Research Note on Special Olympics

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Background

For the purpose of comparing Special Olympics with the Paralympics, The Nippon Foundation Paralympic Support Center's Paralympic Research Group has carried out research on various aspects of Special Olympics which can be used as a basis both to increase public knowledge on Special Olympics and to lay the ground in Japan for encouraging further academic studies on this subject.

The research is composed of the following eight parts:

1. Origin of Special Olympics
2. Origin of Special Olympics in Japan
3. The Significance of Special Olympics
4. Features of Criteria for Participation, Sports, and Competition Rules
5. Organization and Finance
6. Effects and Impacts
7. Special Olympics and Society
8. Issues and challenges of Special Olympics

1. Origin of Special Olympics

In her memoir, Kayoko Hosokawa, one of the leading figures in the establishment of Special Olympics Nippon (SON) in 1994, gives a summary of the origin of Special Olympics as below.

Special Olympics was established in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the sister of John F. Kennedy. The Kennedys had nine children. Rosemary, their eldest daughter,

had intellectual disability. For a long time, her parents concealed this fact from the public. After consulting with John F. Kennedy, who had become President in 1961, Eunice made her sister's condition public by contributing "Hope for Retarded Children"[1] in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1962. In the same year, she started Camp Shriver, a day camp for children with intellectual disabilities in her home in Maryland, in the U.S. Expanding her activities with the support of the Joseph Kennedy Jr. Foundation, she organized the first International Special Olympics Games in Chicago in July 1968 and announced the establishment of Special Olympics[2] (Note 1).

This implies that there are three key factors in exploring the origin of Special Olympics: first, Eunice's personal conviction and initiative in taking action; second, political support from President Kennedy; and third, the support, including financial support, of the Kennedy family and the cooperation of the people around them.

What lay behind the first of the three factors, Eunice's personal conviction and passion, was the shadow cast by her sister Rosemary. Rosemary's intellectual disability was caused by lack of oxygen during birth delivery. Her condition was not severe at first. She played tennis, was good at swimming, travelled to Europe with Eunice, and enjoyed mountain climbing in Switzerland. In her early twenties however, she began to exhibit violent behavior. Her father decided that Rosemary should have a lobotomy performed, but her condition worsened after the surgery. Rosemary had to live her life in an institution.[3]

What happened to Rosemary must have had a considerable impact on Eunice and prompted her to begin her work with people with intellectual disabilities.

At the same time, Eunice was deeply religious and her faith may have supported her enthusiasm.[4] She also liked sports. It is possible to draw the conclusion that all of these aspects in Eunice played a role in the establishment of Special Olympics.

It was, however, not only Eunice's personal motivation that transformed her belief and passion into concrete actions. There was also the trend of public opinion in the U.S. at that time and the "political" turmoil surrounding the Kennedys.

Already in the 1950s, people such as Congressman John Fogarty of Rhode Island and Archbishop of Boston Richard Cushing, who was close to the Kennedys, had promoted a social and political movement to address issues surrounding people with

intellectual disability in the U.S. It helped lead to the enactment of a law in 1958 on the training of teachers for educating and training people with intellectual disabilities.[5)]

Against the backdrop of this trend in public opinion and with the urging of Eunice, President John F. Kennedy announced the establishment of the Panel on Mental Retardation in October 1961. The following year, the panel set up six task forces to begin fully deliberating on the issues.[6)]

In addition to their enthusiasm in supporting people with intellectual disabilities, these actions by President Kennedy and the people surrounding him may have been politically motivated. President Kennedy, conscious of the significant contribution made by Roosevelt in the treatment of polio and by Eisenhower in the treatment of heart disease and cancer, may have had a political ambition to make a mark in the field of medicine or welfare as President.[7)] The Kennedys, including Eunice, may also have been politically motivated to make the family's somewhat aristocratic or elitist image less prominent by showing to the public their ardent efforts in addressing the issues of people with intellectual disabilities.[8)]

We should, however, not overlook the conflict between the Kennedys' conscience, and the political considerations and public image, behind the Kennedys' actions.

To begin with, for a long time, the Kennedys publicly "disguised" Rosemary's condition, saying that Rosemary was taking care of children with intellectual disabilities in an institution. However, from around the time of the inauguration of John F. Kennedy as President, the Kennedy family began to explain that Rosemary was suffering from cerebral palsy.[9)] Considering the circumstances and timing of these announcements, Eunice's contribution to the *Saturday Evening Post* in September 1962 that called for improvement in the conditions of people with intellectual disabilities and that disclosed the truth about Rosemary's condition, may have been intended to avert criticism that it was politically inconsistent for the President to be working in earnest on the issues of people with intellectual disabilities, while trying to "conceal" the fact that he had a family member who had intellectual disability. In other words, the Kennedy family may have taken action based on the realization that eliminating the tendency of families to "conceal" the existence of a family member with intellectual disability was actually the first step in socially and politically addressing the issues of people with intellectual disabilities.

Furthermore, in looking at the developments that led from the Kennedy administration's work on issues of people with intellectual disability to the establishment of Special Olympics, we cannot deny the role that President Kennedy's tragic death played in pushing Eunice in her efforts.[10)]

We must next turn to financial support and the cooperation of the people surrounding the Kennedys. Against the backdrop of a boom in establishing family foundations in the U.S., Joseph Kennedy (the father of President Kennedy), who had made a fortune from real estate investment, set up the Mercié Foundation in May 1945 for charitable work for the education and protection of those suffering from poverty and ill health, and for supporting the political and social activities of his family members. In October of the same year, the foundation became the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation.[11)] From around 1947, Joseph Kennedy, who was in effect the head of the foundation, decided partly with the influence of Archbishop Cushing of Boston, that the foundation would start to provide support for people with intellectual disabilities.[12)] However, the foundation's support for projects related to people with intellectual disabilities seems to have made up only about 17% of all of the foundation's expenditure in 1957.[13)] That percentage rose to 66% by 1960, which may have been due to the expansion in the political activities of John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy (Note 2). The more active involvement of the U.S. Congress in issues of people with intellectual disabilities from the latter half of the 1950s may also have influenced the Kennedys' stance.

