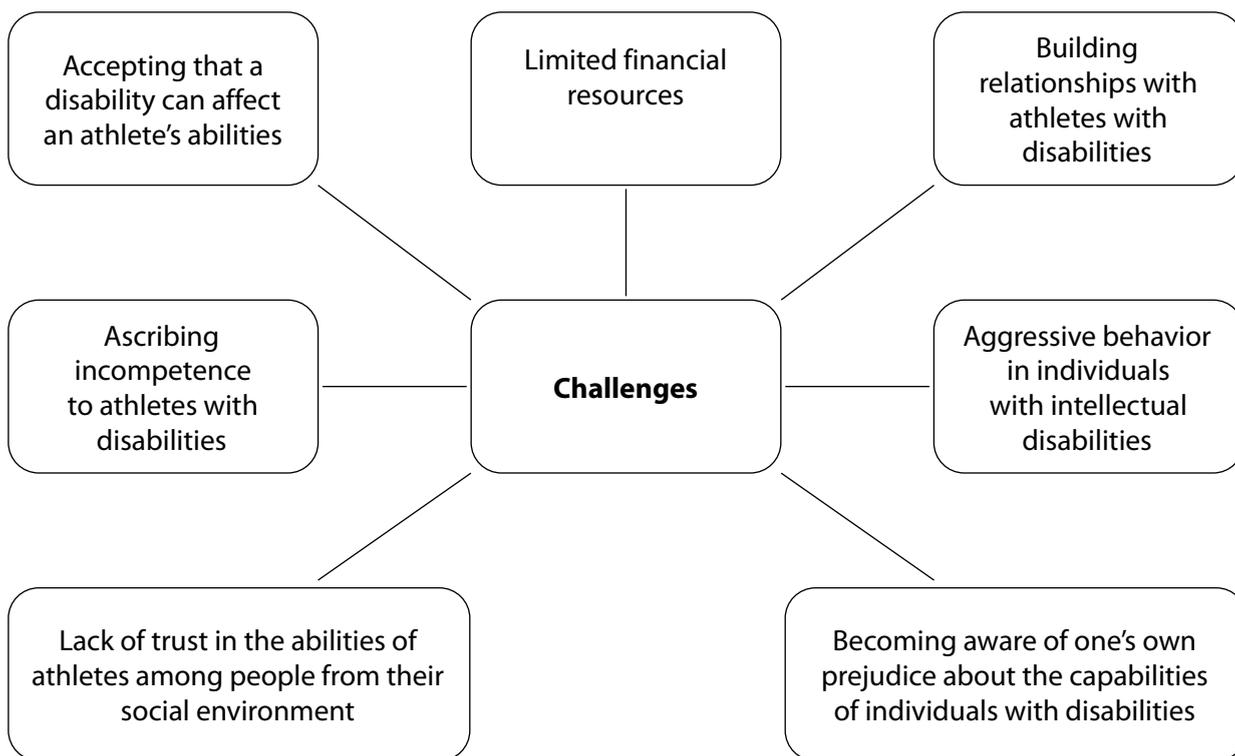
The data was analysed using thematic analysis, which is used to identify, analyse, and report themes within data. The phases of thematic analysis are as follows: familiarisation with data, generation of initial codes, searching and reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the paper (Braun and Clarke 2006).

The interviews were transcribed by one author. All authors read and reread all interviews several times to familiarise themselves with the data. During the process of reading, they noted interesting features of the data, which were then sorted into potential themes. The themes were reviewed, defined, and named. A thematic map was constructed to define relationships between the themes. The most descriptive quotes were selected for illustration of the defined themes. Researcher triangulation and theory triangulation were used to ensure data trustworthiness.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Themes related to challenges faced by para taekwondo coaches

