

ATTITUDES TOWARDS INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND INTEGRATED SPORT PARTICIPATION

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Objectives: Attitudes refer to the way we consciously (explicitly) and unconsciously (implicitly) evaluate a subject. Implicit and explicit attitudes are significant predictors of discriminatory behaviour towards marginalized groups (Greenwald, Banaji, & Nosek, 2015), including individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID). According to the *contact hypothesis* (Allport, 1954), negative attitudes towards a group can be reduced through cooperative contact with group members. Special Olympics (SO) uses sport participation as a means for fostering inclusivity and changing attitudes towards people with ID (Special Olympics, 2003). A more recently established Canadian organization, *Motionball for Special Olympics (Motionball)* raises funds for Special Olympics, generates awareness about ID through campaigns, and hosts integrated sport competitions to help strengthen positive attitudes towards people with ID. The goal of this study was to identify how involvement with Motionball is associated with implicit and explicit attitudes towards people with ID.

Methods: An online survey was administered to individuals who took part in at least one Motionball event in the past 12 months. Data were collected from 326 adults (63.2% female; $M_{age} = 30.07$ years, $SD_{age} = 9.85$, Range: 18 to 70+ years). Participants reported the number of Motionball events attended in the past year and amount of time spent interacting with SO athletes at the event. Explicit attitudes were measured using three subscales of the Attitudes Toward Intellectual Disability Questionnaire – Short Form (ATTID-SF; Morin, Valois, Crocker, & Robitaille, 2019): Discomfort, Interaction, and Sensitivity. Implicit attitudes were measured using a survey-based Implicit Association Task (IAT; Carpenter et al., 2018). Linear regressions were used to evaluate whether Motionball involvement significantly predicted implicit and explicit attitudes.

Results: There were no significant associations between Motionball involvement and implicit attitudes. After controlling for age, gender, socially desirable responding, and prior knowledge about ID, Motionball involvement did not uniquely predict sensitivity towards individuals with ID, $p > .05$. Motionball involvement did significantly predict explicit discomfort towards individuals with ID, $R^2 = .19$, $F(6, 284) = 11.25$, $p < .01$. More specifically, the amount of time spent interacting with SO athletes at Motionball events ($\beta = -.04$, $p = .01$) and the number of Motionball events attended in the past 12 months ($\beta = -.09$, $p = .01$) were unique negative predictors of discomfort towards individuals with ID. Motionball involvement also significantly predicted attitudes towards interacting with people with ID, $R^2 = .19$, $F(6, 285) = 10.86$, $p < .01$. More specifically, the amount of time spent interacting with SO athletes at Motionball events was a unique predictor of more positive attitudes towards interaction ($\beta = .03$, $p = .04$).

Discussion/Conclusion: More frequent involvement with Motionball was associated with less discomfort, and more positive attitudes towards interacting with those with ID. Involvement in Motionball does not appear to be related to implicit attitudes. This speaks to the potential benefits of integrated sport participation. Further research examining the impact of integrated sport participation on community inclusivity and societal attitudes towards people with ID is warranted.

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