Moreover, new initiatives were being launched in Connecticut and other places in the U.S., based on the concept that rather than isolate people with intellectual disabilities in institutions, it was important to build communities where people with intellectual disabilities could participate in activities, as noted by Eunice in her contribution in the *Saturday Evening Post*. These developments may also have influenced the Shrivers.

On the other hand, as support for people with intellectual disabilities expanded beyond institutions and small local communities and developed into the Special Olympics movement on a national scale, there was strong opposition that maintained that such an approach was unrealistic.[14)] In the face of such opposition, by 1962, the Shrivers and a number of others had the idea of organizing a sporting event for people with intellectual disabilities with rules that were as rigorous as those of the

Olympics. The idea originated from the growing awareness among Eunice and others like her, that people with intellectual disabilities can be encouraged to participate in sports, but if it remained at the level of leisure or recreation, they would only be engaging in sports "passively." For people with intellectual disability to adopt a more active attitude and participate in sports with motivation, there was a need for sporting activities that introduced the principle of competition based on measurement of physical fitness and ability. Against this backdrop, the first International Special Olympics Games was organized in Chicago in July 1968.[15)]

2. Origin of Special Olympics in Japan

The origin of Special Olympics in Japan dates back to 1979. That year, Sadaaki Yamamoto, an Anglican priest in Japan who was dedicated to the care and education of people with intellectual disabilities and children with Down syndrome, and who ran the St. Michael's School as well as the Trainable School for early treatment and training of children with Down syndrome in Kamakura, visited the U.S., where he met Eunice, who recommended Japan's membership in Special Olympics.[16)] As Yamamoto was launching activities for joining Special Olympics, Hideo Suzuki, who had studied in the U.S. in 1974 and who had been deeply impressed with the Special Olympics movement before returning to Japan to teach at Kanto Gakuin University, offered to support Yamamoto.[17)]

With the support of Suzuki, Yamamoto established the Japan Special Olympics Committee (JSOC) in April 1980. In the following year, the first Japan Special Olympics National Games were organized for the first time in Japan (Note 3), and in 1983, JSOC sent 68 Japanese athletes to the sixth International Special Olympics Summer Games in Louisiana, USA.[18)] The national games in Japan were organized in 1982, 1983, 1986, and 1987, but then were not organized for several years. In 1990 and 1991, the national games were organized under the banner of Japan Special Olympics and Sports for the Mentally Retarded. We can conjecture that several factors were responsible for this, including the site of the venue, which had to alternate between Tokyo and Osaka (with the exception of the first national games which were held in Fujisawa, Kanagawa), the coordination between local and national organizations, the

relationship between supporters of Special Olympics and supporters of people with intellectual disabilities, conflicting views on the games' orientation towards competition, and issues related to securing funding and human resources[19] (Note 4).

Partly due to these complicated circumstances, JSOC decided to dissolve in May 1992. The national games for people with intellectual disabilities were organized in November of the same year, as the National Sports Games for the Mentally Retarded Yuaipic Tokyo.[20]

Following the dissolution of JSOC, Katsuko Nakamura, a former physical education teacher who had been deeply impressed with the spirit of Special Olympics through a meeting with Yamamoto in 1982, and who had organized the Special Olympics Kumamoto Preparatory Committee for the 1983 International Games in Louisiana, relaunched the movement in 1992, trying to win the support of local influential figures.[21] Nakamura contacted Kayoko Hosokawa and asked her for support. Hosokawa responded and moved to revive JSOC and establish Special Olympics Nippon (SON).[22]

It should be noted that this movement in Japan showed that there was a closer link with Special Olympics International (SOI) than before. This is apparent in the participation of a member of the Board of Directors of SOI at a briefing session on Special Olympics held in October 1992[23] and the launch of the national organization moving forward in step with sending athletes to the fifth Special Olympics World Winter Games in March 1993 in Salzburg, Austria. At that time, Hosokawa's husband Morihiro (the 79th Prime Minister of Japan) had formed a new political party and was becoming a central figure in the realignment of the national political landscape. In her memoir, Kayoko recounts that she took care not to give the impression that the Special Olympics movement was part of her husband's political movement.[24] While that may be accurate, there is no doubt that the remarkable rise of Morihiro in politics indirectly provided a substantial backing to broaden support, within for instance the business world and the mass media, for the movement that Kayoko was promoting.[25]

As a result, SON was established in November 1994 (following the establishment of Special Olympics Kumamoto in March 1993) and the first Special Olympics Nippon Summer National Games were organized in Kumamoto in 1995.[26]

In addition, the growing national interest and participation in volunteer activities in

the wake of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of January 1995, and the rising corporate trend in strengthening corporate social responsibility may also have contributed to the subsequent expansion of the Special Olympics movement.

3. The Significance of Special Olympics

While the significance of Special Olympics can be deduced from its origin and history, we should to be precise, separate the meaning of Special Olympics in its role as sports activities for people with intellectual disabilities, from its role as an event with an Olympics-like format.

