

THE CREATION OF A SPORTS EVENT AS A TOOL FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE NATATORY ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AFTER THE FIRST LOCKDOWN FOR THE SARS-COV-2 PANDEMIC

LA CREAZIONE DI UN EVENTO SPORTIVO COME STRUMENTO PER IL RECUPERO DELLE ATTIVITÀ NATATORIE PER I BAMBINI CON DISABILITÀ DOPO IL PRIMO LOCKDOWN PER LA PANDEMIA SARS-COV-2

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Abstract¹

One of the effects of the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic was certainly the shutdown of sports activities for disabled people, that increased the difficulties of integrating disabled people into sports and activities.

Disabilities, major and minor, affect one in six people in the European Union (EU); this means that about 80 million people are unable to participate fully in everyday social and economic life. (Communication of the European Commission - European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment To a Barrier-Free Europe - Brussels 2010). The organization of events therefore becomes a movement of significant importance to which innovation and a new identity are necessary. Our research was based on the validity and positive feedback of a sports event called "All cleverly in the water", dedicated to the disabled. Three associations for the disabled participated in the event, as well as secondary schools of the town of Santa Maria Capua Vetere. The event took place at the public pool of Santa Maria Capua Vetere on July 12, 2020 and saw:

- Recreational activities
- Activities linked to autonomy in the water
- Activities regarding lifesaving practices

Subjects without disabilities also took part in the events.

The analysis and the elaboration of the data, as well as a survey given to the disabled subjects, the operators, family members and managers of the associations involved in the event, found that such an initiative results in moments of true inclusion, and the possibility to take advantage of certain structures and therefore carry out physical activities. The organization of the event demonstrated that the synergy between the players, the local organizations, the universities and schools, sports associations, and social associations, can bring about moments of confrontation and development to allow the realization of a consolidated program for the physical activities for the disabled.

Uno degli effetti della pandemia Sars-CoV-2 è stato certamente la chiusura delle attività sportive per i disabili, che ha aumentato le difficoltà di integrazione dei disabili nello sport e nelle attività.

Le disabilità, maggiori e minori, colpiscono una persona su sei nell'Unione Europea (UE); ciò significa che circa 80 milioni di persone non sono in grado di partecipare pienamente alla vita sociale ed economica quotidiana. (Comunicazione della Commissione europea - Strategia europea sulla disabilità 2010-2020: Un rinnovato impegno per un'Europa senza barriere - Bruxelles 2010).

L'organizzazione di eventi diventa quindi un movimento di notevole importanza per il quale sono necessarie inno-

¹This research article is the result of the collective work of the 2 authors and can be specifically divided as follows: Francesco Tafuri: Introduction - Discussion. Salvatore Napolitano: Methods and Materials - Conclusions.

vazione e una nuova identità. La nostra ricerca si è basata sulla validità e sui riscontri positivi di un evento sportivo chiamato “Tutti sapientemente in acqua”, dedicato ai disabili. All’evento hanno partecipato tre associazioni per disabili, oltre alle scuole secondarie di secondo grado del comune di Santa Maria Capua Vetere. L’evento si è svolto presso la piscina pubblica di Santa Maria Capua Vetere il 12 luglio 2020 e ha visto la partecipazione di tre associazioni per disabili:

- Attività ricreative
- Attività legate all’autonomia in acqua
- Attività relative alle pratiche di salvataggio

Hanno partecipato agli eventi anche soggetti senza disabilità.

Dall’analisi e dall’elaborazione dei dati, nonché da un’indagine svolta con i soggetti disabili, gli operatori, i familiari e i responsabili delle associazioni coinvolte nell’evento, è emerso che tale iniziativa si traduce in momenti di vero e proprio coinvolgimento e nella possibilità di usufruire di alcune strutture e quindi di svolgere attività fisiche. L’organizzazione dell’evento ha dimostrato che la sinergia tra gli operatori, le organizzazioni locali, le università e le scuole, le associazioni sportive e le associazioni sociali, può portare a momenti di confronto e di sviluppo per consentire la realizzazione di un programma consolidato di attività fisiche per i disabili.