The participants described "becoming aware of their own prejudice about the capabilities of persons with disabilities" as the first challenge they faced in the role of a coach since they considered persons with disabilities as sensitive and less capable in terms of participating in sports: *"The fear was really big at the start, in fact. You don't know if you can hold that kid normally, move something here, then you realize they're not fragile. They're normal people we all have prejudices against, and when you see them on the street, you don't need to go around them or approach them like they're incapacitated... That realisation was very useful to me in life."* (C5); *"When he jumped out of the wheelchair and started doing push-ups, I just stood there in shock! I'm thinking, what now, the man*



**Figure 1.** Challenges faced by para taekwondo coaches

came to class for the first time, and he just throws himself out of the wheelchair and does push-ups and now, like, I let him do everything normally, but I felt really, like, you know that was something.” (C2). Earlier studies also show that prejudices are the major barrier to the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the society (Scior, Potts and Furnham, 2013, Block, 2000).

The next challenge is “to accept that athletes with disabilities have abilities”, but that they are determined by certain traits based on the disability, such as difficulties pertaining to memory, pharmacological therapy use, aggressive behaviour, and severity of the disability. One of the traits, which is also a challenge, is the difficulty pertaining to the memory of athletes with intellectual disabilities: “They can’t practice like other people... Especially remember some things, that holds them back the most, in fact... They can’t do it.” (C5). They also described the motor coordination of athletes with disabilities since movement and movement steadiness are connected to movement coordination and balance, which are important for an athlete to execute a strike: “...there, for example, a person with-

out a leg, when they practice they have a balance problem. That’s the most common problem. That is, in fact, both groups have it, I mean those with intellectual disabilities too.” (C1).

According to one participant, the abilities are also determined by the use of pharmacological therapy by athletes with disabilities, which is necessary if prescribed by a physician, but presents a challenge in professional sports: “A bunch of pills and we then have to struggle against the pills. They give people stuff they don’t need. We’ve seen that on several occasions when they gave them contradicting pills.” (C3). The severity of the disability also determines their abilities: “There are some of them now also who are here recreationally, since you can’t expect something from them because of the degree and everything... All in all, long story short, some are easier to work with, some are harder. It all depends on the degree and on if it is severe, which disability it is, and so on.” (C3). Health conditions, severity, and type of disability are recognised as personal barriers to participation in sports by children with developmental disabilities (Shields, Synnot and Barr, 2012; Jaarsma et al.,

2015). Before engaging in any sport, a person with a disability must consult with a physician about taking up a sport or changing a training program (Petrinović, 2014). The results of pharmacological therapy may be linked to the knowledge that psychotropic medications are widely used among persons with intellectual disabilities (32-85%), as well as to the problems associated with long-term use without reviews and the lack of evidence to support the effectiveness of these medications to manage problems (Intellectualdisability.org, 2018).

“Aggressive behaviour in persons with intellectual disabilities” is also one of the challenges: *“Especially people with intellectual disabilities can have these aggressive tantrums and all.”* (C5). The participants stated that, in these cases, the full picture needs to be taken into account and everything needs to be done to reduce the aggressive behaviour, which is often tied to the comprehension and functioning abilities of the athletes. They mentioned moving the athlete, working with a different partner, and sending the athlete away to calm down as possible methods to reduce aggressive behaviour.

