Para-sport activism in South Korea

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Abstract

While there has been a recent increase in research on para-sport activism, little attention has been given to para-sport contexts in non-Western countries. Accordingly, in this chapter we discuss para-sport activism in South Korea. We begin by providing a historical overview of disability activism and the Paralympic movement in South Korea. Following this, drawing on empirical investigations recently undertaken, we discuss activist propensity between para-athletes and disabled non-athletes in South Korea. Given the importance of cultural milieus that emerged from these findings, we then outline how Western (e.g., modern liberalism) and East Asian (e.g., Confucianism) culture can both enable and constrain para-sport activism. We also reflect on how para-sport activism can be promoted by highlighting contemporary approaches from the International Paralympic Committee and Korea Paralympic Committee. In doing so, we discuss the perspective of cultural legacy to promote para-sport activism in South Korea. We end the chapter by providing directions for further research on para-sport activism as a unique contemporary perspective within wider athlete activism research.

Keywords: para-sports, athlete activism, disability rights, Confucianism, cultural sport psychology.

As the Paralympic Games is becoming increasingly popular, para-sport activism is gaining attention around the world due to the potential of para-athletes to highlight forms of oppression that disabled people face in society (see Haslett and Smith, 2020). Smith, Bundon and Best (2016) defined para-sport activism as an action taken by para-athletes or para-sport organisations to challenge the oppression of disabled people either *within* para-sport contexts or *in wider* society. Moreover, several recent academic works are now available on para-sport activism (e.g., Bundon and Hurd Clarke, 2014, Braye, 2016, Smith et al., 2016, Choi, Haslett & Smith, 2019, Powis, 2018, Choi, Haslett, Monforte & Smith, 2020, Haslett, Choi and Smith, 2020, Haslett, Monforte, Choi and Smith, 2020). These studies have, for example, explored the reframing discourse of para-sports relating disability identity and activism for broader social change (Powis, 2018), or the influences on performing disability activism from the perspective of Irish Para-athletes (Haslett et al., 2020a). Despite the growth of literature in this field, empirical evidence about para-sport activism has been circumscribed to Western cultures, such as UK, Ireland and Canada, with little known of the situation of non-Western countries. Given this lack of knowledge, this chapter addresses para-sport activism in what is considered a non-Western country, namely South Korea.

One of the key cultural elements that influence how people approach social interaction in South Korea is Confucianism; a core philosophical system advocating group harmony with hierarchical order for political, social, and family relations (Sleziak, 2014). The unique cultural frame – Confucianism - has been dominant in South Korea, reflecting not only what identity people create but also outlining how people should behave in certain contexts (Choi, 2005; Choi et al., 2020; Sleziak, 2014). Against this backdrop, in this chapter we discuss disability activism and the Paralympic movement within a South Korean historical context. Drawing on empirical investigations recently undertaken, we highlight activist propensities between para-athletes and disabled non-athletes and the influence of

Confucianism on para-sport activism. Given the importance of cultural milieus that emerged from these findings, next attention turns to how Western (e.g., modern liberalism; individualist approach according to equality and rights) and East Asian (e.g., Confucianism) culture can both be enabling and constraining para-sport activism. After this, we reflect on how para-sport activism can be promoted by highlighting contemporary approaches from the International Paralympic Committee and the Korea Paralympic Committee. In doing so, we discuss the perspectives of cultural legacy to promote para-sport activism in South Korea. We end by providing directions for further research on para-sport activism as a unique contemporary perspective within wider athlete activism research. Before this however, we feel it is useful to position ourselves as authors.

The three authors of this chapter have diverse experiences in research on disability sport. That said, with regard to cultural position, Inhyang (female, South Korean, non-disabled) has lived in Eastern cultural (e.g., Confucianism) society for over 25 years but has however been educated in the United Kingdom where she has completed her PhD. While Damian (male, Irish, non-disabled) and Brett (male, British, non-disabled but for several years a mental health service user) have lived and been educated in Western culture (e.g., modern liberalism) but have also had mutual experiences in international collaboration with people of diverse cultural backgrounds. These lived experiences are important to recognise as they have shaped this chapter with regards to questions poised, examples provided, areas focused upon, and recommendations given for future research, for instance, we draw attention to each author's native culture. We will now discuss a historical overview of disability activism and the Paralympic movement in South Korea.