Keywords

Event, synergy, disabled, motor activities

Evento, sinergia, disabili, attività motorie

Introduction

In the last thirty years, those who have found themselves or are part of the world of the disabled have taken part in a change in vocabulary. Each of these has symbolized the way in which the person was defined (handicapped, disabled, a person with a disability) or the theoretic and operative thought that moved politics and the actions in favor of these people. In the last few years, thanks to the ONU convention on the rights of the disabled of 2007, we have witnessed a new change: the new word is inclusion.

Sport is the gym of life, a fundamental element in social and relational instruction, a moment to meet and confront different realities. Sport brings together and aids comprehension, characterizing the values of reciprocal respect and loyalty. Sport becomes a tool for inclusion for the disabled, for those young people who, although having different capabilities compared to their peers, practice sports, and through this overcome the limits that destiny has given them.

Difficulties regarding the inclusion of disabled people in sporting activities and environments are on the rise and the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has accentuated and aggravated the situation.

The project “All cleverly in the water” takes into account the needs of young people and those in even more severe conditions and their need for participation, integration, and socialization through recreational and sporting activities that meet their needs. It also aims to offer innovative tools for both developing cognitive learning and strengthening the cognitive sphere encountered, as well as recovering from the vast area of handicap and discomfort.

One problem that affects society is without a doubt that of protecting the disabled population. Intense sport, as a moment of pure fun, pleasure, or simply the will to play, represents a gratifying activity that transmits a feeling of wellness to the disabled and helps them in the acceptance and understanding of their limits, that sometimes can be overcome. Sport can contribute to developing social integration offering relationships with friends, adults, sports instructors, disabled and not, and constitutes a further evolving dimension in which the subject can experiment. The dimension of Free Time represents an indicator of quality and today the quality of life is at the core of social health politics and, in the declaration of Madrid (2003), the

European Union affirmed that “sports and free time are equal to school and work.” It is on this principle that sports activities should be thought of as a true form of integration; integration that has already been seen in other fields. Disabilities, minor to major, affect one in six people of the European Union (EU), that is about 80 million people that often don’t have the possibility to fully participate in social and economic life (Communication of the European Commission- European Strategy for the disabled 2010-2020: A *Renewed* Commitment to a *Barrier-Free Europe* Brussels 2010).

1. Methods and Materials

The organization of events becomes a moment of significant importance. It is necessary to recognize new characteristics and a new identity. In 2004, ISTAT conducted a study on people with disabilities that live in families to gather, on one hand, the social integration of the disabled in their social context (relationships, school, work, free time, etc.), on the other hand, the factors that create barriers for these integrations (Mobility limitations, lack of necessary support, etc.) The world of the disabled, has experienced many transformations in the last 30 years, beginning in the 70’s with a call for the renovation of the services and the interventions, and coincides with the first phase of devolution of the competence of the state to the region.

It’s important to make the community aware of the problems regarding the world of the disabled and the help that sports could give them, because sport is the only reality that does not create distinctions among its participants. Understanding the psycho-physical and social disadvantage deriving from the condition occurring with “being handicapped” and that this situation can be overcome through the acquisition of a “different” culture. We can highlight specific and instructional objectives. -Instructional objectives are those to educate through aquatic activities; contribute to a balanced development of the personality (cognitive, emotional, and relational areas) -Specific objectives are those to educate to the water, through the acquisition of abilities in the following specific areas:

- Autonomy in the water
- learn swimming techniques
- Elements of water polo and synchronized swimming
- Fundamentals of life-saving and swimming underwater through understanding the aquatic environment
- Fundamentals of assistance and first aid
- Reappropriation of their environments in the post-Covid

2. Method

Five associations for the disabled and some secondary schools of the municipality of Santa Maria Capua Vetere took part in the event.

The event was held at the public swimming pool of Santa Maria Capua Vetere on 12 July 2020 in compliance with the anti Covid provisions and saw:

- Recreational activities
- Activities related to aquatic autonomy
- Life-saving activity

The events were also attended by people without disabilities.

