Article

Experts' knowledge about leisure education and leadership development: Building capacity of youth with physical disabilities in South Africa

Makhaya Malema[1,*], Marie Young[1], Barry Andrews[1], Lisa Wegner[2]

[1] Department of Sport, Recreation & Exercise Science, University of the Western Cape, Bellville 7535, South Africa
[2] Department of Occupation Therapy, University of the Western Cape, Bellville 7535, South Africa
* **Corresponding author:** Makhaya Malema, mmalema@uwc.ac.za

Abstract: Leisure education has an impact not only on individuals but also on the environment and society. The present study aimed to explore and describe experts' knowledge and experience about leisure education to develop leadership among youth with physical disabilities. The present study used a qualitative research approach through an exploratory design to answer the research question. Five participants were purposefully recruited and selected based on their expertise in the topic of interest. Participants' expertise ranged from leisure, recreation, youth and leadership. The participants had experience working in higher education institutions, and community projects, held doctorate qualifications, and have over ten years in this field. Data was collected online using Google Meet software using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Data was analyzed using a thematic analysis framework and guidelines. The findings of this study suggest that youth with physical disabilities can develop personal capacity through leisure education programmes. Leisure education programmes can be meaningful to youth with physical disabilities and have a developmental impact, including leadership. Youth with physical disabilities' capacities and abilities should be nurtured and protected to allow growth and independence. The implications are that leisure education programmes for leadership development must be intentional to achieve the intended outcome.

Keywords: capacity building; leisure education; leadership development; youth with disabilities; Sustainable Development Goals

1. Introduction

The position of the current paper aligns with Shannon et al. (2016), who viewed leisure education as having an impact not only on individuals but also on the environment and an immediate impact on the person's society. This notion becomes necessary, specifically, in the current context, where youth with physical disabilities in South Africa remain victims of marginalization. The potential outcome of the perception taken by Shannon et al. (2016) is that people within the same society and environment will become more aware and conscious of people with disabilities, their leisure preferences and abilities, helping to destigmatize the perception of disability within their communities (Anderson, 2020). The current study forms part of a larger project that aimed at gaining an understanding of leisure education as a tool for leadership development among youth with physical disabilities (Malema, 2022). The study argued that youth with physical disabilities remain marginalized and side-lined from main stream leisure programs due to their disabilities. Further, argument was made that these youth do not have access to platforms to showcase their leadership potentials due to the lack of information, access to information and knowledge about

resources related to their leisure choices (Malema, 2022). Therefore, it was deemed necessary to bridge the gap of this challenges by developing guidelines for youth with physical disabilities to develop leadership (Malema et al., 2022).

An understanding of the role of leisure education can assist in connecting the element of leadership development to the current context. It is argued that developing leadership skills among youth with physical disabilities could contribute to building personal capacity. The essential practical considerations in leisure education involve "education through leisure", "education as leisure", "education during leisure", "education for leisure", "education to leisure", and "education about leisure" (Sivan and Stebbins, 2011). These practical considerations can be used to develop leadership qualities and skills and can guide researchers in exploring the "why and how" of leisure education. The "why" is rooted in the viewpoint of education and the significance of leisure activities in people's lives and livelihoods (Sivan and Stebbins, 2011). The "how" incorporates the association between leisure activities and education, ensuring that participants' learning activities are enjoyable and thus contain an element of leisure (Sivan and Stebbins, 2011).

2. Literature review

2.1. Leadership context and influence on leisure

Different intervention programs are designed to instill and nurture leadership qualities in individuals (Kark, 2011). Edginton (1997) reports that leisure service providers are challenged to offer appropriate, timely programs that can develop qualities essential for the future of young people. Jordan and Ramsing (2017) suggest that every leader needs to know and work with different types of people to comprehend the ongoing trends in leisure. In the current study context, leadership refers to the capacity of individuals to bring hope and inspiration to their peers and motivate them to do their best while discovering their abilities and capabilities during leisure pursuits (Edginton et al., 2011). Leadership competencies focus on the social capital framework that builds networks and relationships amongst individuals and promotes innovation and collaboration (Kark, 2011). Other competencies include transparent communication processes, teamwork, conflict resolution and mediation, risk management skills, ethics and flexibility (Jordan and Ramsing, 2017). Without a doubt, youth with physical disabilities can develop these qualities and become leaders within society. However, there is a continued segregation between youth with, and without, disabilities, particularly in leisure programs, which hinders on their equal opportunities for development, which is low in youth with disabilities compared to their counterparts (Malema et al., 2022).

