

# The Availability of Sport Activity Services in Special Education Centers in Ma'an Governorate: A Survey of Staff Members' Perceptions

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## Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the availability of sport activity services in special education centers in Ma'an governorate from the perspective of their staff members. The sample of the study consisted of 42 participants. A survey questionnaire and interview questions were used to collect data from the participants. The questionnaire consisted of three scales: physical, human, and organizational services. Interview questions were used to collect data from directors of five centers. The validity and reliability of the used instrument were verified.

The results of the study indicated that the level of the availability of the overall sport activity services was moderate. In addition, the results showed that there were no significant differences ( $\alpha = .05$ ) between the participants' means of perceptions of the availability of sport activity services in special education centers based on their length of service. However, there

were significant differences ( $\alpha = .05$ ) between the participants' means of perceptions of the availability of organizational dimension of sport activity services in special education centers based on the location of the centers. Based on the findings, the study provided some recommendations regarding the sport activity services in special education centers in Ma'an governorate.

**Keywords:** Persons with disabilities, Special education centers, Sport activity services, Ma'an

## 1. Introduction

The number of persons with disabilities is growing rapidly. Persons with disabilities have drawn global attention since their number represents about ten percent of the world population (Al-Roussan, 2010). The lack of proper care and attention to the persons with disabilities might cause social and economic problems. Therefore, it is a national responsibility to provide them with the appropriate services and support. Providing persons with disabilities with appropriate services and support requires cooperation between the public and private sectors. Persons with disabilities should be considered as part of the human, social and economic capital for the nation rather than people who need only special care and rehabilitation (Hilal, 2017). From such point of view it is necessary to establish and organize a variety of programs and services that contribute to the psychological, social, physical and mental developments of persons with disabilities.

Providing persons with disabilities with sport activities services is significant. Participating in sport activities would have several benefits for persons with disabilities. These benefits include building physical fitness, fighting diseases, building a healthy and strong body, enhancing normal growth (Riad, 2005; Ibrahim, 2015) improving psychological health (Hossam, 2010; Altin, 2015) improving the ability to adapt to the surrounding environment (Butler, 2000), enhancing self-esteem (Dalbudak, 2012), constructing identity (Bulgol, 2006) and treating deviations in behavior (Sabeh, 2010). Participation in sport activities has become right for all individuals without exception (Hilal, 2017, Ibrahim, 2015; Jaarsma, et al, 2014).

The importance of sport activities for persons with disabilities is evident in the related laws and regulations that address their rights. For instance, the Jordanian “Law on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities” for the year 2007, Article (4), paragraph (8) and the “Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, Article 30 paragraph (5) addressed the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport. The Jordanian “Law on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities” and the international “Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” focused on the following aspects: establishing and creating sport institutions, supporting and enabling persons with disabilities to participate in a variety of activities that satisfy their needs and develop their capabilities, enabling persons with disabilities to participate in national and international sport activities, introducing sport and recreational activities to the programs of institutions, centers and schools working in the disability domain and providing them with qualified people and equipment needed for this purpose, and facilitating the use of sport facilities by persons with disabilities, and providing suitable accommodation for this purpose (Higher Council for Affairs of Persons with Disabilities, 2007).

Research studies have shown that general community members had positive attitudes toward the persons with disabilities participation in sport activities (Khaled, 2015), In addition, research studies have shown that persons with disabilities themselves had positive attitudes toward their participation in sport activities (Al-Rabihat, 2004).

Despite the related laws and regulations that address the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in sport and physical activities and the wide spread of the institutions, centers, and

schools working in the disability domain, there are several concerns related to the sport programs and services provided to persons with disabilities in these institutions, centers, and schools. Such concerns are related to the availability, quality, objectives, extent of application, related obstacles, and effectiveness of sport activity services and programs (Moran & Block, 2010; Verschuren, et al, 2012, Jaarsma, et al, 2014). Understanding the status of the available sport activity services and programs provided for persons with disabilities and their obstacles and challenges would be significant for decision-makers in order to develop and enhance such services and programs (Shabita and Awaid, 2010; Al-Qurini, 2012; Verschuren, et al, 2012; Goma, 2011; Al-Khalidi, 2011; Moran & Block, 2010; Bahrawi, 2006). Data related to the status of the available sport activity services and programs provided for persons with disabilities can be collected from different resources that include workers, parents, professionals, and persons with disabilities themselves.

The aim of this study was to examine the availability of human, physical and organizational services and resources related to sport provided in special education centers in Ma'an governorate from the perspective of their staff members. In addition, the study aimed to examine the differences between centers' staff members perceptions of the availability of these services based on their length of service and the location of the centers.

## **2. Literature Review**

Several research studies have been conducted to examine the actual status of the provided sport services and programs for persons with disabilities. In Jordan, Almsbhieen (2016) examined the perceptions of the staff of the centers for children with mental disabilities regarding the importance and the availability of early intervention services. These services include sport activity services and physical therapy. In addition, the study aimed to examine the potential differences in their perceptions of the level of availability of these services based on their gender, experience, qualification, and the location of the centers. The study took place at Ma'an city in Jordan. The sample of the study consisted of 44 staff members. The results of the study indicated that the staff members believed that the level of importance of the early intervention services is high. However, the staff members believed that the level of availability of the early intervention services was moderate. Furthermore, there were no significant differences between the staff members' means of perceptions of the level of availability of the early intervention services based on their gender, experience, and qualification. There were significant differences between the staff members' means of perceptions of the level of availability of the early intervention services based on the location of the centers, where these services were more available in the centers in urban areas compared to the centers that are located in the rural areas.