Disability activism and the Paralympic movement in South Korea

Due partly to Confucian cultural norms (e.g., societal hierarchy) and historical customs (e.g., disability is seen as a punishment inflicted by supernatural demons upon people whose

ancestors lived an immoral life), many South Koreans still perceive disability to be undesirable (Kim, Shin, Yu and Kim, 2017). Thus, disabled people have historically experienced unequal treatment in most segments of South Korean society (Ahn and Kim, 2018). Then in 1988, the South Korean government established eligibility criteria for disabled people to access welfare benefits focusing on physical and functional limitations but this initiative neglected a focus on social barriers, thereby leading to limited support for a range of disability groups.

The disability activism movement in South Korea initially emerged from the unequal treatment of disabled people. The evolution of South Korea's disability rights movement has undergone three broad phases: the quickening phase (1945–mid-1980s—providing care, led by the parents of disabled children), the developing phase (1989–mid-1990s—granting rights, led by people with mild disabilities), and the diversity phase (late 1990s–now—ensuring self-determination, led by people with severe disabilities) (Kim, 2008; You and Hwang, 2018). Although the documented history of the disability rights movement in South Korea is more limited than in Western countries, and discrimination persists (Kim, 2008), their movements have had some success in terms of improving disability rights. Accordingly, the needs of disabled people have traditionally been addressed by enacting or amending laws regarding their freedom of movement or by improving awareness. For example, in 1991, 'Disabled Persons Day' was introduced to raise public awareness of the difficulties faced by disabled people and to promote their rights. Further, the unfair eligibility criteria for disabled people to access welfare benefits was abolished in 2019.

It has been claimed that one of the strongest catalysts for disability activism in South Korea was the country's hosting of the Seoul 1988 Paralympic Summer Games and 2018 PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games. For example, following the 1988 Seoul Summer Paralympic Games, considerable changes occurred in raising awareness of disability

and protecting disability rights with enacting new regulations and laws (Son, 2014). More recently, the PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games also brought positive attention to disability rights, such as improving disability facilities and promoting para-sport programmes. Thus, hosting the Paralympic games may have created a better awareness about the disability issues by providing a wider visibility of disability and supporting a more inclusive society.

Nevertheless, reactions to the Paralympics games were not all positive in South Korea. In 1987, young disabled activists discovered that the budget for the 1988 Paralympic games was over four times the total welfare budget for disabled people who were not elite athletes (Son, 2014). In response to this, they organised a mass public protest encouraging people to boycott the Paralympics games and demanding greater resources and services for disabled people. Further, despite hosting two Paralympic games, the actual events were received less attention than the Olympic Games. Indeed, in terms of media coverage, the PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games received greater media attention outside South Korea than inside the country. For instance, while Channel 4 in the UK dedicated a total of 100 hours to the PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games, South Korean television gave a meagre 18 hours of coverage. However, para-sports in South Korea are increasingly becoming a strong platform to highlight disability rights issues (Haslett et al., 2020a; Smith et al., 2016). In what follows, we discuss this potential, drawing on two empirical studies of para-sport activism in South Korea (e.g., Choi et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2020).

A Confucian approach to para-sport activism in South Korea

Choi et al. (2019) used a mixed methodology to explore para-athlete activism in South Korea. In the quantitative phase they hypothesised that disabled non-athletes would be more likely to engage in activist behaviours (e.g., protesting, boycotting) and then measured the extent to which participants would engage in activist behaviours using Corning and Myers' (2002)

Activism Orientation Scale. However, they found that para-athletes in their sample scored higher than disabled non-athletes. Thus, the authors suggested that para-athletes were actually more willing to engage in activism than disabled non-athletes in the South Korean disabled community. In the next qualitative phase, their interview data suggested that para-athletes with a 'high activist orientation' were motivated to engage in activism for broader social good by their high social influence with the spotlight of the PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games. By contrast, para-athletes with a 'low activist orientation' faced barriers to engaging in activism, such as emotional cost or the fear of a perceived backlash (e.g., being disadvantaged within sport contexts).

In a follow-up study, Choi et al. (2020) interviewed Korea Paralympic Committee (KPC) board members and para-athletes to understand the influence of Confucianism on para-sport activism. The authors indicated five Confucian values, such as positional hierarchy, age hierarchy, factionalism, collectivism and parents' influence, have the dual capacity to encourage or discourage para-athletes' engagement in activism. For example, in the context of positional hierarchy, para-athletes are culturally perceived as 'elite athletes' rather than 'disabled people' and, in turn, are given a higher status than disabled non-athletes within the disabled community. Thus, athletes with a strong activist identity could use their positional power as a platform for advocacy. However, within the narrower para-sport system than disability society, para-athletes would not engage in activism for fear of disrespecting those who are deemed to occupy a 'higher position' (e.g., board members, non-disabled stakeholders). In other words, given their two-sided identity linked to positional hierarchy, some para-athletes took advantage of their power on diverse social and political issues, but they had difficulty in engaging in sport-based activism because this could be deemed disrespectful by the KPC.