In the significance of Special Olympics in its work in sports activities for people with intellectual disabilities, one of its functions is improving and maintaining the health of people with intellectual disabilities.

A survey conducted not on people with intellectual disabilities but on those who support them - families, volunteers, coaches, and sporting organizations, for example - showed that "health and physical fitness" was one of the five factors identified as reasons for people with intellectual disabilities to participate in sports activities, in responses such as "sports activities help to maintain health" and "sports activities lead to improved physical fitness."[27] It has also been noted that people with intellectual disabilities generally tend to be more overweight than those without such disabilities,[28] and there is much support for the view that exercise, particularly intense exercise such as competitive sports, helps to reduce obesity and maintain good health.

In addition to subjective motives, there are also objective factors that make sports activities particularly important for the improvement and maintenance of health for people with intellectual disabilities. This is connected to the life expectancy of people with intellectual disabilities, which is shorter than those without such disabilities, and a high mortality rate particularly among young people with intellectual disabilities.[29] It remains to be verified whether the short life expectancy and high mortality rate are directly related to lack of exercise. It should be also examined what type of exercise, including competitive sports, has any additional benefits beyond recreation or basic physical exercise. A survey has shown improvement in physical fitness and skills among athletes who participate in regular training,[30] but the results cannot be

generalized, considering that the survey covers a limited number of events and a small sample of athletes (Note 5). It is also unclear whether improvement in competitive performance can be linked directly with improvement in physical fitness and health. Results of research conducted in Japan and abroad have shown that in general, people with intellectual disabilities have a lower level of muscle strength and a smaller range of hip joint movement compared to those who do not have intellectual disabilities,[31] but it is debatable whether such a fact could be regarded as evidence of lack of exercise among people with intellectual disabilities and the need for exercise. The cause and effect relationship could be seen as being the opposite.

Nevertheless, improvement of health of people with intellectual disabilities is central to the objectives of Special Olympics. This is reflected in the statement on SOI's official website: "Our goal is to bring better fitness, nutrition and healthier lifestyles to everyone involved in Special Olympics - from athletes and their families, to coaches and volunteers."[32]

The effect that the adoption of a competitive game format has on the minds of participating athletes, is described in many anecdotes that point to the elevated emotions of the athletes and the confidence the athletes gain through their participation in the games, but most of these anecdotes are limited to the observations of families, friends, and those who support the games.

A change in the self-awareness of people with intellectual disabilities, however, is an objective of Special Olympics as reflected in the words of Hosokawa: "What we value most in Special Olympics is not to defeat others but to 'better oneself over one's performance the day before,' and to 'not necessarily become the world's number one but to become uniquely oneself, the only one in the world.'"[33] Although the expressions are slightly different, a common thread runs through Eunice Shriver's following words, "The most important thing in Special Olympics is not who is the strongest or most vigorous. It is the spirit to overcome individual barriers. Winning medals lose their significance without this spirit. However, there is no defeat if this spirit is there."[34] The meaning of Special Olympics for athletes with intellectual disabilities, in other words, can also be described as change in self-awareness from being a person with intellectual disability to being an athlete.

In addition to the effect that Special Olympics has on the athletes, the significance of Special Olympics is also apparent in its effect on families, friends, and others who

support the athletes

Interaction with people with intellectual disabilities produces two-way "benefits" between the supporter and the assisted, and can remind those who support people with intellectual disabilities of what often becomes "forgotten" in contemporary society. People have described these qualities as purity, friendliness, and the importance of taking the time to wait.[35)]

This is a result of interaction with people with intellectual disabilities, and not inherent to supporting sports activities for people with intellectual disabilities. If Special Olympics can provide people who normally have few opportunities to interact with people with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to interact, then a significance of Special Olympics is in providing that opportunity to a large number of people. It is a result not of sports, but of organizing a large event with the participation of a large number of people with intellectual disabilities. It needs to be examined whether the effects of such interaction can be felt more easily through sports activities as compared with other types of activities.

4. Features of Criteria for Participation, Sports, and Competition Rules

(1) Criteria for Participation

People with intellectual disabilities can participate in Special Olympics, but how is "people with intellectual disabilities" defined, and what qualification is needed to participate?

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, on its "e-health net" website,[36)] defines intellectual disability as "1. clear delay in the development of general intellectual functions compared with children of the same age (IQ test score of 70 or under in an intelligence test)," "2. with clear limitations in adaptive functions," and "3. occurring by the age of 18."

The Special Olympics Official General Rules[37)] provide that those who meet the following qualification criteria can participate in Special Olympics:

(1) The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability;

(2) The person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as IQ testing or other measures which are generally accepted

within an agency in the accredited nation as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay; or

(3) The person has a closely related developmental disability.

A "closely related developmental disability" means having functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and in adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care). However, people whose functional limitations are based solely on a physical, behavioral, or emotional disability, or a specific learning or sensory disability, are not eligible to participate as Special Olympics athletes, but may be eligible to volunteer for Special Olympics.

Therefore, the definition of a person with intellectual disability in Special Olympics includes not only the medical conditions but also the person's relationship with society. In that respect, the term "mental disabilities" is better suited to this definition than the medical term "mental retardation."[38] The minimum age for participation is eight, but accredited programs may permit children from the age of six to participate.[39]

The procedures for participating in Special Olympics are as set forth below. First, a person who has registered with an accredited program (local organization) registers as a Special Olympic athlete after undergoing physical examination and obtaining approval from his or her family, after which the athlete will participate in training, for a minimum of eight weeks, for an official or semi-official event and then participate in a local competition to record performance. The athlete then participates in the national games, and based on the records at the national games, a decision is made on whether the athlete can take part in the world games (Notes 6 and 7).