In another study that was conducted in Jordan, Al-Khalidi (2011) examined the effectiveness of the services provided in special education centers in Jordan. The study involved examining the perceptions of different stakeholders. The study sample consisted of all special education institutions in the country that provide services for different categories of disability: visual, auditory, mental, autism, and physical. The results of the study indicated that there were needs to provide persons with disabilities with a number of common services, which include

recreational and sports services. In addition, the results showed that the level of effectiveness of the available services ranged from low to moderate.

In older study in Jordan, Bahrawi (2006) examined the status of support services provided by the institutions of special education to persons with mental disabilities. In addition, the study investigated the perceived barriers to provide such services. The study took place at several public and private special education institutions in Jordan. The study sample consisted of 379 of staff members in these institutions. Variety of data collections methods were used to collect data from the participants that included: survey questionnaire, note form, support model form, and self-assessment tool. The results indicated that the level of the availability of support services provided to persons with mental disabilities was moderate. Regarding the types of provided support services, it was found that the level of the availability of sport services was the highest followed by the levels of the leisure and recreational services.

In Palestine, Shabita and Awaid (2012) examined the status of support services provided to special needs students. The examined services included: professional, social, psychological, and medical services. The study sample consisted of 357 students with different types of disabilities and 185 parents of students with special needs in the governorates of Nablus, Qalqilia and Salfit. The results of the study indicated that the students with special needs believed that the level of the quality and the availability of the support services was low. However, the parents of the students with special needs believed that the level of the quality and the availability of the support services was moderate. In addition, the results showed that there were significant differences between the students' means of perceptions of the level of the quality and the availability of the support services based on their educational level, social level, and place of residence. However, there were no significant differences between parents' means of perceptions of the level of the quality and the availability of the support services based on the examined variables.

In Saudi Arabia, Goma (2011) examined the level of the availability of physical and human resources in orphanages. In addition, the study examined the availability and the quality of the sport and physical education programs in the orphanages in city of Jeddah. The researcher used a cross-sectional study design in which 33 staff members from private and public orphanages completed a questionnaire. In addition, one hundred and thirty five students in these orphanages completed the questionnaire. The results showed that there was lack of sport stadiums, covered halls, fitness rooms, professional trainers, sports physiotherapists, and organized sport programs.

Regarding the status of support services that are provided to the students with disabilities in the Arab world, Al-Qurini (2012) investigated the reality of the provision of support services for students with disabilities in the Arab world. In addition, the author examined the potential barriers that would prevent providing students with disability with the appropriate services. The researcher analyzed the past two decades' literature that examined the availability of these services and their importance from the perspectives of the workers in special education institutions. Furthermore, the researcher analyzed the past two decades' literature that examined different stakeholders' perceptions of the status of the available support services

and level of support services that should be provided to students with disabilities. The results of the study showed shortcomings in the provision of related services in educational institutions for the students with disabilities. In addition, the study found that the main barriers providing students with disabilities with proper services were:

the lack of Arab legislation that govern the framework of related services, the lack of procedural safeguards of the related services in these legislation, and the lack of preparation programs specialists in the field of related services in the Arab universities (p.74).

In relation to the barriers for persons with disabilities to participate in sport activities, Verschuren, et al. (2012) examined the facilitators and barriers to participate in sport and physical activities for persons with cerebral palsy. The study sample consisted of 33 persons with cerebral palsy and their parents. Interview questions were used to collect data from the participants. The results of the study showed that the youth with cerebral palsy and their parents reported personal and environmental facilitators and barriers to participation in physical and sport activities.

On the other hand, the study of Moran and Block (2010) examined barriers that hinder children with significant disabilities from successful participating in the youth sport programs. The authors argued that the main barriers were related to: leaders' fear of responsibility of having children with significant disabilities to participate sport programs, sport coaches' lack of knowledge and training in relation to how to have children with disabilities participating in sport programs, and parents and children fear of participation. Others reported barriers were related to lack of appropriate sport programs that is suitable to children with significant disabilities. The authors reported that there are needs to resolve these barriers in order to facilitate the participations of children with disabilities in sports activities and programs.

The previously discussed research studies showed the importance of examining the provided services for people with disabilities. They showed that there were a range of services that should be provided for people with disabilities. In addition, they showed that there were different factors that would affect the provided services for people with disabilities. However, examining the previous literature showed that there was lack of the specific study that examined the status of provided services for people with disabilities in Ma'an governorate.

The aim of this study was to examine the availability of human, physical and organizational services and resources related to sport provided in special education centers in Ma'an governorate from the perspective of their staff members. In addition, the study aimed to examine the differences between centers' staff members perceptions of the availability of these services based on their length of service and the location of the centers. Furthermore, the study examined the suggestions of the directors of special education centers to promote sport activity services.