Participants were collected and divided into equal groups, considering their age and disability.

Each group was led by 5 operators and the activity coordinator.

All groups carried out the following activities:

- Swimming competitions (long pool)
- Water games (12 x 8 m swimming pool)

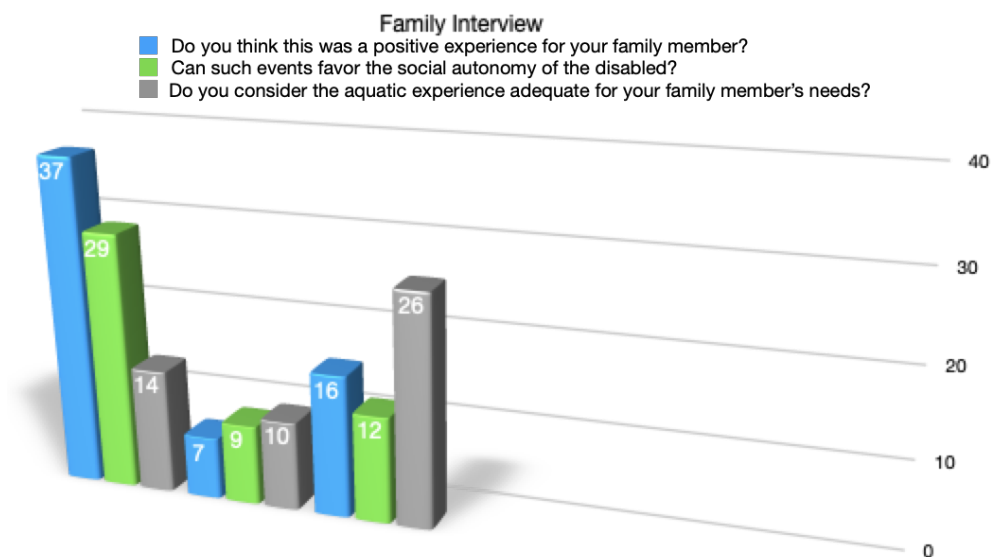
- Games aimed at the acquisition of motor schemes (swimming pool 10 x 6 meters)
- Therapeutic treatments (swimming pool for motor rehabilitation)
- Activities aimed at autonomy in deep waters and at understanding the major motions for assistance and life-saving techniques.

3. Discussion

Two interviews were handed out, one for the families and one for the disabled subjects, structured on three questions

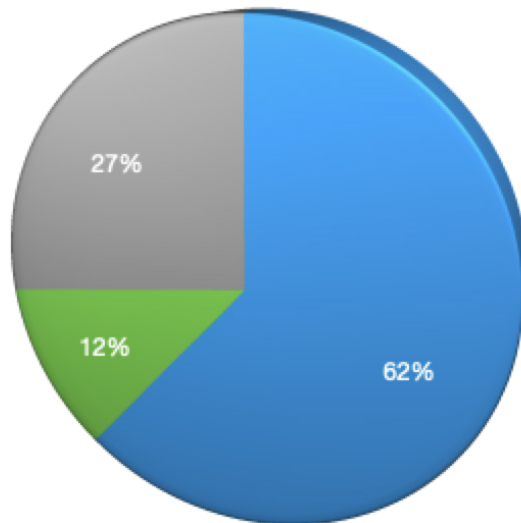
| Family Interview | | | |
|---|-----|----|--------------|
| Question | Yes | NO | Doesn't know |
| Do you think this was a positive experience for your family member? | 37 | 7 | 16 |
| Can such events favor the social autonomy of the disabled? | 29 | 9 | 12 |
| Do you consider the aquatic experience adequate for your family member's needs? | 14 | 10 | 26 |