As these participation procedures show, Special Olympics places an emphasis on practice and training (often called a "Program") before actually entering a competition. Such Programs focus on practice for a particular event as well as warming up and jogging.[40] The Programs are intended not only to improve the physical fitness and performance of athletes, but also to invigorate the Special Olympics movement locally, and particularly to train volunteers.[41]

(2) Sports

According to the official SOI website, four events (athletics, swimming, water polo, and floor hockey) were held at the first International Special Olympics Summer Games (Chicago) in 1968,[42] and 10 events (basketball, bowling, floor hockey, gymnastics, pentathlon, softball throw, athletics, swimming, diving, and volleyball) at the fourth International Special Olympics Games (Mount Pleasant) in 1975.[43] At the 2015 Special Olympics World Summer Games (Los Angeles),[44] 26 sports (swimming, athletics, badminton, basketball, beach volleyball, bocce, bowling, cycling, equestrian, football, golf, gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics, half-marathon, handball, judo, kayaking, open water swimming, powerlifting, roller skating, sailing, softball, table tennis, tennis, triathlon, and volleyball) were recorded.

As shown above, Special Olympics has adopted highly competitive sports as well as recreational sports, sports that aim to enhance one's fitness levels, and sports that are linked with everyday exercise. It also includes sports such as bocce that were specifically developed for people with physical disabilities. The Special Olympics events are truly wide ranging. Moreover, unlike the Olympics and Paralympics, efforts are not made to restrict the number of sports. It appears that there is more flexibility (and fluctuation) in Special Olympics in the number of sports compared with the Olympics and Paralympics.

(3) Competition Rules

A distinguishing characteristic of Special Olympics is the rules of competition. Special Olympics differs from the Olympic and Paralympic Games in the way it introduces competitiveness. One aspect is grouping athletes by "divisioning." Athletes are grouped by gender as well as age. For example, at the 2005 World Winter Games in Nagano (hereafter referred to as the "Nagano Games"), athletes were divided into the age groups of 8-11, 12-15, 16-21, 22-29, and over 30 for each individual event, and for each team event into the age groups of under 15, 16-21, and over 22, based on the age of the oldest competing athlete (if there was a particularly large age group, that group was further subdivided).[45]

After the athletes are divided into age groups, they are further divided into smaller groups based on their records at the preliminary events so that athletes of similar ability are grouped together. The number of athletes in each group must be more

than three, but not more than eight. The element of competition would be diminished if there are fewer than three athletes, and a group of more than eight athletes would create a wide disparity in performance between the most and least competitive athletes so that the least able will have little chance of ranking at the top no matter how hard they tried. In other words, it appears that this rule, by dividing athletes of similar ability into small groups, is intended to promote competition among athletes as well as to give all athletes a chance to reach the top.

As a result, in comparison with the Winter Paralympic Games in Sochi (2014) and the Winter Deaflympics in Khanty-Mansiysk (2015), which had 72 and 31 finals respectively, the Nagano Games (2005) had the equivalent of 661 finals.[46)47)48)]

The implications from the unique concept of divisioning in Special Olympics are that the objective of the games is not necessarily in having athletes perform well in comparison with other athletes, but rather in comparison with their past performance.

This system, however, is open to "cheating" whereby an athlete could intentionally perform poorly in preliminary events to be grouped with athletes with a lower ability and win the competition in the final. To prevent this from happening, the Maximum Effort Rule (formerly called the Honest Effort Rule) is adopted at Special Olympics Games. This rule prescribes that an athlete who exceeds his or her performance either in preliminary events or in records submitted in advance by 15% or more in the final, will be disqualified (in events such as skiing in which the weather may have a significant effect on performance, a jury review is adopted and the threshold of 15% does not seem to be strictly adhered to).[49)]

Another prominent feature of Special Olympics is that it has introduced Unified Sports®[50)] (Note 8) in which athletes with intellectual disabilities participate together with athletes who do not have disabilities as teammates. For example, at the Nagano Games, athletes with and without intellectual disabilities participated together as pairs in figure skating and as teams in cross-country skiing relays (two athletes with and two athletes without intellectual disabilities).[51)]

(4) Awards

Special Olympics's distinctive approach to competition is also apparent in the awards given to athletes.

First, based on the notion that the athletes do not represent their home countries,

there is apparently no raising of the national flag.[52] Ranking is announced based on performance. Medals are presented to the first, second and third-place winners, and ribbons are presented to athletes who finish in fourth through eighth place so that all athletes are awarded. In addition, there is a prize for special recognition for athletes who have made a significant effort. For example, a Japanese athlete who entered a skating event at the Salzburg Games in 1993 was disqualified when he failed to stand up from his chair after his name was called three times at the preliminary event, but was allowed to take part in the final, and even though he finished last, was awarded the prize for special recognition.[53]

Furthermore, there are events in which athletes do not compete for ranking, such as the Motor Activity Training Program (MATP). MATP is a special program for athletes with severe or profound intellectual disabilities who cannot participate in standard training programs or games. Athletes in MATP take part in a combination of exercises such as going over obstacles and putting balls in a basket. There is no ranking based on performance, and MATP challenge awards are given in recognition of athletes who took on the challenge of participating in MATP.[54][55]