### **3. Purpose of the Study**

There were significant developments in the quantity and quality of services provided to persons with disabilities such as educational, early intervention and health services (Al-Roussan, 2010). There was large number of research studies that were conducted in

disability domain related to the provided support services. There are large number of associations, institutions, schools, and centers that provide various services for the persons with disabilities (Al-Hadidi & Al-Khatib, 2005). Students with disabilities had positive attitudes towards their participation in sports activities (Al-Rabihat, 2004). However, persons with disabilities, their parents, and workers in special education domain believed that there were clearly visible insufficiency in the number and quality of the provided sport activity services in special education institutions (Khaled, 2015; Shabita & Awaid, 2012; Bahrawi, 2006).

Based on the nature of the jobs of the authors of this study in disability domain, they observed lack in the provided services to persons with disabilities, specifically the lack of provided sports activity services in special education centers in Ma'an governorate. In order to better understand the level of availability of sport activity services in these centers, their staff members were selected to participate in this study in order to acquire accurate and adequate information about the level of the availability of these services.

The aim of this study was to examine the availability of human, physical and organizational services and resources related to sport provided in special education centers in Ma'an governorate from the perspective of their staff members. In addition, the study aimed to examine the differences between centers' staff members perceptions of the availability of these services based on their length of service and the location of the centers. Furthermore, the study examined the suggestions of the directors of special education centers to promote sport activity services. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What are the levels of the availability of physical, human and organizational services and resources related to sport in special education centers in Ma'an governorate from the perspective of their staff members?
2. Are there differences in participants' perceptions of the levels of the availability of physical, human and organizational services and resources related to sport in special education centers based on their length of service?
3. Are there differences in participants' perceptions of the levels of the availability of physical, human and organizational services and resources related to sport in special education centers base on the location of the centers?
4. What are the centers directors' suggestions to enhance the quantity and the quality of sport activity services provided for persons with disabilities in their centers?

### *3.1 Importance of the Study*

This study provided better understanding the actual status of the provided physical, human and organizational services and resources related to sport to persons with disabilities in developing countries such as Jordan. The findings of this study would help decision makers in the disability domain to develop and enhance the quantity and quality of these services and programs. Based on the knowledge of authors of this study, the current study is the first of its kind that examined the availability of sport activity services in the south of Jordan.

### *3.2 Definition of Terms*

The current study adopts the following operational definitions of the used terms:

- **Sport activity:** All physical exercises and training offered to gain fitness including physical therapy. In addition, it refers to the process of participation in different sport competitions.
- **Special education centers:** Non-profit organizations and institutions that work under the supervision of the Jordanian ministry of social development. These institutions provide care, rehabilitation and training services to all types of disabilities.
- **Staff members of the special education centers:** The employees who provide services to persons with disabilities in these centers including instructors, administrators, and the staff with different areas of expertise. They include the male and female employees.
- **Ma'an governorate:** A governorate that is located in the south of Jordan. It has a population of (127,989) thousand people (Department of Statistics, 2016). It covers an area of about 33,163 km, which represents largest governorate in Jordan.

### *3.3 Limitations of the Study*

As any other research study, the current study has some limitations. The first limitation was related to the settings of the study. The study took place in only one governorate in Jordan that called Ma'an. Participants from special education centers in Ma'an governorate participated in the study. The second limitation of the study was related to its timeline. The study took place in one point of time. The study was conducted in the academic year of 2016-2017. The third limitation was related to the study's sample. The sample of this study consisted of only in-service staff members in special education centers in Ma'an governorate.

## **4. Methodology and Research Design**

Descriptive mixed methods research approach was followed in this study. Data were collected using questionnaire instrument followed by interviews with some participants. The questionnaire instrument consisted of three scales: human services and resources scale, physical services and resources scale, and organizational services and resources scale. The qualitative method involved conducting semi-structured interviews with directors of five special education centers. The interview results provided more in depth understanding of the investigated matters. The five directors had long experience in the disability domain. Their views and beliefs would enrich the findings of this study and provide more reliable, accurate and comprehensive results.

### *4.1 Study population and sample*

The population of this study included the entire staff members in the special education centers in Ma'an governorate. The population consisted of a total number of 78 staff member who work in 9 special education centers that provide services for persons with different types of disabilities. The study sample consisted of 42 staff members of special education centers in Ma'an governorate. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants based on their



willingness to participate in the study. Out of 42 staff members, the number of female participants was 30 and the number of male participants was 12. Twenty two participants hold bachelor degree while the rest of the participants hold academic degree below bachelor. The job titles for the participants varied. The participants consisted of instructors, administrators and physical therapists. Table 1 shows some demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1. Descriptive summary of participants' demographic data

	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	30	71.40
	Female	12	28.60
Job Title	Instructors	26	62.00
	Administrators	12	28.60
	Physical therapists	4	2.40
Academic Qualification	Below bachelor	20	47.62
	Bachelor	22	52.38

All the participants in the interviews were male. Three of them hold bachelor degree while two of them hold academic degree below bachelor.

