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## **Opportunities and challenges: youth activation program for youth athletes soina in increasing self-esteem**

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**Abstract:** The achievements of intellectually challenged athletes in the Special Olympics are not always accompanied by their sense of *self-esteem*. Often training focuses more on physical training and pays less attention to psychological and social aspects. Efforts to increase athletes' *self-esteem* have not been maximized which are believed to have an effect on the achievement of improving the quality of athletes in inclusive spaces so that the Youth Activation Program was formed. The purpose of this study was to obtain an overview of the opportunities and challenges faced in the Youth Activation program in improving athletes' *self-esteem*. The research method used is descriptive qualitative. Data was collected through interviews, observation and documentation, with research subjects namely 3 program administrators, 5 Youth Leaders and 5 athletes. The results showed that the opportunities are (1) the opportunity for athletes to socialize, (2) a place to train courage in leading, (3) motivation for other athletes. Meanwhile, the challenge is that there are differences in principles among program administrators. The conclusion is that the Youth Activation Program has the opportunity to be able to increase *self-esteem* in athletes, especially in shaping the character of leaders, accommodating athletes' abilities in socializing, and creating inclusive spaces.

**Keywords:** Opportunities, challenges, youth activation program, self-esteem

### **INTRODUCTION**

In human development from childhood to adulthood, of course, passes through the adolescent phase. Adolescents are very vulnerable in accepting and responding to their surrounding environment. Recognizing and understanding self-ability is a form of maturity in achieving human psychological needs. After the needs that were felt at childhood, namely the need to be loved and owned, were felt to be fulfilled, the next level, namely the need for appreciation, namely *self-esteem*, needed to be met first before moving on to the next level of needs.

As a Special Olympics teenager athlete with intellectual disabilities, it is important for her *self-esteem* needs to be met in reaching adulthood. The feeling of being loved and owned can be fulfilled through the attention of both parents to give them the opportunity to excel in a sports environment. However, being an achiever does not determine that they will feel their *self-esteem* needs are being met. Feeling part of the wider community, brings them out of their comfort zone by seeing a more tangible difference apart from the environment of their fellow athletes. In essence, after they reach adulthood and have to retire as athletes, the outside world, namely the wider community and the world of work, awaits them.

Their lack of social skills such as low *self-esteem*, insecurity, shame, not daring to start friendships, shy in introducing themselves, afraid to talk to other people or get along well in society. This shows the lack of self-respect for Special Olympics athletes even though many of them excel in various sports, both domestically and abroad.

Special Olympics is a global organization founded by Eunice Kennedy Shiver in the sporting movement to accommodate individuals with intellectual disabilities. In addition to the sports program which is the main program of the Special Olympics, there are also programs that focus on developing and

empowering athletes, which is to support athletes after their retirement as athletes can help themselves in society and become part of the community itself.

The Youth Activation Program is one of the programs formed by Special Olympics with the aim of helping Special Olympics youth athletes in increasing self-confidence, forming leadership characters, making inclusive spaces to unite youth in general with adolescent athletes who have intellectual disabilities and improve other abilities outside of sports program which is the main program of the Special Olympics. In this case, Youth Activation has an inclusive vision as well as empowering athletes with intellectual disabilities. This program is always carried out every year by Special Olympics, especially Special Olympics Indonesia (SOIna).

*Self-esteem* is the third level of basic human needs that must be met based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. In this theory, it is explained that *self-esteem* is a psychological need which is divided into *self-esteem* and respect from others. Meanwhile, according to Rosenberg (1965), *self-esteem* is a positive or negative evaluation of oneself. Thus *self-esteem* is how a person sees and evaluates himself. If the two opinions are linked, *self-esteem* is a basic human psychological need to assess and give appreciation for himself to be able to socialize with others.

When viewed from the side of individuals with intellectual disabilities, their need to be able to feel part of the community they must realize the value of themselves which basically humans have different abilities and have their respective advantages. According to Coopersmith (1967) in Kassim et al., (2020:72), the term *self-esteem* refers to our positive and negative evaluations of ourselves.

Based on the results of research by Willis & David (2015), which shows that the threat to *self-esteem* is followed by increased prejudice and stereotyping, which is raised in the form of behavior, namely avoidance of the target. From this avoidance, it can be seen from the appearance of the athlete's behavior, namely not daring to speak, embarrassed and feeling inferior in dealing with new people.

In other words, *self-esteem* is an evaluation of yourself that is raised in the form of behavior and prejudice against yourself or those around you. It is said according to Heatherton & Polivy (1991) in Kassim et.al. (2020), that although some of us have higher *self-esteem* than others, the feeling of *self-esteem* is not a permanently engraved trait but on the contrary. A state of mind that fluctuates up and down in response to success, failure, social relationships, and other life experiences.

## **METHOD**

This research method is a qualitative descriptive research method. The participants in this study were 3 program administrators, namely the program coordinator and the activity committee. 5 Youth Leaders who are youths under the age of 25 in several regions. And 5 Athlete Leaders who are athletes from the Special Olympics Indonesia (SOIna) under the age of 30 years, SOIna athletes consist of special athletes for individuals with mild intellectual disabilities from several regions who are partnered with Youth Leaders.