Table n. 1



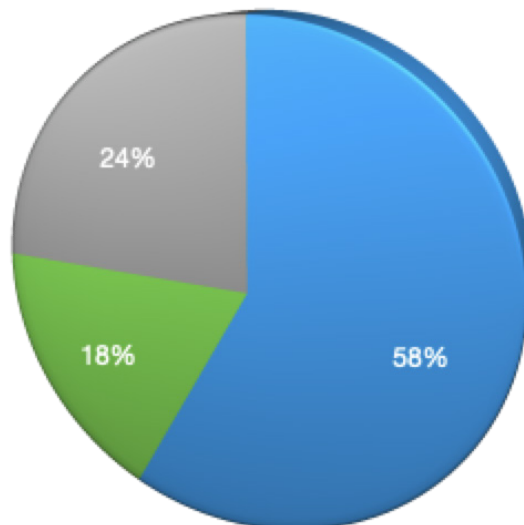
Graph n. 1

Do you think this was a positive experience for your family member?



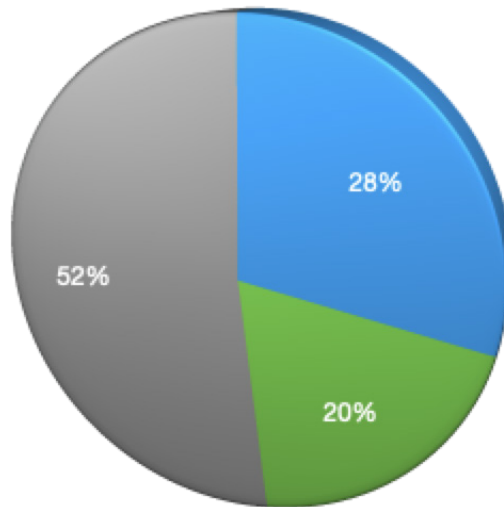
Graph n 2

Can such events favor the social autonomy of the disabled?



Graph n 3

Do you consider the aquatic experience adequate for your family member's needs?



Graph n 4

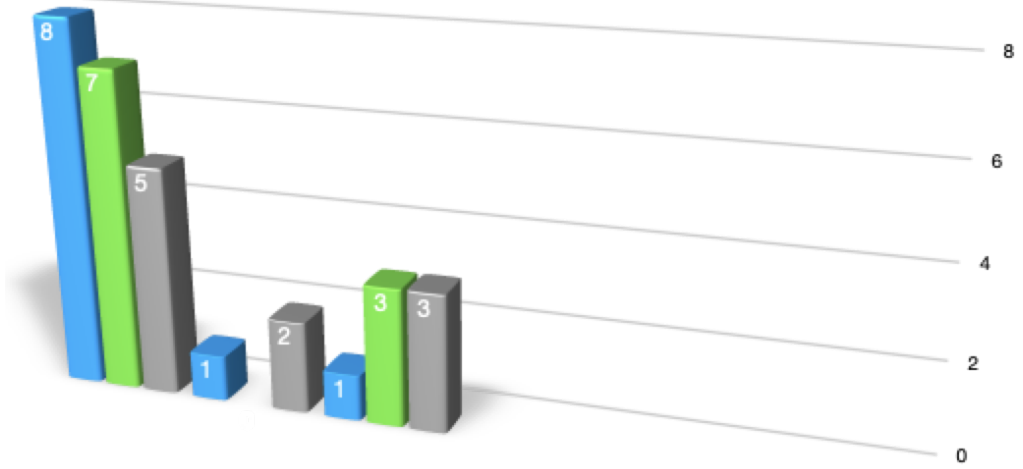
And one interview was handed out to the directors of the associations of the disabled participants, always based on three questions.

| Interview directors disabled associations | | | |
|--|-----|----|--------------|
| Question | Yes | NO | Doesn't know |
| Do you consider this initiative positive towards the improvement of your members' self esteem? | 8 | 1 | 1 |
| Has this event favored the process of socialization and integration of your members? | 7 | 0 | 3 |
| Do you consider the aquatic experience adequate for your members' needs? | 5 | 2 | 3 |