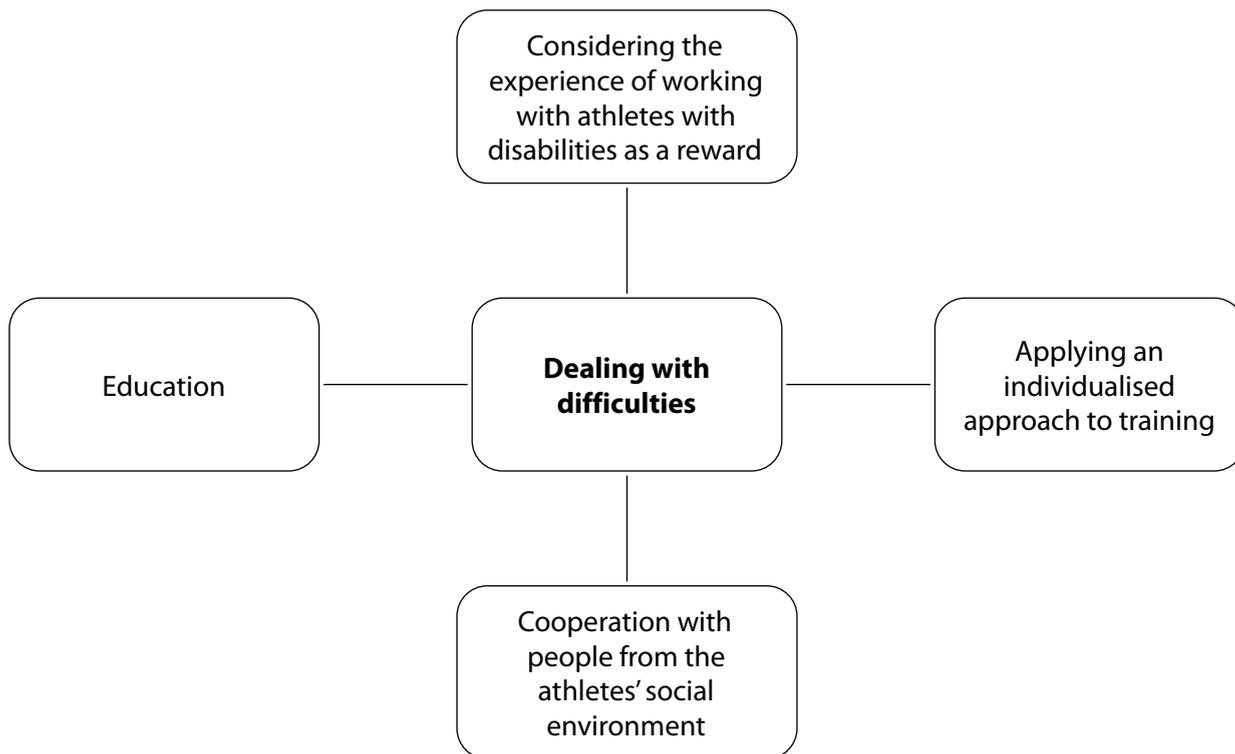
“Building relationships with athletes with disabilities” is based on the coach’s patience and dedication:

*“It takes maybe a little more patience with them. Then explaining it to them many times, some things, I mean, encouraging them...”* (C6); *“These people demand a lot of attention and a different approach, because something that is normal to us in regular taekwondo, somebody doing it for 10 times and then it’s a completely normal movement for them. With this guy, it can cause some permanent damage and you’ll get him in even more trouble, not help him.”* (C4). The results about the aggressiveness of persons with intellectual disabilities and building relationships with athletes with disabilities show that a more complex approach to training is needed, while establishing contact with others represent key elements in the development of athletes (Martindale et al, 2007). Participants state that they encounter situations that they have not encountered in their work thus far and must find ways of coping: in these cases, they rely mostly on previous experience and reactions. There is a lack of formal education for training persons with

disabilities. Coaches should have an opportunity to gain specific knowledge about persons with disabilities, characteristics of different types of disabilities, as well as knowledge and skills in the area of working with them. If they have adequate knowledge, coaches can prepare the best exercise program that would reduce the probability of characteristic injuries.