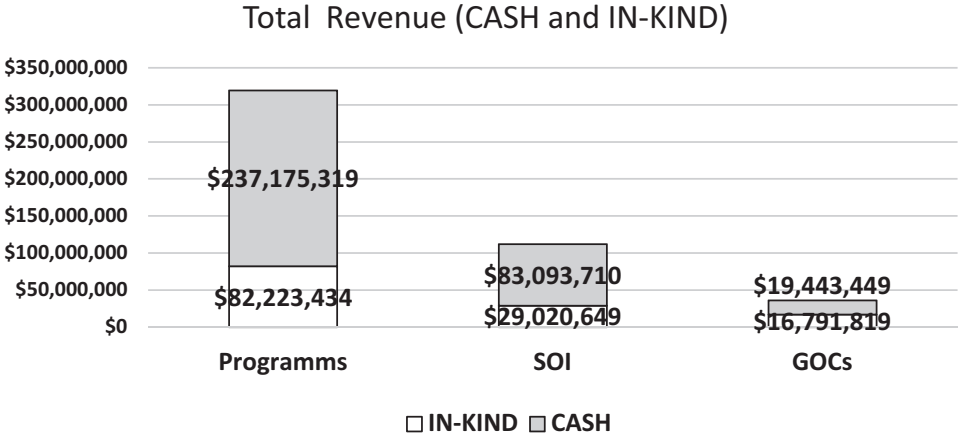
5. Organization and Finance

Organizations in 172 countries around the world support the Special Olympics movement[56] (Note 9), and each country has local chapters[57] (Note 10). The SOI headquarters is the world's governing body and undertakes management of the games, organizes the environment to enable athletes to participate in the games, and also works to train and mobilize local volunteers.

In terms of funding, approx. $319 million was donated in 2014 to programs accredited by SOI, of which approx. $82 million was donated in the form of products or services. This is another distinguishing feature of Special Olympics.

SOI had an income of some $110 million, and the Games Organizing Committees (GOCs) have an income of some $36 million. The figure below illustrates this income with a breakdown by cash and in-kind income.

Figure 1. Breakdown of the Total Income of Special Olympics Movement in 2014



Special Olympics International, 2015 Reach Report, https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/reports/reach-reports/2015_Special_Olympics_Reach-Report.pdf, (January 16, 2018), 26.

The financial structure above shows that the implementation of programs in each country and region, and not the organizing of the World Games, is central to the Special Olympics movement. The fact that 77% of all income is generated in North America[58] also shows that the movement is centered in the U.S.

6. Effects and Impacts

Various types of studies and research have been conducted in the U.S. and other countries on the effect or impact of Special Olympics in relation to government policies for people with intellectual disabilities, its meaning as sports activities for improving physical abilities and social adaptation, and its effect in promoting volunteer activities and donations from corporations.

When we consider the effect or impact of Special Olympics, we need to first clarify the perspective from which to approach this issue.

First, we can analyze the effect that sports, and particularly competitive sports, has on people with intellectual disabilities. Second, we must look at the effect that the Special Olympics Games has as a large-scale sporting event that differs significantly in experience from the participants' everyday lives. The latter, moreover, should consider the effect not only on the athletes, but also on the families who provide support for the athletes as well as the effect on society at large.

(1) Effect of Sports Activities on Athletes

It is generally accepted, partly due to the high youth mortality rate among people with intellectual disabilities mentioned above, that exercise is meaningful for the health of people with intellectual disabilities. In fact, there is notable research that suggests that exercise is the single most effective way of improving the health of 500 people with intellectual disabilities living in different residential conditions in the UK.[59] There is also multiple research that, although limited in scope to young people with Down syndrome, has verified the mental and physical effects that physical exercise can have.

Bartlo et al.[60] have reviewed related studies and summarized what kind of exercise was effective in improving which type of physical ability in people with intellectual disabilities.[61] The main points of the studies are as follows.

The age of people with intellectual disabilities who were the subjects of the research ranged from 18 to 65, the types of exercise ranged from aerobic exercise to stretching and balance training, the duration of exercise was from 10 to 45 minutes, the frequency of exercise was about three times a week, and the period of engaging in the exercise ranged from three to six months. The benefits of exercise were reduced anxiety, improved body balance, better quality of life (QOL), overall improvement in physical ability, longer walking distance, increased satisfaction in life, greater endurance, and improvement in performance, as outlined in several separate papers (with some overlap).

These and other research results prove that exercise helps to improve physical ability and increase the mental satisfaction of people with intellectual disabilities. However, most of the research focuses only on recreational sports and moderate exercise, and does not fully cover the benefits of competitive sports. Moreover, most of the research does not provide a comparison with people without intellectual disabilities, and the number of subjects is limited to between 10 and 50, and there are questions regarding how much the results can be generalized. In addition, many athletes who participate in the Special Olympics World Games undergo for many years of training. Assessing the multi-year effect on such athletes would be even more difficult since a greater number of factors, such as changes in the environment surrounding the athletes over time, will need to be considered.

Considering that the pressing issue for people with intellectual disabilities is less

about insufficiency in physical ability but more about the lack of opportunity to engage in sports, it will be meaningful to examine the effects of Special Olympics from a more indirect, and completely different angle. For example, it is possible to argue that we should examine whether the Special Olympics Games are increasing opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities in countries that provided few opportunities to participate in sports, to participate in sports and in regional and national games. The comparatively large increase in the number of Special Olympics athletes from Africa and Asia (excluding East Asia) over the U.S. and Europe (excluding the Middle East, which is affected by political instability and prolonged conflicts), as shown in the statistical table 1 below, indirectly points to the effect that Special Olympics is having in developing countries (in terms of providing opportunities to participate in the Special Olympics movement).