2.2. Leisure's contribution to the global society

This notion is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 agenda. The five domains in SDGs, namely people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, are considered the main pillars to transform the world. The context of the current study cuts across three pillars, namely, prosperity, people and partnerships. As such, within the pillar of people, the current study contributes to goal 10: reduced

inequalities (United Nations, 2015). Within an African context, the current study aligns with the 7th Agenda 2063 Aspiration One: a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, with an indicator of a high standard of living, quality of life and wellbeing for all citizens (African Union Commission, 2015). Additionally, Aspiration Six focuses on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children (African Union Commission, 2015). Furthermore, the current study contributes to Aspiration Seven: Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner (African Union Commission, 2015).

Despite the united efforts, each state, country and region must determine and implement these goals at their own pace, which is regulated by their wealth, natural resources and economic activities. For a developing country like South Africa, it means it is impossible to achieve every goal successfully. According to the preliminary report released in May 2023 by the United Nations' Secretariat, there has been little progress towards the SDGs at this halfway point of Agenda 2023. The lack of progress results from universal injustices between countries, coupled with other factors, such as wars and the various pandemics (United Nations, 2023). There is slower progress achieved in respect to the topic of study in the present context and the contribution towards SDGs'. The reality is that people with disabilities are marginalized in mainstream activities, making it more likely that they will never witness the SDG goals. Through innovative and creative tools such as leisure education (Malema et al., 2022), youth can be encouraged to express and develop their potential into future horizons (Meng, 2017). This potential can be a crucial advancement toward contributing to the SDGs in the South African context.

The success of the SDGs is aimed at "recognizing that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth" (United Nations, 2024). In the context of this study, an argument is made that youth with physical disabilities can contribute towards SDGs through their leadership skills and capacity developed through leisure education programs. This is achievable by considering leisure education through the following's lens: education for leisure, education about leisure and education through leisure (Sivan, 2019). There is a consensus in a scholarly debate that different approaches can be used to adopt leisure education for people with disabilities and apply it in leisure and recreation programs (Sivan, 2019). Furthermore, there is a need to raise awareness among people to promote and realize the importance of leisure at an early age to combat sedentary and risky behavior. Education through leisure focuses on developing people's potential and promoting participation in leisure activities to promote personal growth (Sivan, 2019).

2.3. Theoretical framework for the study

The current study adopted the Leisure Ability Model (LAM), specifically the domain of leisure education, as a framework with an intentional pillar that focuses on self-development, education, motivation, attitudes and values as critical elements for leadership development (Austin, 2009; Hoffman and Long, 2020; Stumbo and Peterson, 2021). The notion of leisure education was campaigned by scholars like Brightbill and Mobley (1977), who suggested that when people learn to improve their

use of leisure through leisure education programs, their values of independence and spontaneity will not be abandoned. By engaging in leisure education programs, youth can learn how to use leisure effectively while maintaining their independence without compromising their leisure patterns due to external circumstances (Brightbill and Mobley, 1977).

Youth with physical disabilities can embrace their leadership qualities and take the initiative for further development during leisure participation. For this to happen, youth with physical disabilities need to adopt the goal of leisure education, which seeks to raise awareness, develop and teach participants how to enjoy their time during activity programs (Austin, 2009; Sivan and Stebbins, 2011; Stumbo and Petersen, 2021). The present study complements a previous study by Malema et al. (2023), which explored the perceived experiences and knowledge of youth with physical disabilities on how leisure education can be used as a tool to develop their leadership. The study involved youth with physical disabilities who reported their experiences about the topic, and shared their understanding and knowledge (Malema et al., 2023). Therefore, the present study sought to share knowledge and experiences from experts and expand on their perceptions to guide the development of relevant leisure education programs for youth with physical disabilities. The research question in this study was: What can be learnt from experts' knowledge about leisure education to develop leadership among youth with physical disabilities?

3. Methods

3.1. Design

A descriptive qualitative research design was used to explore and describe experts' knowledge about leisure education to develop leadership among youth with physical disabilities. Five leisure, recreation and leadership experts were purposefully recruited as participants for the study. The participants all work in higher education institutions, hold doctoral qualifications, and have over 10 years of experience in teaching and conducting research in this field.

3.2. Data collection procedures

Data was collected online using Google Meet software. The participants were interviewed using semi-structured questions (**Table 1**). The interviews lasted around an hour and a half and were audio recorded. Data collection continued until it was deemed sufficient known as data sufficiency in qualitative research; which means the information acquired was sufficient for the present study (Varpio et al., 2017). The data set from the present study is comprehensive and can account for discrepant breadth (Morse, 2015). Data sufficiency depends on both the rigor of the analytics and rich data generated (Ladonna et al., 2021). The questions below in **Table 1** were developed based on findings from Malema et al. (2023) below.

Table 1. Interview questions.