#### *4.2 Data Collection Methods*

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, a questionnaire instrument and interview questions were developed by the researchers to collect data. The questionnaire items and interview questions were selected and developed based on different research studies. Examples of these research studies include (Al- Khalidi, 2011; Shabita & Awaid, 2012; Al-Qurini, 2012; Goma, 2011). The questionnaire instrument consisted of 32 items. The questionnaire consisted of five-point Likert-type scale. All the questionnaire items were positively stated except for two that were negatively stated. The questionnaire items were presented in the discussion section.

#### *4.3 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments*

To ensure face validity of the questionnaire instrument and the interview questions, the instruments were reviewed by a panel of experts. The panel of experts consisted of faculty members in the fields of special education, physical education, educational measurement and evaluation, and educational administration. The panel members were asked to review the language of the questionnaire items and interview questions. In addition, they were asked to rate each item based on relevance, clarity, simplicity and ambiguity on predefined scale. Based on the experts' comments, three items were added to the questionnaire, the language of some questionnaire items and interview questions were reviewed.

A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability, validity, and usability of the used

instruments. The questionnaire instrument and interview questions were piloted with 8 staff members in special education centers who were not part of the study. In order to ensure the internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire instrument, Pearson's correlations coefficient were calculated for each item in the survey questionnaire and the total score of the instrument. The correlation coefficients varied across the items ranging from 0.48 to 0.76, the results were statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

To ensure reliability of the questionnaire instrument, Cronbach's alpha for the three scales were calculated: human services and resources scale = 0.77, physical services and resources scale = 0.88, and organizational services and resources scale = 0.64. For the overall instrument items, the value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.87. The values of Cronbach's alpha were accepted for the purpose of the study.

#### *4.4 Variables of the Study*

The independent variables in this study were the number of years in service for the participants and the location of the centers. The number of years in service has three options (i.e., less than 5, 6-10, and 11 years and more). The location of the centers has two options (i.e., urban area and rural area). The dependent variable was participants' perception of the level of the availability of sport activity services in special education centers in Ma'an governorate.

#### *4.5 Data Collection Procedure*

The researchers visited the directorate of social development in Ma'an governorate to obtain the approval from officials and to collect data about the special education centers that were working in Ma'an governorate. Then, the researchers visited the nine special education centers. The researchers acquired the directors' approval to have their centers participate in the study. After that, the researchers personally distributed paper-format questionnaires to the staff members, who agreed to participate in this study, to explore their perceptions of the level of the availability of sport activity services in their centers. The researcher conducted interviews with 5 directors of special education centers. The selection of the directors was based on their willingness to participate in the study as well as on their length of experience in disability domain. Some of the interviews were conducted in face-to-face settings and others were conducted over the phone.

#### *4.6 Data Analysis*

Descriptive statistics (i. e., means and standard deviations) were used to describe participants' perceptions of the levels of the availability of sport activity services in special education centers. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine variations in participants' perceptions of the levels of the availability of sport activity services in special education centers based on their length of service. Independent sample t-tests were conducted to examine the differences in participants' perceptions of the levels of the availability of sport activity service in special education centers based on the locations of the centers. Data were analyzed using SPSS 16.0

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Overall Sport Activity Services and Resources

Participants' perceptions of the availability of sport activity services were measured using three scales: participants' perceptions of the availability of human services and resources scale, participants' perceptions of the availability of physical services and resources scale, and participants' perceptions of the availability of organizational services and resources scale (Table 2). In order to answer the first research question, regarding the participants' perceptions of the level of the availability of sport activity services in special education centers in Ma'an governorate, descriptive statistics were used.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of participants' responses to the human, physical and organizational services and resources perceived availability scale. (N =42)

N	Scale	M	SD	Level	Rank
1	Human services and resources	2.73	0.93	Moderate	1
2	Physical services and resources	2.59	0.85	Moderate	2
3	Organizational services and resources	2.12	0.36	Low	3
	Overall	2.48	0.59	Moderate	

Table 2 shows that participants' perceptions of the availability of the sport activity services was moderate (M = 2.48, SD=0.59). The participants' perceptions of the availability of the three dimensions of the sport activity services varied between low for organizational services and resources (M = 2.12, SD=0.36) to moderate for the human services and resources (M = 2.73, SD=0.93).

The results showed that there was diversity in the special education centers staff members' perceptions regarding to the availability of sport activity services. The staff members' perceptions of the level of the availability of sport services varied between low to moderate. In order to better understand participants' responses to the questionnaire instrument, the following section represent the descriptive analysis of participants' responses to each item in the three scales of the questionnaire.