Similarly, age hierarchy implies that younger people are expected to follow and respect older people, even if the age gap is minimal (Yum, 1988). The tacit value of age hierarchy within South Korean para-sport contexts has become a facilitator for older people (e.g., senior athletes, NPC board members) but a barrier for young athletes to participate in activism. For instance, a younger athlete-activist in the study who presented his divergent opinions to senior athletes believed he was ignored and considered to be impertinent and antagonistic (Choi et al., 2020). Also in this study the Confucian value of factionalism - strong informal personal connection such as similar educational background or hometown – was shown to be closely intertwined with encouraging or discouraging para-sport activism. For example, Choi et al. (2020) highlighted how one elite para-athlete blew the whistle on corruption involving board members of the KPC and, subsequently, this person was ostracised by people who belonged to a rival faction in the KPC and excluded from the national team as a result of activism against them. Another athlete who graduated from the same university as one of the board members was granted a place in the national team instead of him. Thus, some para-athletes avoided becoming embroiled in 'activist' disputes between different factions because they feared repercussions from superior factions, which could stifle social justice efforts.

Collectivism, another core value of Confucianism, can be discussed in terms of two different types. Horizontal collectivism (e.g., the value of seeing oneself as similar to others and highlighting common goals) promotes cooperation among people who have a common activist identity. However, vertical collectivism (e.g., being loyal to one's group and adhering to hierarchical interpersonal relations) discourages athlete activism, as it may result in negative repercussions from high-status board members. According to the results of the study by Choi et al. (2020) one athlete activist spoke out for the development of his sport team against KPC. However, his behaviour incurred all team members were deem as disrespectful

from KPC board members as a result of a vertical collectivist environment. Consequently, other athletes from the same sport team evaded him because they thought their group was reviled by his dogmatic behaviour. However, they also criticised him for not participating in activism despite being a medallist. This contradictory feedback from peer athletes and KPC board members led him to face an identity crisis, oscillating between an athlete-activist identity and a collectivist identity.

Lastly, parents' attitude has a tremendous influence on identity formation and behaviour of para-athletes, as children should submit to their parents in Confucian value (Yum, 1988). On the one hand, parents' involvement in advocacy could support athletes' activism (Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer, 2004). On the other hand, a drive to overprotect their disabled children and fear of the stigma associated with disability may push parents to bar para-athletes from any outside activities, and any act of rebellion against one's parents is considered immoral. For example, one para-athlete stopped his activism because of his parents' worries that he would be exposed to the media and face social stigma and public shame. Importantly, despite the influences of Confucian ethics on hierarchical social relationships, these two studies indicated how para-sports could be a strong platform for advocacy for the disability rights both within and beyond sport in the unique cultural background of South Korea. Having established the impact of Confucianism on the development of activist identities, we now focus on differentiating cross-cultural understandings of para-sport activism between the inherent value of Western liberalism and Eastern forms of Confucianism.

A cross-cultural understanding of para-sport activism: A perspective from Western and East Asian studies

In many Western countries, *modern liberalism* strongly emphasises individualism according to the principle of equality and rights (Tseng, 2016). Thus, modern liberalism considers that

the essence of the rule is to negatively set a limit on individual freedom to protect individual rights and freedom (Langlois, 2003). This philosophical frame is also based on a liberal constitutional socio-political system in which individuals become the basic element of social relationships; thus, family morality is retrenched largely to the private sphere in liberalism (Tseng, 2016). By contrast, as highlighted before, the East Asian cultural frame of Confucianism creates a hierarchical social order where the social status of an individual should be dependent on their position in society and the political system; thus, a superior power is absolute (Choi et al., 2020). Confucianism also emphasises cooperation and harmony in a collectivist frame (Choi et al., 2020). These different histories, cultures, and ideologies shape people's behaviour in certain situations, including disability, sports, and activism, resulting in the differences in para-sport activism between Western and East Asian research.