“Lack of trust in the abilities of athletes among people from their social environment” presents itself in ascribing dependence to athletes with disabilities: *“...at the first training session, the parents were inside, the second session, when I said, you don’t need to be here, go somewhere, and then they stood in the hall in front of the gym the whole time.”* (C2). The next challenge is “ascribing incompetence to athletes with disabilities”: *“...the kid sits there, waiting for his dad, and the dad says: Thanks for dressing him. No, I didn’t dress him, he dressed himself.- He can’t do it alone. I said: He knows how, he knows it all, but, please, I’m asking you, let him do it at home.”* (C3). The results indicate that it is precisely the parents who consider their children dependent and incapable of engaging in sports. It is also reflected in the disinterest of assistants in taking the time to take their wards to training sessions, even though they are paid for it and supposed to do it: *“They live in these houses separately and then the assistants don’t feel like taking them, it’s too much trouble for the assistants when it rains, there’s snow outside... They like making them coffee and stuff like that at home much more”* (C3). Previous studies have also shown a lack of trust in the abilities of persons with disabilities (Mehrotra and Vaidya, 2008, May and Simpson, 2003, Shaw, 2009).

“Limited financial resources” are manifested through limited resources of persons with disabilities and their associations. Athletes with disabilities cannot afford training gear, so the clubs often provide gear, pay participation fees, and so on: *“They are often, sadly, connected with bad financial status. And then it is a bit, I mean, a problem of sorts, we’ll see if there are... Because they can’t buy a “dobok”, I mean, they can, we give it to them, as a gift, you know? And so, but they would, let’s say, also want to afford something, and then as much, depending on how much we can afford,*



**Figure 2.** *Dealing with difficulties related to para taekwondo training*

*we give them as much as we can, and then, like, some kind of trip, when there's a trip somewhere, then it's a problem, because then the sums are a bit larger and so. So we can't take them to every single tournament."* (C1). The clubs most often rely on their own financial sources comprised of membership fees. The coaches attempt to obtain financial support by answering funding calls, but there are no guarantees that this will ensure results: *"So support, and as far as the city is concerned, the city, the state, we've never received a single Kuna from anyone. We wrote one funding call, we wrote another, never got anything anywhere. Everything we've done, we've done by ourselves with their membership fees and our regular taekwondo membership fees."* (C3). Para taekwondo is a new discipline and it is still developing. It is noted that coaches are still managing on their own without adequate support from institutions, often in inadequate conditions. There is a problem of having training sessions in an inadequate space, and the financial situation of some athletes is not favourable since sports clubs rely on their own resources to help athletes. According to the statements, insti-

tutions do not participate in the programs to the extent that they should, nor do they show interest except in terms of promotion in the media, which leads to the feeling of powerlessness among the coaches. Another problem is the lack of connection between the Croatian Taekwondo Federation and the Croatian Para Taekwondo Federation. Coaches themselves express their displeasure and confusion, especially since there is a para taekwondo department within the Croatian Taekwondo Federation. These findings about the challenges faced by para taekwondo coaches also highlight community attitudes on sports practiced by individuals with disabilities.

**Themes related to the ways in which coaches deal with difficulties related to para taekwondo training**

"Considering the experience of working with athletes with disabilities as a reward" is one way of dealing with the difficulties related to para taekwondo training. Here participants describe a sense of fulfilment: *"And when you see it in their eyes, when you see that joy, then I say it is really*

a reward for what we do.” (C2); *“I get one satisfaction that I managed to change the lives of those people with a little bit of my time, with a little bit of my desire. This is what’s enough for me, that each Friday I can hurry to the gym and do something for them.”* (C4). They emphasized that the reward is neither money, any material reward, nor publicity, but rather the job itself, for which a person “must be born” and that must be carried out with love.

“An individualised approach” is based on individual work with athletes with disabilities and setting realistic expectations for these athletes: *“So we work together for a while so that they develop some habits, and then we move on to individual work, but again the group is there, but we work with almost everyone individually and that is why the groups cannot be large.”* (C3); *“...you won’t expect them to win gold at the Olympics and then you and the club will get a bunch of money to invest in equipment, in the gym, they are people who are engaged in the sport because they like it.”* (C1). Previous studies have also highlighted that the individualisation of athlete training is vital for the optimization of the physical preparation of athletes (Paulson, Mason, Rhodes and Goosey-Tolfrey, 2015), and that an individualised approach is necessary (Falla and Hodges, 2017). The results of the present study show that an individualised approach to athletes is crucial not only because of their capabilities and needs, but also because of the coach. Large groups distract the coach from focusing on an athlete, resulting in slower progress since there is no time to focus on one athlete’s performance.