### 5.2 Human Services and Resources

The results suggest that the participants perceived that the level of the availability of human services and resources was moderate (Table 3).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of participants' responses to human services and resources perceived availability scale. (N =42)

N	Items	M	SD	Level	Rank
2	The administrators of the center encourage sport activities	4.17	0.91	High	1
7	The parents of students with disabilities encourage their children's participation in sports activities	3.83	0.99	High	2
4	The center has specialists in physiotherapy, psychological counseling, and nutrition	2.81	1.84	Moderate	3
3	The center has a qualified administrators who are responsible for sports activity programs	2.76	1.81	Moderate	4
1	The center has qualified leaders (e.g., teachers and trainers) who supervise sport activity programs.	2.38	1.70	Moderate	5
5	The center has students with disabilities who participated in sports activities at the national and international levels.	1.57	1.27	Low	6
6	The center has students with disabilities who received prizes for participating in sports activities at the national and international levels.	1.57	1.23	Low	7
	Overall human services and resources scale	2.73	0.93	Moderate	

Table 3 shows that the level of the availability of human services and resources was moderate ( $M = 2.73$ ,  $SD=0.93$ ). The means of the staff members responses to the items of the human services and resources scale varied between low ( $M = 1.57$ ,  $SD=1.23$ ) and high ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SD=0.91$ ). The staff members responded most positively to item 2 “The administrators of the center encourage sport activities” ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SD=0.91$ ). The staff members responded least positively to item 6 “The center has students with disabilities who received prizes for participating in sports activities at the national and international levels” ( $M = 1.57$ ,  $SD=1.23$ ).

### 5.3 Physical Services and Resources

The results suggest that the participants perceived that the level of the availability of physical services and resources was moderate (Table 4).

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of participants' responses to physical services and resources perceived availability scale. ( $N=42$ )

N	Items	M	SD	Level	Rank
6	Students with disabilities in the center practice outdoor sports activities	4.4	0.94	High	1
7	The center allocates specific times for sports activities	4.17	1.15	High	2
8	The center has facilities for sports activities	3.88	1.23	High	3
5	Adequate health facilities are available at the center	3.31	1.51	Moderate	4
11	The center provides well-planned sport programs	3.14	1.63	Moderate	5
2	The center has halls for sports activities	2.26	1.47	Low	6
4	The center has usable tools and sports equipment	2.19	1.31	Low	7
3	The center provides enough sports equipment and tools to the students with disability	2.14	1.57	Low	8
12	The center receives assistance and donations from private organizations that allocated for sports activities	2.02	1.41	Low	9
1	The center has playgrounds for sports activities	1.71	1.42	Low	10
9	The center has a closed gymnasium for sports activities	1.57	1.33	Low	11
13	The center rents playgrounds to make the students participate in sport activities	1.52	1.31	Low	12
10	The center holds festivals and leagues for sports activities	1.31	0.90	Low	13
	Overall human services and resources scale	2.59	0.85	Moderate	

Table 4 shows that the level of the availability of physical services and resources was moderate ( $M = 2.59$ ,  $SD=0.85$ ). The means of the staff members responses to the items of the physical resources varied between low ( $M = 1.31$ ,  $SD=0.90$ ) and high ( $M = 4.4$ ,  $SD=0.94$ ). The staff members responded most positively to item 6 "Students with disabilities in the center practice outdoor sports activities." ( $M = 4.4$ ,  $SD=0.94$ ). The staff members responded least positively to item 10 "The center holds festivals for sports activities." ( $M = 1.31$ ,  $SD=0.90$ ).

#### 5.4 Organizational Services and Resources

The results suggest that the participants perceived that the level of the availability of organizational services and resources was low (Table 5).

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of participants' responses to organizational services and resources perceived availability scale. ( $N=42$ )

N	Items	M	SD	Level	Rank
3	The center informs the parents of children with disabilities verbally and in writing about the eligibility of their children to participate in sports activities	4.02	0.92	High	1
4	The center cooperates with parents of children with disabilities to prepare and implement plan for sports activity in terms of the goals and eligibility for sports.	3.24	1.38	Moderate	2
1	There is lack of Jordanian laws and regulations related to the rights of the children with disabilities to be provided with sport activity services	2.93	1.64	Moderate	3
6	The center offers training courses to qualify trainers in the sport field for persons with disabilities	2.24	1.41	Low	4
5	The center regularly collect data regarding the level of parents' satisfaction with their children's participation in sports activities	2.02	1.07	Low	5
7	The center cooperate with other organizations and institution in the disability domain to conduct and offer sport activity programs	2.02	1.14	Low	6
8	Private sector contribute in supporting and offering sports activity programs and services for children with disabilities	1.93	1.16	Low	7
2	There laws and regulations related to provide sports activity services for persons with disabilities are not clear	1.79	0.75	Low	8
9	Public sector contribute in supporting and offering sports activity programs and services for children with disabilities	1.48	0.67	Low	9
11	Cultural centers contribute in supporting and offering sports activity programs and services for children with disabilities	1.33	0.57	Low	10
12	Local universities contribute in supporting and offering sports activity programs and services for children with disabilities	1.24	0.58	Low	11
10	The center contacted the parents of children with disabilities regularly to determine their satisfaction regarding the sports activities provided to their children	1.19	0.45	Low	12
	Overall organizational services and resources scale	2.12	0.36	Low	

Table 5 shows that the level of the availability of organizational services and resources was low ( $M = 2.12$ ,  $SD=0.36$ ). The means of the staff members responses to the items of the organizational resources varied between low ( $M = 1.19$ ,  $SD=0.45$ ) and high ( $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD=0.92$ ). The staff members responded most positively to item 3 “The center informs the parents of children with disabilities verbally and in writing about the eligibility of their children to participate in sports activities” ( $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD=0.92$ ). The staff members responded least positively to item 10 “The center contacted the parents of children with disabilities regularly to determine their satisfaction regarding the sports activities provided to their children” ( $M = 1.19$ ,  $SD=0.45$ ).