Table 1. Increase in the Number of Athletes (%) (from 2011 to 2015)

Africa	14.9
Asia Pacific	9.1
East Asia	2.2
Europe	−1.4
South America	2.3
Middle East and North Africa	−0.5
North America	0.2

出典：Special Olympics International, 2015 Reach Report, https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/reports/reach-reports/2015_Special_Olympics_Reach-Report.pdf, (January 16, 2018), 6.

(2) Effect of Participation in Special Olympics on Athletes

Also connected is the question of what effect Special Olympics has on athletes not as sports activities in the broad sense but specifically as international events or games.

Families, coaches, sports officials, and others in a position to observe athletes' attitudes have pointed out that by participating in the Special Olympics Games, athletes were able to gain confidence and self-esteem as well as a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment.[62)]

As a way of verifying the above point, the research report "*Special Olympics*

Nippon 20 Nen no Kensho" (Observing the Last 20 Years of Special Olympics Nippon) [63] was published to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Special Olympics Nippon. In this research, Special Olympics was considered as a venue or means for self-expression by people with intellectual disabilities and based on this assumption, it conducted a 22-item questionnaire survey of some 1,200 people, including athletes' families, coaches, and volunteers, on the effect and impact that Special Olympics has on athletes. The results showed that the benefits can be broadly categorized into three areas: (1) social skills (for example, improvement in conducting daily activities and in communication skills) ; (2) emotional and psychological benefits (for example, increased satisfaction and confidence) ; and (3) physical benefits (for example, improvement in physical strength).[64]

And in the U.S., interviews were conducted with parents of athletes who participated either in sailing or kayaking, to compare their reactions with those of the parents of athletes who did not participate in Special Olympics. The results show a quantitative difference that supports the significance of participating in Special Olympics in terms of raising one's sense of fulfillment and self-esteem.[65]

On the other hand, other research shows that participation in Special Olympics for longer than a certain period of time does not greatly help to increase the participants' self-esteem or confidence.[66] In response to the results, some claim that such results may be because athletes who had already gained a higher level of confidence through an activity will not show a significant increase in their level of confidence just because they participated in Special Olympics, and that there needs to be a measurement of their original level of confidence. Others point out that the "degree of achievement," as measured by whether they received an award or the ranking they attained, may weigh more heavily in the minds of the athletes than the act of or the duration or frequency of participating in Special Olympics activities.

In Canada, a survey was conducted of 49 athletes registered with regional Special Olympics chapters across Ontario on the effect of Special Olympics over a period of 42 months. Results showed that the more time athletes spent involved in Special Olympics and the higher levels of attainment (for example, awards of medals) over the 42-month period reported, the higher their sense of self-esteem.[67]

In a study limited to athletes who won medals at events in the U.S., results showed improvement in self-esteem and social competence as a result of participating in

Special Olympics activities, when compared with those who did not participate.[68)]

The problem with such studies, however, is that even if participation in Special Olympics activities is beneficial in terms of athletes' self-esteem and social competence, few studies go as far as to analyze the true determining factors of such positive outcomes: whether they are the result of stimulation from participating in an event that differs significantly from the participants' everyday lives, the result of participating in sports activities, the result of an increase in social contact, or the result of stimulation from participating in activities of a competitive nature.

(3) Special Olympics and Athletes' Families

People with intellectual disabilities require the support of families and others to participate in Special Olympics activities. Moreover, most surveys rely on interviews with families and other supporters to measure the benefits that participation in Special Olympics activities brings to the athletes. For these reasons, efforts have been made to understand the effect or impact that Special Olympics has on athletes as well as their family members. In this context, we first need to clarify the motivation with which families, and in particular parents, have their children participate in Special Olympics and what kind of benefits they expect from such participation.

Research was conducted to compare such motivation in several countries, including Brazil and Argentina. Results from interviews with 130 families in Argentina showed that 26% considered improved self-esteem and self-confidence as the top-priority motivator, 36% said improved social skills and relationships with others, 22% said better health, and 17% said improved sports skills.[69)] Similar results were obtained in Brazil.[70)]

As for family members' assessment of the actual results of participating in Special Olympics, results of interviews with 120 family members of athletes in the U.S. (104 mothers, 49 fathers, and 38 siblings) show that 69% of the respondents indicate social skills, 35% indicate impact on self-concept, 34% indicate social participation, while only 29% indicate physical improvement.

These types of studies, however, examine how families assess the impact on athletes, and families are grouped together with athletes into one identity. In other words, the effect or impact on family members is substituted by the effect or impact on the athletes. To avoid such "identification," some research has tried to verify -

based on the assumption that families (mothers, in this case) of people with intellectual disabilities feel stress and a sense of isolation - how effective Special Olympics is in freeing mothers from stress and related emotions. Results show that the less stress mothers are feeling in their relationship with their children, the higher frequency of mothers having their children participate in Special Olympics activities.[71] It is unclear, however, whether it is linked with the "result" of participation, or with the "motivation or enthusiasm" for participation. Other research also shows that it remains unclear whether the stress or sense of isolation felt by mothers decreased when compared with before or at the start of participating in Special Olympics.

Special Olympics activities may have a recreational effect on participating parents over time, as they continue to participate (the level of stress may increase at first). They may also provide parents with an opportunity to meet other parents sharing a similar set of concerns and problems and establish a social support network, and can extend to having an impact on public opinion. In fact, the true meaning of Special Olympics for parents may have less to do with having an active impact on mothers themselves, and more to do with the opportunity that Special Olympics may provide as a catalyst for stimulating public opinion, and as an inspiration for parents to change public opinion.[72]

7. Special Olympics and Society: its Impact on Changing Perceptions and Attitudes towards People with Intellectual Disabilities

The issue of Special Olympics's effect on families, discussed above, shows where its effect on athletes meets with its effect on society at large.

