PERFORMANCE OF KENYAN ATHLETES WITH PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS ON CLASSIFICATION ACTIVITY LIMITATION TESTS FOR RUNNING EVENTS AND RELATED INFLUENCING CONTEXTUAL FACTORS.

Student Name: Edna Thangu

SYNOPSIS
Numerous benefits have been associated with participation in sports by people with disabilities. For athletes to compete in sports they must be grouped based on how their impairments affect the outcome of their performances. Activity limitation tests are used in this process to enable classifiers differentiate between the trained and untrained athletes. The methods that are currently being used in Paralympic classification of athletes with physical impairments are not evidence-based and hence, athletes who have trained hard could find themselves competing with athletes who have a less impairment than them. Besides this issue of classification, other personal and environmental factors can also influence participation in sports by athletes with disabilities. Not much is known of these contextual factors of athletes from developing countries, including Kenya. This study assessed a battery of tests for activity limitation in running events by finding out the association between a criterion test (30 meters sprint time) and five tests which included; a standing broad jump, four bounds for distance, a 10 meters speed skip, 25 cycles of running in place as well as 25 cycles of split jumps. The battery, which has been found valid on nondisabled athletes, was developed and proposed for use in classification by an expert panel. However, its validity using athletes who have physical impairments was not known. On the personal factors, the study assessed the training history and motivation of the athletes in sports while indicators for environmental factors included access to facilities and equipment, coaching, and medical personnel. 67 athletes who had physical impairments and participated in running events in Kenya were selected for the study. Results indicated that there was a significant relationship between the criterion activity and performing the 4 bounds, Broad jumps and with the 10 meter speed skip. The battery of tests also statistically significantly predicted the performance measure of the 30 m sprint. On contextual factors, the participants were mainly intrinsically motivated to participate in sport. Most of the athletes did not have access to other sport training facilities and equipment to facilitate serious training. They also lacked medical personnel. The findings of this study showed that some of the tests in the activity limitation battery can be validly employed in decision making during the classification process to differentiate trained and untrained athletes and hence avoid misclassification. Other tests in the battery however need further investigation. Knowledge from the findings on the influence of personal and environmental factors have far reaching implications on policy practitioners and even by-standers in the sporting arena. The Ministry of Sports could formulate policies to inform and enhance the pedagogical and training practices in athletes with physical impairments. This
can promote and further enhance inclusive participation in sport and physical activity by individuals with disabilities in Kenya.