### 5.6 Availability of Sport Activity Services and Participants' Length of Service

In order to answer the second research question regarding the variations in participants' perceptions of the level of the availability of sport activity services in special education centers in Ma'an governorate based on their length of service, the means and standard deviations of the staff members responses to the three scales were calculated based on their length of service (Table 6).

Table 6. Means and standard deviations for the staff members' responses to the three scales (i.e., physical, human and organizational services and resources scales) based on their length of service.

Scale	length of service	n	M	SD
Physical services and resources	Less than 5	18	2.45	0.38
	6 - 10	15	2.98	1.06
	More than 11	9	2.21	0.98
Human services and resources	Less than 5	18	2.66	0.60
	6 - 10	15	2.94	1.34
	More than 11	9	2.51	0.62
Organizational services and resources	Less than 5	18	2.17	0.31
	6 - 10	15	2.15	0.34
	More than 11	9	1.97	0.48
Overall	Less than 5	18	2.42	0.36
	6 - 10	15	2.69	0.76
	More than 11	9	2.23	0.60

Table 6 shows that there were differences in the means of the staff members' responses to the three scales that measured their perceptions of the level of availability of sport activity services based on their length of service. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine if these differences were statistically significant at ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) (Table 7).

Table 7. One-Way ANOVA- staff members' responses to the three scales (i.e., the availability of physical, human and organizational services and resources scales) based on their length of service

Scale	Groups	Sum of Squares	Degree of freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Physical services and resources	Between groups	3.91	2.00	1.95	2.93	0.065
	Within Groups	26.02	39.00	0.67		
	overall	29.93	41.00			
Human services and resources	Between groups	1.21	2.00	0.61	0.69	0.510
	Within Groups	34.57	39.00	0.89		
	overall	35.79	41.00			
Organizational services and resources	Between groups	0.25	2.00	0.12	0.94	0.398
	Within Groups	5.16	39.00	0.13		
	overall	5.40	41.00			
Overall	Between groups	1.28	2.00	0.64	1.91	0.162
	Within Groups	13.07	39.00	0.34		
	overall	14.35	41.00			

Table 7 shows that there were no significant differences at ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) in the means of the staff members' responses to the three scales that measured their perceptions of the level of availability of sport activity services based on their length of service.

### *5.7 Availability of Sport Activity Services and Location of the Center*

In order to answer the third research question, t-tests were conducted to examine the variations in participants' perceptions of the level of the availability of sport activity services in special education centers in Ma'an governorate based on the location of the center (Table 8).



Table 8. Results of t-tests and descriptive statistics for staff members' responses to the three scales (i.e., physical, human and organizational services and resources scales) based on location of the center

Scale	Location of the centers.	n	M	SD	t	Sig
Physical services and resources	Urban area	27	2.59	0.67	0.01	0.985
	Rural area	15	2.58	1.14		
Human services and resources	Urban area	27	2.68	0.80	0.46	0.643
	Rural area	15	2.82	1.17		
Organizational services and resources	Urban area	27	2.23	0.39	2.93	0.006
	Rural area	15	1.92	0.20		
Overall	Urban area	27	2.50	0.50	0.30	0.759
	Rural area	15	2.44	0.75		

Table 8 shows that there were no significant differences ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between the means of the staff members' responses to two scales: physical services and resources and human services and resources based on location of the centers. However, there was a significant difference ( $t=2.93$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) between the means of the staff members' responses to one scale: organizational services and resources based on location of the centers.

### *5.8 Suggestions from the Directors' of Special Education Centers to Promote Sport Activity Services*

In order to answer the fourth research question regarding the participants' suggestions to promote sport activity services, participants' responses to the following interview question were analyzed: What are the main suggestions to promote the availability and quality of sport activity services in special education centers in Ma'an governorate? (Table 9)

Table 9. Directors' responses to the interview question regarding their suggestions to promote sport activity services

N	Answer	Number of times/ directors reported	Frequency
1	Cooperate with local universities to conduct training courses and programs in physiotherapy and sports.	4	80%
2	Open new majors at local universities related to physical and sport education for children with disabilities.	4	80%
3	The implementation of the laws and regulations, in relation to provided sport activity services to persons with disabilities, should be monitored by the government	4	80%
4	The special education centers should be provided with specialists in physiotherapy from relevant institutions e.g., universities and hospitals in certain days to provide physical therapy in these centers	3	60%
5	Cooperate with local private institutions and companies to support sport activity services and programs for persons with disabilities	5	100%
6	Cooperate with municipal councils and local cultural centers to support sport activity services and programs for persons with disabilities	3	60%
7	Cooperate with other special education centers in the governorate of Ma'an in order to reach common understanding and vision in relation to the provided sport activity services in these centers. In addition to share such vision with decision makers in the government.	1	20%

Table 9 shows that the frequency of the number of suggestions provided by the directors of special education centers in Ma'an governorate to promote sport activity services varied between low and high (20% to 100%). The most reported suggestion by directors was "To cooperate with local private institutions and companies to support sports activity services for persons with disabilities (Frequency = 5, percentage =100%). The least reported suggestion by directors was "To Cooperate with other special education centers in the governorate of Ma'an in order to reach common understanding and vision in relation to the provided sport activity services in these centers. In addition to share such vision with decision makers in the government" (Frequency = 1, percentage =20%).