To begin with, it is clear that the effect on athletes is interrelated with the effect on their families, and this can extend further to friends and local communities, and to society's views and the attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities.

Based on this assumption, there are many "anecdotes" that have been told about the effect that Special Olympics has on the perception of those without intellectual disability. The example below describes the reaction of a junior high school student who went to see a sports competition for people with intellectual disabilities that was organized as part of Special Olympics activities.[73]

"I noticed something today," said Izumi. "It's about what happened on the train just now." She was talking about a boy with intellectual disability making a lot of noise on the train.

"The boy was making noise but his mother looked calm, which made me think at first that she might be waiting for someone to stop him." Izumi took a sip of her tea bottle and continued, "But I realized that wasn't so. Making noise like that is nothing unusual for the boy. He was trying to express himself. If his mother got upset, he wouldn't know what to do. That's why she was behaving that way."

Izumi was imagining that his mother needed to show, through her attitude, that she trusted the boy.

This was an anecdote about the reaction of a young woman who went to see the 1st Floor Hockey Games held in Tokyo in June 2004. It shows that she realized what those without intellectual disability should respect when they are around people with intellectual disabilities and their families. This anecdote has implications for the social significance of organizing events related to Special Olympics.

A more complicated social reaction is related to volunteerism in Special Olympics. One of the features of Special Olympics is the participation of a large number of volunteers, and the following comment by a physician who has for many years participated in the Special Olympics movement is noteworthy:[74] "Today, Special Olympics volunteers are acquiring a good, professional attitude. What concerns me about this, is that they tend to become a bit critical against other volunteers who are less active or efficient. There is a risk that we will stray from the principle that 'anyone should be allowed to take part as volunteers.' I think volunteers should be amateurs and not professionals." This is an example of how participating in Special Olympics activities resulted in a deeper insight. This may have implications for the value, or the potential value, that Special Olympics has in shaping sports volunteerism.

As a standard of measuring the social impact of Special Olympics, we also need to analyze the results of questionnaire surveys on whether there has been a change in the way people without intellectual disability see people with intellectual disabilities,

making a comparison of before and after training or participation in Special Olympics Games. Such questionnaire surveys have been aimed either at people with intellectual disabilities and their families, or people without intellectual disability. An example of the former is a survey conducted by Weiss et al.[75] According to this survey, those who won medals at the Ontario Special Olympics (in the competition and the training leading up to the competition) felt that they experienced a higher level of social acceptance.[76]

This result may indicate that the Special Olympics contributes to the social acceptance of people with intellectual disabilities. However, it can also be argued that the achievement of winning medals became a basis for socially evaluating the athletes for the athletes themselves and for others, and that it does not lead to a clear conclusion that Special Olympics, as a sporting event, contributed to increasing the social acceptance of people with intellectual disabilities. In fact, there is research that concludes, from interviews of athletes who participated in Special Olympics activities for two months and their families, that there is no clear indication of a positive change in perceived social acceptance of the athletes before and after their participation in the activities.[77]

On the perception of those without intellectual disability, research was conducted to examine changes in the perception of students without intellectual disability after they took part in a Special Olympics Schools Partnership Program. The research, which examined changes in perception on several aspects including the physical ability of people with intellectual disabilities and inclusion, concluded that there was hardly any increase in the students' willingness to actively promote inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.[78] The research, like other studies, concluded that conversation with people with intellectual disabilities was the most important factor in promoting perception change among the participating students.[79] It is possible to suggest that the social significance of Special Olympics activities lies in providing opportunities for direct contact between people with and without intellectual disabilities and as such, sports activities are merely a catalyst for such contact.

Changes in perception about social acceptance of people with intellectual disabilities are derived not from Special Olympics per se, but from various factors such as professional contact and involvement within the local community with people with intellectual disabilities. It is even plausible that in countries and regions with

advanced levels of social acceptance of people with intellectual disabilities, the additional effect that Special Olympics may have on their social acceptance will be small. This suggests that Special Olympics does not necessarily play a direct role in bringing about change in society, but plays a role as a catalyst in stimulating other determining factors.

8. Issues and Challenges of Special Olympics

Although there are elements that make their results less conclusive, most research concludes that the Special Olympics Games and the succession of activities leading up to the Games have a positive effect or impact on the athletes, their families, and, by extension, society at large. However, we cannot overlook the negative or potentially negative aspects of Special Olympics that have been pointed out in terms of how it is managed and in the social significance of its activities.

These can be broadly divided into two areas. The first involves the effect of Special Olympics on the participants or athletes in the sports activities.

Secondly, there are concerns that the Special Olympics Games and training for the Games places emphasis on improving skills for a specific sport (for example, the ability to throw a ball at a faster speed), at the cost acquiring social adaptation skills.[80)]

The negative effect of Special Olympics on people without intellectual disability is based on a criticism of having children and adults participate in the same Special Olympics games or events, even though they are divided into different age groups. When combined with social stereotypes about people with intellectual disabilities, this has been criticized as perpetuating the tendency to treat people with intellectual disabilities as if they are children.[81)]

Regarding the effect of Special Olympics on society, it has been pointed out that by treating people with intellectual disabilities as special, Special Olympics may embed more deeply in people without intellectual disability a sense that people with intellectual disabilities are different.[82)] A similar criticism exists that Special Olympics may be contributing to seeing people with their disabilities before regarding them as individual human beings.[83)]

These views and criticisms, however, are equally applicable to almost every disability sports event and activities leading up to those events, and will be met with

a counterargument based on a more realistic perspective and question: can sports activities for people with disabilities only be promoted when people without disability are participating side by side with people with disabilities?