Table n. 2

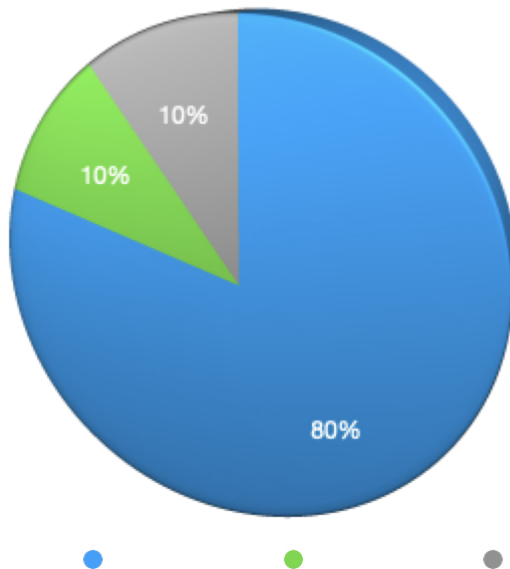
Interview directors disabled associations

- Do you consider this initiative positive towards the improvement of your members' self esteem?
- Has this event favored the process of socialization and integration of your members?
- Do you consider the aquatic experience adequate for your members' needs?



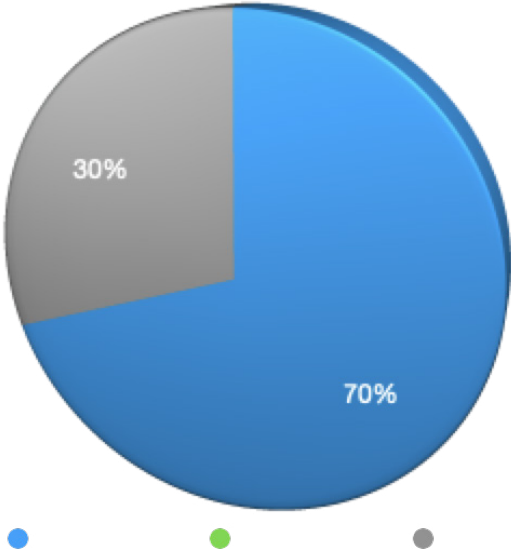
Graph n 5

Do you consider this initiative positive towards the improvement of your members' self esteem?



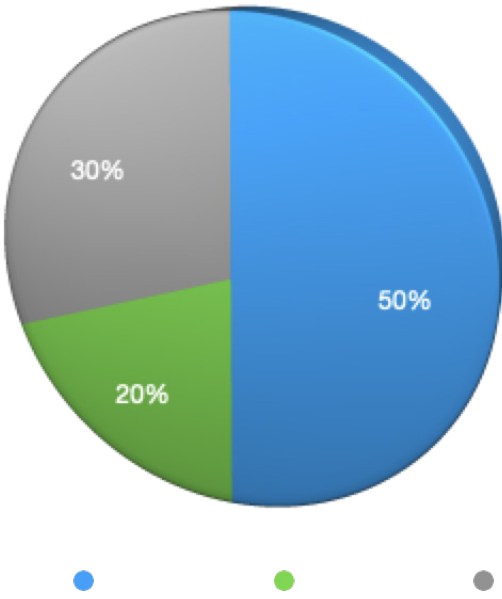
Graph n 6

Has this event favored the process of socialization and integration of your members?



Graph n 7

Do you consider the aquatic experience adequate for your members' needs?



Graph n 8

The data collected shows a great interest and high percentages in activities of this kind, by both the families and the representatives of the associations of the disabled involved.

Conclusions

The data collected allows us to affirm that our hypothesis has been verified. In fact, the numerous participants, disabled and none, were active and positive. Both the family members and the representatives of the Associations were pleased with the event, but above all they saw a new way of easing integration and inclusion. It appears to be evident that the irregular recurrence of these events is the weak link of our project, but at least we were able to prove the validity of such an event.

We can highlight as a strong point: The Association ACFFADIR (association for parents of the autistic), which, following this event, asked for biweekly meetings for their members to carry out and practice aquatic activities. It has almost been one year that 11 autistic subjects routinely attend the swimming facility of Santa Maria Capua Vetere.

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