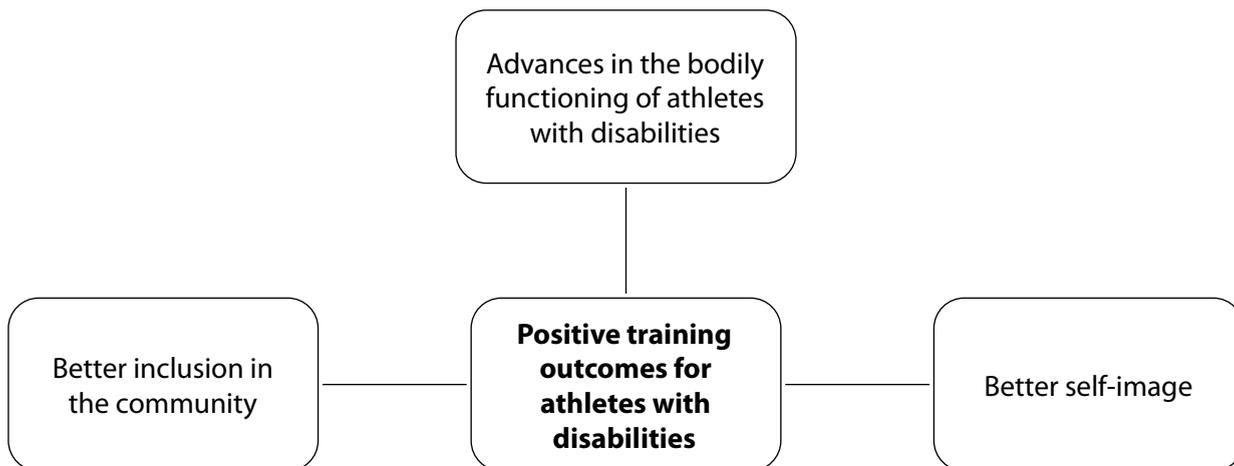
“Cooperation with people from athletes’ social environment” includes not only volunteers and psychologists, but also parents who provide them with valuable information about the athletes’ disabilities: *“.....the four volunteers who are working now, and this is another way we will try to tackle all these challenges and deal with it all.... We also have psychological support, now we have a psychologist at the Croatian Paralympic Committee, who is also accompanying us, who is helping us now...”* (C3); *“...I am satisfied about the parents in this regard, that together we are looking for a solution to some problems these children have. Ultimately, by now we have managed everything we had to sort out and solve the problem.”* (C4).

Some studies have found that family involvement has a major influence on the involvement of individuals with disabilities in sports (Fitzgerald and Kirk, 2009), while contact with people from the social environment of athletes with disabilities is important because of the exchange of information about the progress and health status of athletes with disabilities (Martindale et al., 2007).

Acquiring new knowledge through “education” is important so that a coach can keep up with new trends that are the result of sports science research. It also helps in learning new training methods and methods for working with athletes with disabilities: *“By reading, learning, searching, watching, writing, and everything else.”* (C4); *“Well in terms of my own education, something. It... So I took it up because I wanted to... See and learn new methods, I mean new training methods...”* (C5). Each coach learns in their own distinct way, while top coaches constantly find new information that is important for working with athletes. The participants stated that they were able to manage in different ways even if they were not certain that their approach to training was good or if they were not confident in their knowledge. They used the Internet to find more information in Croatian or other foreign languages. Education is especially important for working with athletes with disabilities since negligence can result in serious injury. Information on para taekwondo training is available at para taekwondo judges’ seminars, but a formal taekwondo training course or a course as part of taekwondo education should be established to provide specific knowledge about persons with disabilities and training methods.