At any rate, to systematically identify issues and challenges associated with Special Olympics, there is a need for further study and research on the following: (1) a comparison with the significance of sports activities for people with other forms of disabilities, and if there is a distinctive significance for people with intellectual disabilities, and analysis of that significance; (2) factor analysis of the content and aspects of Special Olympics activities (such as increasing opportunities for social contact with a large number of people, establishing a habit of enjoying sports, the significance of having opportunities for enjoying sports, and the significance of experiencing a "sense of achievement" through winning competitions, receiving awards, and improving one's record) ; (3) a comparison of sports activities with activities in fine arts and crafts to analyze similarities and differences in promoting a sense of independence and social inclusion, based on many examples of fine arts and crafts becoming a context for many people with intellectual disabilities to express extraordinary talent; (4) an analysis of the benefits of integrating as much as possible or merging Special Olympics, Deaflympics, and Paralympics, as well as the benefits of strengthening their separate identities, and the pros and cons of linking or working together with sports activities for people without disabilities; and (5) research on whether there is any bias arising from the fact that Special Olympics, partly for historical reasons, is based on American elements and principles and if so, the pros and cons and the degree of such bias.

Many researchers seem to criticize the fact that in contrast with the Paralympics and Deaflympics, in which people with disabilities are members of the senior executive teams of the organizations, all of the executive members of the Special Olympics organization are people without intellectual disability.[84] However, this is an issue that exists in many other disability sports organizations, although in varying degrees. It is also related to the issue of how to incorporate training coaches and supervisors, and employing or actively involving people with disabilities, and simply criticizing the status quo is unproductive. This is particularly the case with people with intellectual disabilities, as they depend more on their families and friends to have their voices heard in society.

In conclusion, this shows that many of the issues and challenges associated with Special Olympics are, in varying degrees, also closely connected to the Paralympics and Deaflympics.

Notes

(1) In her contribution to the Saturday Evening Post, Eunice wrote that Rosemary was born through normal delivery and that the other children of the Kennedy family tried to include Rosemary in everything they did.

(2) Although the influence of Joseph Kennedy's wife Rose and Eunice Shriver has been mentioned as the main reason for bringing about this change (Shorter, 2000), Eunice's activities at around this time only seems to have had limited influence, and there is no clear evidence to substantiate Rose's influence. It is more likely that the political aims of the Kennedy family as a whole were leaning towards focusing on supporting people with intellectual disabilities.

(3) Within Japan, Special Olympics Nippon was first called "Japan Special Olympic Committee," omitting the s at the end of "Olympics." The s was later added. This change seems to have been made to symbolize the fact that the Special Olympics movement was not just limited to the World Games, but also included a wide range of activities, such as daily training and volunteer activities (Inoue, 2016). However, it should be noted that while the word "Olympic" in English is usually used as an adjective, when the word "Orinpikku" (without the s) is used in Japan, it represents the equivalent of the "Olympic Games" or "Olympics" in English.

(4) Yamamoto, who was dedicated to Special Olympics activities, was forced to take responsibility for deteriorating financial conditions at St. Michael's School where he was serving as director of the board, and withdrew from Special Olympics activities (Endo, 2004). Considering the subsequent developments leading up to the launch of Special Olympics Nippon (Inoue, 2016), several factors may have been intricately involved. As the movement expanded nationally and internationally, there were differences in opinion between the pioneers, such as Yamamoto and Suzuki, and the politicians and business people who came to support the movement in terms of funding and activities. There was also a gap between the strategies of Special Olympics International (SOI) in Washington D.C. and the organization in Japan. This may be reflected for example in the timing of the visit to Japan by SOI leadership and its connection with the timing of changes in the movement in Japan. As Endo's interview of Suzuki illustrates (Endo, 2004), the circumstances surrounding the dissolution of JSOC and leading up to the launch of the new organization have become extensively apparent as far as the people involved with the movement on the Japanese side are concerned. There is also a need to take into consideration the degree and nature of the involvement of people associated with SOI.

(5) In Special Olympics, people with intellectual disabilities participating in activities are called "athletes."

(6) In Special Olympics, each competition has a selection process for participation. To participate in higher level competitions, priority is given to athletes who came first within their respective divisions. If the number of first-place athletes exceeds the quota, athletes are selected randomly among the first-place athletes. If the quota cannot be filled by first-place

athletes alone, random selection is made from among the second-place athletes, and so on until the quota is filled. Therefore, unlike the Olympic Games, Special Olympics does not restrict participation to athletes with the best records.

(7) The above description of the procedures for participating in Special Olympics has been compiled by the author from various sources. A summarized diagram of the procedures is also available (Kiya, 1997).

(8) Unified Sports® is a program in which Special Olympics athletes and athletes without intellectual disability (partners) train and compete on the same team. The Special Olympics athletes team up with partners of similar age and ability in the sport. The ratio of Special Olympics athletes to partners is determined for each sport in accordance with sports rules (Special Olympics Nippon Foundation, 2016A).

(9) However, because countries, unlike in the Olympic Games, do not compete against each other in Special Olympics, organizations in "countries" that are not independent and in regions are also recognized, and the number of organizations by country depends on how a country is defined. Moreover, on the list of country contacts on SOI's official website, the offices representing U.S. states are given equal status as the offices of North American countries such as Canada.

(10) The "What is Special Olympics" section of Special Olympics Nippon Foundation's official website lists local organizations in 47 prefectures in Japan.

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