Broadly speaking, a key difference between Western and East Asian research on para-sport activism is how para-athletes perceive public attitudes towards disability equality and inclusion in society. Western-based studies have indicated that disabled elite athletes can perceive that disabled people are treated mostly fairly, equally, and respectfully in society (Smith et al., 2016). By contrast, disabled elite athletes in South Korea believe there is a need to speak out for societal change to improve disability rights from the currently poor and unfair conditions, even though these rights have been legally settled in several documents (Choi et al., 2019).

Furthermore, as Choi et al. (2019) argued, para-athletes perceive their influence has been increased with the successful hosting of the PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games and have sought to amplify the disability movement through a social, cultural, and inspirational voice. Disabled recreational athletes and non-athletes have also voiced the importance of themselves and para-athletes in terms of amplifying disability stories within

and beyond sport in South Korea. However, elsewhere, such as in the UK and Ireland, athletes have said that activism is part of the para-sport story but not a responsibility of all para-athletes; thus, engagement in disability activism for broader social good has been deemed not compatible with para-athletes who choose to reject a disabled first identity (Powis, 2018). Examples included some Irish para-athletes expressing their displeasure towards being contextualised as an inspirational icon for the audience (Haslett et al., 2020b). In this context, non-sport disability activists have considered using para-sports as a vehicle to enhance disability activism can be counterproductive because it can focus on the development of disability sport activism rather than support stories about the day-to-day realities of living with a disability (Braye, Dixson and Gibbons, 2015; Haslett et al., 2020a).

In South Korea, the parents' influence has meant that there is a athlete–parent hierarchy and disability is performed mainly within the home, whereas parents in the Western rights-based paradigm primarily contribute to supporting disabled children's independence outside the home (Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer, 2014). This has led to para-athletes' voices in South Korea being oppressed and often filtered through the views of their family members. In a similar approach, KPC board members believe para-athletes would follow their vision for disability movement in the hierarchical order of relationship in South Korea. However, in the West, some National Paralympic Committees considered para-athletes as independent individuals and were concerned about them having a disability activist identity that could incur a cost to para-athletes' unforeseen mental health due to public criticism and social pressure (Haslett et al., 2020b).

Lastly, when compared over the limited but growing connection between disability, sport, and activism, Irish and South Koreans value specific and relevant information as a condition for being a political activist (Haslett et al., 2020b). However, Irish para-athletes have more regarded politically informed knowledge as a priority requirement to engage in activism;

thus, para-athlete activists are expected to be rewarded proportionately to their capability for disability politics (Haslett et al., 2020b). By contrast, South Korean para-athletes have stressed the importance of education-based factionalism. This cultural difference shows a distinction between outer political action regulated by rules and inner moral conduct governed by autonomy that is blurred through Confucianism (Choi et al., 2020).

Although the West and East Asian culturally-based studies seem quite different from, and even opposed to, each other, and notwithstanding their essential chronological difference, some similarities between them can still be drawn for perspectives on para-sport activism. Both appear to suggest that government and administration should guarantee some basic means for individual development (e.g., disability rights) (Choi et al., 2020; Haslett et al., 2020a). In modern Western culture, corresponding to the rule of law, the government should guarantee individual rights, which are expanded to include disability rights for the disabled community. In Confucianism, government, as a high level of social status, should play a predominant role in promoting social prosperity and the welfare of people through their efficient administration. Further, regardless of the Confucian environment in society, the athletes' unique status is exercised in activism in both positive and negative ways. From Western viewpoints from Canadian (Bundon and Hurd Clarke, 2014), British (Smith et al., 2016), and Irish contexts (Haslett et al., 2020a), and from an Eastern perspective in South Korea (Choi et al., 2020), there is positive evidence from empirical studies that para-athletes prefer to advocate for social change to improve para-sport contexts in contrast to activism to improve the lives of disabled people in wider societies. In addition, these studies have also indicated that para-athletes could be reluctant to engage in activism because of public criticism and lack of time due to sport and work commitments. Now that we have highlighted the importance of the cultural context the next sections present how international and national

Paralympic committees exercise their influence on promoting disability activism through para-sports at the international and national levels.

Promoting para-sport activism: Approaches from the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and Korea Paralympic Committee (KPC)

With the growth of research in para-sport activism, Paralympic committees have also contributed to promoting disability activism at an organisational level. In 2019, the IPC produced the 2019–2022 Strategic Plan (IPC, 2019), in which a key aspect is to promote disability activism through para-sports, by stressing the importance of cultivating a generation of para-athletes who can work as advocates for disability rights (Objective 3.6). Moreover, in 2020, the IPC and United Nations Human Rights signed a landmark Co-operation Agreement to deliver a global communications campaign around the coming Tokyo Paralympic Games that aims to change global attitudes towards disability and further the human rights agenda. Cementing this strategy, the IPC used the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games as a platform to launch the WeThe15 (www.wethe15.org) campaign that is bringing together the largest ever coalition of international organisations with the aim to end discrimination against disabled people within ten years (i.e., 15% of the whole world).