Main question	Probing question
In what ways do you think that leisure is important for youth with physical disabilities?	Probes: During individual participation and group/pair participation.
In your opinion, what are the challenges youth with physical disabilities experience in developing leadership?	Probes: Individual level, mainstream society and government level.
Research shows that sometimes youth with physical disabilities don't always feel that they can act as role models for others. Why do you think this might be?	
Research shows that it is important to encourage people to participate in leisure activities through which they can increase their knowledge. Why do you think this is important for leadership development?	
Research shows that it is important to help people identify their own skills and abilities that they can use in leisure activities. Why do you think this is important for leadership development?	
How do you think leisure education can be used to develop leadership among youth with physical disabilities?	

3.3. Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a process for reducing data to form a coherent narrative and interpreting the findings to obtain insights from the information gathered (Lecompte, 2013). Thematic analysis followed a six-step guide which included: (a) organization and preparation of the data which was achieved by thoroughly understating the data and reading the transcripts to understand the context, (b) obtaining a general sense of the information which was achieved by aligning the responses against the interview questions, to check if the responses were answering the questions asked, (c) the coding process was achieved through the researcher (MM) and an independent co-coder noting initial themes and concepts, identified subthemes, and applied the thematic framework, themes and sub-themes were merged and agreed upon to by MM and an independent co-coder to promote trustworthiness of the data, (d) categories or themes was achieved through noting similar patterns and statements which aligned with participants' responses and quotes, (e) interpretation of the data was achieved by using participants' quotations to support the themes and sub-themes from the data collected, (f) reporting was achieved through organizing and describing the data in detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Clarke and Braun, 2017).

3.4. Rigor of the study

This study adopted the model of rigour/trustworthiness proposed by Schurink et al. (2011), including credibility, transferability and dependability. The study's credibility was achieved through thorough engagement with participants during data collection, allowing the researchers to gain insightful knowledge from the participants' meaning and understanding of how leisure education can be used to develop leadership (Krefting, 1991; Merriam, 2009; Schurink et al., 2011). To ensure transferability, a detailed account of the methodology and participants' perceptions is presented, preserving the meaning of their responses (Krefting, 1991; Merriam, 2009; Schurink et al., 2011). Lastly, dependability was enhanced through a two-phase process of verifying the themes and sub-themes with an independent researcher to avoid biases in the data (Krefting, 1991; Merriam, 2009; Schurink et al., 2011).

3.5. Ethics

Ethics clearance was obtained from the Biomedical Research Committee (BM20/2/1). Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that at any point during data collection, they could withdraw their participation without any prejudice. Participants signed consent forms and agreed to be audio recorded during the data collection process. The information given by the participants is kept confidential and their identity protected at all times. Before each interview, participants were informed not to reveal their personal details, and where names are mentioned, during the interview, a pseudonym name were used to protect their identity.

4. Results

The results section is presented in two parts: firstly, demographic profiles of participants and details of the participants are given (**Table 1**), and this is followed by a presentation of the themes and sub-themes with supporting quotes.

Table 1. Demographic profiles of participants.

Code	Profile
E01	Male, holds a PhD, South African Senior Lecturer, + 10 years' experience in teaching and research, specializes in adventure related experiential learning and youth leadership development.
E02	Female, holds a PhD, South African Professor, + 18 years' experience in research and academic career, specializes in health service research, capacity building, self-leadership, and self-care
E03	Female, holds a PhD, American Professor, + 20 years' experience in the academic career and research, specializes in youth development, leisure studies, health promotion and health education.
E04	Female, holds a PhD, International Assistant Professor, + 15 years' experience in the academic career and research, specializes in leisure studies, health promotion and youth development.
E05	Female, holds a PhD, International Assistant Professor, + 18 years' experience in teaching and research, specializes in therapeutic recreation, quality of life research and special education for people with disabilities.

Table 1 above describes the profile and characteristics of the participants in this study. Participants have a wealth of knowledge in the professions of leisure, recreation and youth development. The participant's experience in the topic of this study is valuable because of their academic knowledge and involvement in community and research projects exploring leisure and recreation.

Table 2. Overview representation of the themes and sub-themes with supporting quotes.

Theme	Sub-themes	Quotation
Leisure engagement	Importance of leisure	*"I think that everybody should just have leisure to have fun, you know, not everything has to be meaningful or benefit, that just having fun and playing as a benefit. But I think, even just playing computer games, or whatever, you know, that can be kind of mindless, that everybody needs that kind of thing"* E03.
	Considerations in leisure activities	*"I think there's a lot of stigmas. And I think there's stigma that related to youth that people maybe don't feel like they have the skills and abilities that they do and so they aren't willing to let youth be more independent"* E04.

Table 2. (*Continued*).