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the availability of sport activity services in special

education centers in Ma'an governorate from the perspective of their staff members. For the purpose of the study, the researchers developed a questionnaire instrument that consisted of 32 items in three scales: physical services and resources, human services and resources, and organizational services and resources. In addition, interview survey was used to collect in-depth information from directors of five special education centers. The validity and reliability of the used instruments were verified. The number of the participants in the current study was 42 special education centers' staff members.

In order to answer the first research question regarding the participants' perceptions of the level of the availability of sport activity services in special education centers in Ma'an governorate, descriptive statistics were used. The participants' perceptions of the level of availability of sport activity services was moderate ( $M = 2.48$ ,  $SD=0.59$ ). The finding is consistent with the results of similar studies. For instance, Al- Khalidi (2011) found that the level of effectiveness of the available services ranged from low to moderate. Bahrawi (2006) found that the level of the availability of support services provided to people with mental disabilities was moderate.

The participants believed that the human services and resources were the most available types of sport activity services. The level of the availability of human services and resources was moderate ( $M = 2.73$ ,  $SD=0.93$ ). Some item in the human services and resources scored a higher level than others. For instance, a high percentage of the participant agreed that "The parents of children with disabilities encourage their children's participation in sports activities". Such perception reflects the relatively positive perceptions and acceptance of the society in general and the parents of children with disability toward the participation of their children with disabilities in sport activity. For instance, different from the findings of the current study, Ibrahim (2015) reported that there is increasing number of persons with disabilities who participated in national and international sport activity. However, the findings of this study in relation to the human-related barriers for disabled children's participation in sports activities aligned with Moran and Block's (2010) study that showed that there were different types of barriers for persons with disabilities to participate in sports activities. Furthermore, the results showed that there was lack of the number of students with disabilities in the centers in Ma'an governorate who participated in sports activities at the national and international levels. Such finding was expected since there were no playgrounds, gymnasiums, trainers, sports supervisors or physiotherapists in most of these centers. Such findings aligned with Verschuren, et al's.(2012) study that showed that there were personal and environmental barriers that would hinder persons with disabilities to participate in sport activities.

Regarding the availability of physical services and resources related to sport activity services, the participants believed that the level of the availability of physical services and resources was moderate ( $M = 2.59$ ,  $SD=0.85$ ). The findings are consistent with the results of similar studies. For instance, Goma's (2011) study found that special education centers have lack of sport stadiums, covered halls, fitness rooms, professional trainers, sports physiotherapists, and organized sport programs.

The lack of sport facilities, tools, and equipments in special education centers in Ma'an governorate can be attributed to the limited financial resources and economic problems that face the developing countries such as Jordan. The limited financial resources and economic problems in Jordan would negatively affect the provided services for persons with disabilities. Therefore, the special education centers have limited budgets and suffer from lack of sport facilities, tools, and equipments. Some item in the physical services and resources scale scored higher level than others. For instance, a high percentage of the participant agreed that "Students with disabilities in the center practice outdoor sports activities". Such perception can be explained by the geographical features of Ma'an governorate and the area around it. The geographic feature of Ma'an governorate is characterized by being flat and sweeping landmass. Therefore, the centers of special education have extended plain area. Such extended plain area would allow students with disabilities to participate in outdoor sport and recreational activities.

The participants believed that the organizational services and resources were the least available types of sport activity services. The level of the availability of organizational services and resources was low ( $M = 2.12$ ,  $SD = 0.36$ ). The findings are consistent with the results of similar studies. For instance, Al-Qurini's (2012) study found that the main barriers to provide students with disabilities with proper services were the lack of laws and regulations that govern and organize the provided services for persons with disabilities, the lack of academic programs that are specialized in the field of special education and physical education for persons with disabilities in the Arab universities, and the lack of people's awareness regarding the voluntary and collaborative social works in the disability domain. The researchers attributed the low level of the availability of organizational services and resources for persons with disabilities to the lack of specific laws and regulations that govern the availability and the quality of the educational services in general and physical education services in particular for persons with disabilities in Ma'an governorate. Different types of support should be provided to persons with disabilities in order to promote their participations in sport activity programs. In Ma'an governorate, the different civil society and private organizations such as cultural and educational institutions have low support to sport activity service that are provided to persons with disabilities. In addition, there is lack of communication and cooperation as well as awareness among the administrators of the institutions and centers in the disability domain in relation to the provided sport activity services for their students. Furthermore, the institutions and centers in the disability domain suffer from economic problems and limited income, where that negatively affect their capabilities to provide sport activity services to their students. In Ma'an governorate, the local universities are relatively new. They suffer from economic problem and they do not offer majors and programs related to physical education for persons with disabilities. Therefore, special education centers and institutions suffer from shortage in the number of qualified trainers and professionals in the field of physical education and physical therapy in the disability domain. The findings differ from the findings of Almsbhiheen's (2016) study that showed that the staff members believed that the level of availability of the early intervention services was moderate. In Almsbhiheen's (2016) study, the sample consisted of early age children who do not need to stadiums or gymnasiums, but they need natural therapist. In

addition, Almsbhiien (2016) used an instrument with a few items that examined the availability of sport activity services.