### **Themes related to positive training outcomes for athletes with disabilities recognised by para taekwondo coaches**

Participants described “advances in the bodily functioning of athletes with disabilities” as better physical functioning of athletes, improved coordination, improved balance, and weight loss. Motor skill development results in better physical functioning of athletes: *“One woman with cerebral palsy was having a hard time getting into the car, getting out of the car, walking home or somewhere. So it was necessary to climb from the*



**Figure 3.** Positive training outcomes for athletes with disabilities

ground floor to the first floor for 10 minutes, she had now mastered it in three minutes in the way that her muscle tone improved, she had hypertonus... (C4). Improvements in coordination through regular training was also mentioned as a positive outcome: "...with these minimal training sessions two times a week, incredible advances in coordination are noticed, as well as in understanding the space around you, just everything." (C5); "We have now straightened him out. The boy knows which side is left, which side is right. The oldest member did not know how to turn forward, turn backwards, now she knows forward, back, left, right." (C3). Improved balance is most noticeable in a person's gait, whereby the coach recognises that the frequency of the athlete's falls while walking has been reduced, and confidence when walking has been improved: "She walks a lot, but she used to lose her balance, now she says that it is much easier, she falls down much less, especially in the snow and when my girls drive her home, they notice that she walks better than before." (C6); "She can stand now on one leg as well. This was not possible before, now she can move on, jump on one leg, which was not possible before." (C3). Weight loss as a result of training is also a positive outcome: "One of our girls still, she for example is one of our girls who came for recreational taekwondo and weighed 130 kg, now she is under 100 kg. So this part we did not manage in two years, practically two and a half to three, to reduce weight through talking and by training." (C3). Previous studies have also reported advances in physical stamina

and strength, posture, cognitive processes, and decline in the frequency of falls (Rajan and Tsang, 2015), as well as improvement in coordination and balance in children with developmental disabilities related to coordination (Fong, et al., 2012).

"Better self-image" as a sense of pride is most evident when achieving a goal or winning an award for effort, whereby medals are a testament to the progress and effort invested in the performance at a competition: "And when they're walking out in the city, I see them with medals. You know. A month later, this guy also came for training with a medal." (C5). Improved self-confidence is based on the athletes' insight into how their work and effort has paid off: "So from something she was aware she couldn't do, to that she realized she was given the opportunity to show something she could do too." (C4); "...their confidence is greater and then they see that they can do things." (C6). They gain self-confidence through exercising and teaching others because they notice that they can do something that others think they cannot, such as teaching others. Gaining independence is the result of the acquisition of habits either by training or by socialising with friends from training sessions. Through the acquisition of habits, these individuals notice that they can do some things on their own: "We went on foot to training, on foot to the city, nobody had to remind me: - "Hey, it's time for training, let's go." But they all come, some with (states the name of the settlement) on foot." (C6); "And so, our people lead the training

sessions themselves. Each time, one of the others leads the training session.” (C3). Results about better self-image have also been confirmed by previous studies that found that individuals with disabilities who are engaged in sport activities have an opportunity to enhance their self-esteem, boost their confidence, and socialise with others (Shapiro and Martin, 2010, Semerijan, 2009, Ginis, Jetha, Mack and Hetz, 2010). The relationship between athletes and coaches proves to be important in the advancement and development of self-confidence and motivation. This relationship should not be very formal since the relationship of trust is thereby lost and becomes strictly a business relationship. There is also a decrease in aggressiveness in athletes with disabilities during regular training since it eliminates possible aggressive reactions by allowing venting of negative emotions *“He became less aggressive because he blew off some steam here. I was doing it to get out of him everything that could be gotten out so that he would calm down later, be calm and so on.”* (C3). Farhangi and Alamdarloo (2015) stated that previous studies have shown that sports reduces aggression in people with intellectual disabilities.