The data collection techniques carried out are through interviews, observation and documentation. Interviews were conducted to gather information and arguments from participants regarding the program. Observations were made by researchers to see in real terms the changes and developments of athletes during the program. And documentation is done with the aim of looking deeper based on real evidence from videos and photos during the activity.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the results of interviews and observations that have been made by researchers, the opportunities and challenges of the Youth Activation program from the participants who are members can be described. Taken from one of the administrators, namely Na, whose narrative is based on the results of his interview, "The Youth Activation Program is a series taken from the regions, it is seen that the participants are excited, enjoy, blended, and their friendship becomes more intimate. Special Olympics itself held a hostage acceptend, friendship, which throughout the event implemented that this was inclusive, this was respect, we accepted, we were friends. So that the Youth Leaders are used to it, until finally the athletes give up and they want to be friends because we accept them. We strive to give them the space to express themselves, to be brave, to have an opinion, and the opportunity to have their needs met. The need as a human being, the need to be accepted, the need to be appreciated, the need to learn, and the need to have an opinion. So this program is an opportunity for them to be themselves, get their basic needs and psychological rights as human beings. The challenge is that the difference in principles between the management in the program becomes a difficulty when it comes to achieving the expected target. The vision and mission of

creating this inclusive space are also still not well understood by some of the management so that in its implementation there have been problems related to licensing arrangements and other things”.

The statement conveyed by Na stated that the program's opportunities to improve athletes' *self-esteem* were to provide space for athletes to want to express themselves, feel accepted and take athletes out of fear of making friends and the challenge, namely the difference in principles for each administrator. Meanwhile, according to the results of interviews conducted with two other administrators, the opportunity in the Youth Activation Program is to create an inclusive space with cooperation between all participants, opportunities for athletes to socialize, a place to train courage in leading, and is expected to be a good example for other athletes who do not join the next program or program.

Meanwhile, according to 5 Youth Leaders while accompanying their partner athletes, the opportunities seen during the activity are that this program makes athletes have a place to socialize, dare to express their opinions, dare to appear in front of other participants after being shown and presented by several athletes who took part in the program the previous year at that time. has been confident and dared to show his abilities.

The challenge is that the diverse character of each athlete makes youth leaders have to be able to adapt well, such as athletes who are shy to start making friends and sometimes the athlete's mood changes. And the challenges that occur when gender differences with partners become less flexible in some activities so that they cannot always be together all the time.

Meanwhile, according to 5 athletes, based on the results of interviews that they felt during the program, there were opportunities in the program, namely that they could meet new friends and dare to make friends or appear in front of other participants, they got new activities and experiences. Their challenges in the program are that it is difficult to socialize because they are shy, awkward to talk to new people, and feel inferior when they have to appear in front of other participants. Their opinion after completing the program is that they are now brave enough to meet and meet new people, some are joining other organizations that are not only intellectual individuals but consist of general youth and some are already working which requires them to be able to work with anyone.

Based on the results of the interviews above, what the researchers saw during the observation, the opportunities in the Youth Activation Program were as follows:

1. As a forum for athletes to channel their abilities in public by providing motivation to be brave, confident and confident in their abilities
2. As an opportunity for athletes to dare to socialize outside the scope of their friendship which is only with fellow athletes,
3. As an inclusive space with collaboration between athletes and youth leaders, they understand each other's differences and accept each other,
4. Become a motivation for other athletes to be brave by applying leadership values

And the challenges seen during the observation are as follows:

1. The diverse character of athletes such as athletes suddenly refuses to participate in activities or just doesn't want to leave the room.
2. Gender differences in some pairs of athletes and youth leaders, so there is not enough time for activities together.
3. Differences in principles between the management that make the program in achieving its target achievement is slightly hampered.

According to Rosenberg (1965:31) in Murk (2013:105), high *self-esteem*, as reflected in our scale items, expresses the feeling that on is "good enough". The individual simply feels that he is a person of worth; he respects himself for what he is, but does not stand in awe of himself nor what he expect others to stand in awe of him. Low *self-esteem*, on the other hand, implies *self-rejection*, *self dissatisfaction*, *self-contempt*. The individual lacks respect for the self he observes. The picture is disagreeable and he wishes it were otherwise.

Based on the statement above that low *self-esteem* describes a sense of describing a form of self-sabotage by feeling we are good enough, feeling dissatisfied with our achievements and feeling ashamed of ourselves to hate ourselves. Based on the program, researchers observed the possibility for athletes to experience low *self-esteem* that was not very visible on the program. Athletes are quite enthusiastic and try to realize athletes, that they are well received and their achievements and courage when performing are highly appreciated by other participants.

As in the research of Satrio Budi Wibowo & Siti Nurlaila (2016) that *self-esteem* in children with special needs is influenced by belief (internalization of trust) against negative stigma from peers. What is reinforced by Link et.al., (1997), states that the effect of negative stigma on *self-esteem* is determined by the level of individual belief in discrimination and negative judgments they face.

Meanwhile, the program did not appear to feel discriminated against or ostracized by other participants. However, what is a form of trust between athletes and their partners is slowly building well. Seen in the results of the documentation, namely photos, videos and also certificates of athlete's achievements after participating in the program, namely on *self-esteem*, athletes become more respectful of themselves by being able to socialize well, dare to talk to new people or appear in public, and are more confident. themselves to be able to get along and join other organizations which not only consist of individuals with intellectual disabilities but youth in general. So that the Youth Activation Program has a good opportunity to increase *self-esteem* in Special Olympics athletes.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of interviews, observations and documentation conducted by researchers, conclusions can be drawn from the opportunities and challenges in the Youth Activation Program. Opportunities from the program are as a space to express athletes' abilities, an event or forum for training socialization, training leadership which can later be a good example for other athletes to dare to speak up and feel part of the wider community through an inclusive space. The challenges obtained from the program are differences in principles from the management regarding program achievement targets, differences in character in athletes, and gender differences. The Youth Activation program in this case has the opportunity to increase *self-esteem* in Special Olympics athletes, namely forming mutual trust with partners, mutual respect and acceptance, feeling recognition from their surroundings, concern for their achievements, and feeling appreciation for their courage and abilities.

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