Historically, in the KPC, the focus has been on developing para-athletes' performance through para-sport sciences and coach support. However, there has been a transition since the new president, Jin-Owan Jung was elected in January 2021. President Jung produced a new strategic plan for 2021–2025 regarding the direction of the KPC to reduce limitations resulting from Confucian values and to promote disability rights. Specifically, to break down factionalism in para-sports, the KPC highlighted the importance of autonomy and independence for each department in the para-sport administration (Objective 1.1). As an example of promoting para-athlete's rights, the KPC aimed to develop guidance for the protection of rights for para-sports and para-athletes (Objective 7.1), called for departments

of human rights in all disability sport organisations in South Korea (Objective 7.3), and established mandatory courses on human/disability rights for all key stakeholders, such as coaches, athletes, physiologists and referees (Objective 7.4).

To promote disability rights in wider society, the KPC specifically outlined the disability rights movement in relation to the para-sport platform. Accordingly, it aimed to establish over 150 Bandabi (disability) sport centres throughout the nation to emphasise the legacy of the Paralympic Games (Objective 8.1) and to support recreational disability sport events (Objective 9.1). The KPC also highlighted its ambition to improve public awareness of disability rights by training para-athletes to become disability rights instructors and placing them at public educational institutions (Objective 13.1) and launching a national Paralympic Day where both disabled and non-disabled people can play sports, enjoy events such as wheelchair dance performances, and meet with elite para-athletes (Objective 13.5).

The KPC's shift in focus emphasises the importance of cultural legacy by showing how Confucian values have led to influence on promoting para-sports at the organisational level in South Korea. In *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Gladwell (2008) described the power of cultural legacy creating an invisible influence on social attitudes and behaviour through intergenerational practices.

> *"Cultural legacies are powerful forces. They have deep roots and long lives. They persist, generation after generation, virtually intact, even as the economic and social and demographic conditions that spawned them have vanished, and they play such a role in directing attitudes and behaviour that we cannot make sense of our world without them."* (2008, p.125)

While South Koreans no longer learn Confucian theory at school, Confucian philosophy is still the dominant social system and provides the basis for day-to-day life, informing not only the identity people portray but also the words they speak and how they

behave in certain contexts (Choi, 2005). The Confucian discourse is noteworthy for being more than a philosophy and for delving into the abundant richness of the tradition to encourage para-sport activism. In this chapter, we offer two perspectives of Confucian cultural legacies on para-sport activism.

First, KPC board members can promote disability activism given their power. Power and culture is continuously being produced and reproduced in the dynamic interactions between individuals and social environments (Kemmelmeier and Kuhnen, 2012). KPC board members have upheld traditional Confucian customs by maintaining a hierarchical structure within the para-sport community; in this structure, they sit in the highest position. Given that the KPC has significant influence and power in the South Korean disabled community (Choi et al. 2020), the KPC Strategic Plan 2021–2025 shows that they are striving to lead social change through the disability movement.

Second, the KPC's movement can be adopted progress disability rights and para-sport rights movements. Before the announcing of the KPC Strategic Plan 2021–2025, the nature of the strong hierarchical culture deteriorated into ostensible bad habits over time. As one of the Confucian cultural values - the ruler-subject relationship - has degenerated in such a way that only the subject's loyalty to the ruler was emphasised within a hierarchical society rather than the ruler being situated as the subject's ideal role model. However, with the wave of human rights movements in contemporary South Korean society, the strategic plan shows that KPC members aim to be in the vanguard to reduce the shortcomings of Confucian values and produce long-lasting changes in Confucian society. In line with this approach, the KPC emphasises ethical values in the social realm and promotes disability activism through the platform of para-sports. Objective 1.1 demonstrates the relationship between the unique Confucian cultural context and para-sports and underscores the aim to refute factionalism,

while Objectives 7.1 and 13.1 show its ambition to create a safe space for para-athletes and those interested in disability activism.