“Better inclusion in the community” manifests through better acceptance of athletes with disabilities from athletes without disabilities. Acceptance leads to respect and inclusion for people with disabilities, while their achievements are recognised and celebrated together: *“I mean, she and the coach (states the name) were welcomed by her friends from work with flowers and... And the coach arrived with the cake. She was delighted, surprised.”* (C6). Togetherness is manifested in such a way that in some clubs they are not separated from others, since all athletes train together depending on the characteristics of the group, in terms of whether it is a group for beginners, a technical group, a more advanced group, or a sparring group. They all train together, and they accept and respect each other: *“...they have no special training sessions, they work in a group with athletes with no disabilities, which means that of course I explain it to everyone and they see that certain people have certain problems and as such they are, let’s just call it socialised.”* (C1); *“It’s not just the training component, the physical aspect, it is*

*important to have some social component to give them the opportunity to go on a trip together, for them to socialise, to spend time with each other, not to be isolated as such.”* (C4). The results of the present study on cooperation and togetherness of athletes with and without disabilities confirms that sports has physical, psychological, and social benefits for many individuals with disabilities (Smith and Sparkes, 2012). These individuals can establish new friendships through socialising and inclusion during a training session (Eminović, Nikić, Stojković and Pacić, 2009). Similar to this study results, McConkey, Dowling, Hassan and Menke (2013) study highlights that the involvement of people with intellectual disabilities in sport activities can result in personal development of the athletes, social inclusion, and change of attitudes of people without intellectual disabilities through the promotion of positive perceptions of athletes with disabilities.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that there are similarities between para taekwondo training and training for world-class sports. Both types of trainings include a detailed plan for the training program, focus on the desired goal, as well as the development of athletes’ capabilities and their progress. Similar to taekwondo, each group in para taekwondo differs based on the personalities of trainees, their behaviour, and their group dynamics. In para taekwondo, there is also a trend towards a new role for athletes, which is the role of coaches through which they acquire new skills and develop themselves as a person. Taekwondo is a sport that provides a physical and spiritual component if a coach knows how to pass it on to the athlete. This study results show that challenges faced by para taekwondo coaches are mostly based on prejudices about athletes with disabilities, lack of information and knowledge about persons with disabilities, and limited financial resources for para taekwondo. With respect to the difficulties the coaches have to deal with during training, they highlight the importance of education, cooperation with people from athletes’ social network, and the intrinsic motivation of the coach. Positive training outcomes show advances

in the bodily functioning of athletes with disabilities, better self-image, and more community inclusion. The results of this study also demonstrate that persons with disabilities become more persistent, competitive, and proud of their successes, as well as more confident, independent, and motivated. This is the result of the joint action of coaches, athletes with disabilities, other people from their social environment, and athletes without disabilities. Para taekwondo results in better quality of life for athletes with disabilities. Based on these results, it can be concluded that further education is crucial, both for the coaches and people from the athletes' social environment. Specific knowledge about the abilities, needs, and disadvantages faced by individuals with disabilities will enable us to provide better support for them. The results also highlight the need for community sensitisation about para taekwondo because it can result in better disability awareness and more appropriate conditions for para taekwondo training.

Similar to other sports for persons with disabilities, investing in para taekwondo and train-

ing coaches for para taekwondo is important. Para taekwondo has a positive effect on the health of athletes, their muscular system, as well as the psychological aspect of athletes such as their socialisation. Athletes with disabilities reap physical, health-related, psychological, and social benefits by engaging in sports. The results also show that para taekwondo is a reciprocal process of sharing between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities. Taekwondo is not merely a martial sport consisting of a series of movements for attack and self-defence. The philosophy of taekwondo is an addition that makes the sport a holistic skill. It is part of folklore that provides a lot to athletes because they learn how to respect not only others, but also themselves through the cultivation of a self-image as a capable member of society. Seeing oneself as a capable member of society is especially important for persons with disabilities since they do not want to live the life of "an incapacitated and ill person", but rather gain confidence and show their strength to society without being excluded and without opportunities to show what they can.

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