The highest scored item in the organizational services and resources scale was “The center informs the parents of children with disabilities verbally and in writing about the eligibility of their children to participate in sports activities. This can be explained by the nature of the adopted educational plan by the special education centers. Special education centers implement individual educational plan that involve cooperation between the special education centers’ staff members and parents of the students to diagnosis the disabilities and special education eligibility for the students. Therefore, there is periodical evaluation for the students that conducted by the staff members of the special education centers and the parents of the students.

In relation to the answer of second research question, the findings showed that there were no differences in the staff members’ perceptions of the availability of sport activity services based on their length of service. The years of service do not have a significant role in addressing the availability of sport activity services in these centers. The nature of the work in the special education services made their staff members, regardless of the duration of the employment, aware of these centers’ needs and provided services. The special education centers’ staff members work as a one team to accomplish their tasks and they learn from each others. In addition, the small sizes of the special education centers contribute in making the employees of these centers aware of the needs and provided services.

In relation to the answer of third research question, the findings showed that there were no differences in the staff members’ perceptions of the availability of sport activity services based on the location of the center except for one scale. The staff members believed that the level of the availability of organizational services and resources related to sport was higher in the urban area compared to rural areas in Ma’an governorate. This result was consistent with the findings of Almsbhiien’s, (2016) study that found the staff members believed that the early intervention services were more available in the special education centers at urban areas compared to the centers that are located in the rural areas.

In relation to the answer of the fourth research question regarding the special education centers directors’ suggestions to enhance sport activity services in their centers in Ma’an governorate, the results showed that the directors focused on promoting the cooperation with local private institutions and companies to support sport activity services and programs for persons with disabilities. Ma’an governorate is rich with natural resource e.g., Phosphate and Cement. Therefore, several national and international companies have invested in these resources and opened branches to their companies in Ma’an governorate. These companies usually provide support to the civil community in Ma’an. Therefore, the directors suggested directing such support to special education centers to enhance the provided services, which include sport activity services, to persons with disabilities.

The directors suggested opening new majors and providing training programs at local universities related to physical and sport education and physical therapy for persons with disabilities. The special education centers suffered from shortage in the number of qualified

trainers and professionals in the field of physical education and physical therapy for persons with disability. However, some of the local universities have experts in this field and special education academic departments. Therefore, the directors believed that the special education centers should take advantages from these universities and their faculty members to provide training related to sport activity services for persons with disabilities.

The directors suggested that need to develop and enhance the implementation of the laws and regulations that guarantee the rights of the persons with disabilities to participate in sports activities. The directors believed that the government should monitor and supervise the provision of services, which include sport activity services, to persons with disabilities.

There are some laws and regulations that specify the rights for persons with disabilities in Jordan. These rights include their rights to participate in sports activities. However, these laws and regulations are not effectively implemented. Therefore, the directors believed that there are needs for monitoring and overseeing from the governments in order to effectively implement these laws and regulations.

A few directors focused on the prompting the cooperation with municipal councils and local cultural centers to support sport activity services for persons with disabilities. However, such suggestion was not common since the municipal councils in the rural area suffer from economic problem and limited financial resource. In addition, rural area has lack in the number of cultural centers.

Only one director suggested the need to promote cooperation among special education centers in governorate of Ma'an in order to reach common understandings regarding their needs of human, physical, and organizations service and resources related to sport. After specifying the common needs, these centers can act as one unit in the process of attracting and demanding the needed support from the private and public sectors. The director who suggested this idea had long experience in disability domain and in management. This director believed that the unification of efforts of all the centers of special education centers in Ma'an governorate would result in attracting support from private and public sectors.

## **7. Recommendations**

The results recommended that there are needs to raise the awareness of the importance of sports activities in the disability domain; to activate the role of civil society institutions in Ma'an governorate (e.g., public and private, cultural and educational institutions) to support the sport activity services for persons with disabilities; to cooperate with local universities to provide academic programs, courses, training sessions in sport and physical education and physical therapy; and to require the local private institutions and companies to support sport activity services for persons with disabilities.

Special education centers should be provided with experts in physical therapy and physical education through the cooperation with relevant institutions (e.g., local universities and hospitals). There are needs to reform and activate the laws and regulations that govern the rights for persons with disabilities to participate in sports activities. In addition, officials in the government should work closely with the special education centers to apply these mandatory laws and regulations related to rights for persons with disabilities to participate in sports activities. Special education centers should pay more attention to the sport classes. In

addition, special education centers should cooperate with the private and public sectors in order to organize sports activities and tournaments.

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