The KPC has tailored the plan to national and cultural needs, as the IPC's strategic plan would be difficult to critically employ at the national level, given the complexity of understanding national cultural intricacy. Nevertheless, the IPC's movement for disability and human rights is crucial as the KPC starts to demonstrate its vision of using its platform to promote para-sports and disability rights by following the IPC's 2019–2022 Strategic Plan. In other words, the disability rights movement at the organisational level (e.g., IPC, KPC) is positioned to foster disability rights at their respective governance levels beyond academia. In line with this movement, scholars could also focus on diverse approaches to para-sport activism with regard to strategy, research, and communication.

Possible directions for further research

One suggestion moving forward lies in developing a quantitative approach to explore para-sport activism. Choi et al. (2019) contributed to providing a meaningful baseline for future quantitative research of para-sport activism on disabled populations by framing the sample of para-athletes within a cultural context that also accounts for the perspectives of disabled people who are not athletes.

Further, researchers should continue to focus on enabling meaningful approaches to para-sport activism, grounded in unique cultural milieus (McGannon and Schinke, 2017; McGannon and Smith, 2015). When this cultural complexity and diversity is overlooked in research, the experiences of minorities may be lost (Ryba and Wright, 2005), and the perpetuation of the stereotyping of these minorities may be reinforced (Ryba, Stambulova and Schinke, 2013). Notably, You and Hwang (2018) emphasised sensitivity to the 'localised' interpretation. This is because the South Korean disabled people's movement has undoubtedly made great advances, based on the Western-based disability social model

(disabled people are limited not by their impairment but by the environment) in political legislation. However, the social and cultural perspectives of disability remain lodged in the combined traditional and modern Confucianist era. Thus, the route of the disability rights movement in an Eastern culture might not be the same as that of a Western culture, given the differences in their historical and cultural backgrounds. The intersectional and eclecticist perspectives of activism are important because the multiplicity of the lived experience of oppression is not always reflected in disability activism (Haslett et al., 2020a).

In a similar approach, future studies could seek to inform strategic plans for para-sport activist initiatives, such as the IPCs, to be considered not only at the international level but also at the national level. Given the complexity of understanding social attitudes, perception, and the unique intricacy of national culture, overlooking cultural subtleties can lead to unintended consequences of international strategic visions in different ways. As Haslett et al. (2020b) suggested, the IPC's 'top-down' strategy can be implemented, resisted, or (re)interpreted at a national level due to different political systems (e.g., democratic or authoritarian), institutionalised cultural values, and political interests. Similarly, future research can examine the ways in which national-level activist discourses influence and shape global activist discourses (Haslett et al., 2020b). This contemporary approach could constitute an important stimulus for the development of disability sport and disability rights, promoting the best contexts to support para-sports and the disabled community.

Future research can also examine how key stakeholders in different positions draw upon different cultural activist discourses over time to argue for or against promoting activism. For instance, Haslett et al. (2020b) indicated that different stakeholders drew on different activist discourses, and this resulted in argumentative tension among stakeholders. Likewise, KPC board members stuck to traditional Confucian customs by maintaining a hierarchical structure within the para-sport society where they sit in the highest position, despite having played an

active role as athlete-activists in tackling unfair hierarchical treatment of disability in the past. Thus, research could consider activist narratives from current and retired elite para-athletes, as well as board members who are retired athletes, working at para-sport organisations at the international (IPC) or national (NPC) level.

There is a need for research to approach para-sport activism through many different perspectives, as the current literature on para-sport activism is limited to the Paralympic Games and the IPC's framework. Researchers could consider expanding the exploration of activism surrounding events such as the Special Olympics (sport organisation for intellectually disabled people), Deaflympics (international game for deaf athletes at an elite level), and Asian Para Games (multi-sport game for Asian athletes with physical disabilities). Such studies could explore the disability sport activism that comes from recreational athlete activism.

Finally, researchers should consider para-athlete activism as a policy factor influencing the development of para-sports and disability politics. Investigations are needed on actions the National Paralympic Committee could take towards athlete activism at the organisational level (e.g., controlling athletes' activism or prompting it with their credible voices). We could also consider how policymakers can amplify their legislative voices for a wider disability landscape by understanding the unique and intrinsic complexity of the disability sport domain (Dowling, Leopkey and Lee, 2018; Patatas, De Bosscher, Derom and De Rycke, 2020).

We would like to finish by encouraging researchers to critically move forward in approaching para-sport activism. We also believe that more disabled people should be encouraged to lead research in this area, in part, because the positive societal impact of para-sports is overemphasised as an "academic discourse on the Paralympics being written predominantly by non-disabled people" (Braye et al., 2015, p. 45). We hope this chapter has

helped scholars and practitioners think more critically about para sport activism in South Korea.

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