Theme	Sub-themes	Quotation
Leisure education components	Active engagement	*"The more active they are in trying, being exposed to new things, and being engaged with things that maybe they didn't think they could do. I think that's important"* E05.
	Motivation	*"Its self-motivation, and being motivated by others, that people with disabilities, but then also in the sense that they are the ones that are motivating people that have no disabilities"* E01.
	Self-development	*"...the more you learn, the more you practice, the more you talk to people, the more you read, the more you try things, you increase your knowledge, and then you're a better leader, because you've increased that knowledge and you can help other people"* E05.
	Attitudes and Values	*"Values that they have formed. So, so, if somebody is motivated, and if they contribute to other people's motivation. If they actively engaged, if they are, if they are involved in processes, if they self-reflect they will be able to have the appropriate values, and, you know, the capacity to, to not only look at society in a certain way, but also to look at themselves in a certain way"* E01.
Leadership development	Leadership potential during leisure education	*"I think there should be no reason whatsoever that a person with any kind of physical limitation shouldn't be a leader".* E03.
	Challenges when developing leadership	*"it's a paradigm of society that people have this perception that people with disabilities do not have the same potential, or the same offering, as other people do. And I think that is the biggest stumbling block, I don't think it is these young people with the disabilities, I think it's a society problem".* E01.
Leisure education and leadership programs	Leisure education programs	*"It's just bringing in knowledge, attitudes, skills, the desire to help a community. Feeling like they can't be a role model, or be a leader, but by, by using leisure activities to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes to serve a purpose, I think, leisure education is a perfect venue for that vehicle".* E03.
	Program components	*"So, peer mentoring, you really do need to make sure it can be long term, because what's going to be so important is when the kids are growing up that they can give back and be a role model to the younger children that are coming into your program. So, it needs to be sustainable. And if you know that it can't be sustainable then you really need to think about what you're starting".* E05.
	Challenges within programs	*"The emotional part is getting past the, you know, the stigma of people thinking that someone who has a physical disability can't do these things"* E05.

Table 2 above gives an overview representation of the findings with themes and sub-themes. Furthermore, a supporting sample quote from a participant is illustrated to show support of the theme and sub-theme above. Detailed account of the themes and sub-themes with the supporting quotes from participants is reported below. The themes and sub-themes above are expanded below with clear descriptions and supporting quotes.

4.1. Theme: Leisure engagement

Leisure programs and activities contribute to overall health and promote lifelong skills (Weybright et al., 2019). Furthermore, leisure programs benefit personal development through improved self-concept, a sense of achievement, spiritual growth, enhanced creativity, learning and self-reliance. In this theme, participants share their knowledge and insights about leisure engagement for youth with physical disabilities. The sub-themes under this theme include the importance of leisure and considerations in leisure activities.

4.1.1. Sub-theme: Importance of leisure

Leisure activities offer a variety of benefits, which have been documented by scholars in this field. It is well established that leisure activities play a critical role in the health and well-being of anyone who engages in the activities. Participants are recorded expressing that:

According to E05: *"...leisure is going to be empowering, it's going to increase socialization, it's going to include socialization for friends, you know, with friends, but also with family. So, I think about all the different domains of what leisure can do to increase quality of life".*

One participant, E04 emphasizes that shared identity is important, reporting that: *"...There's something to be said for being with people who share similar characteristics as you, and forming a connection and bonding with those individuals, having opportunities to hang out together with someone who just inherently understands the challenges that you face and can appreciate that so.*

E03 suggested that: *"...I think that everybody should just have leisure to have fun, you know, not everything has to be meaningful or benefit, that just having fun as and playing as benefit. But I think, and even just playing, you know, computer games, or whatever that can be kind of mindless, that everybody needs that kind of thing".*

"..., for me, no experience in leisure, during leisure time, it can just be for the sake of, you know, typically let the experience talk for itself. Because if the experience talks for itself, it means that the perceptions, and the assumptions which young people can make during that time, could be based on the wrong paradigm... both young people with disabilities, and the abled people need to be encouraged to be involved in groups where the is, you know, one of the other groupings". Said E01.

The participants in this sub-theme shared valuable knowledge of the powerful benefits for youth with physical disabilities that are associated with leisure. Furthermore, the benefits are universal and youth with physical disabilities are not exempt.

4.1.2. Sub-theme: Considerations in leisure activities

Planning leisure activities comes with a lot of responsibilities. This process must consider various scenarios and circumstances, especially when planning activities for people with disabilities.

E05 report that: *"..., But I see that our programming has to reach the caregivers, the family, the other caring adults, around them as well to help promote build the leadership, the skills, the confidence in that child or youth..., we have to kind of make sure that other people that are involved in that participant's lives understand it too..., the different systems surrounding the person, so it's the person, it's the family, it's the teachers, it's the coaches, it's of course the leisure professionals when they're involved in our programmes."*

The social factors need to be considered during leisure program planning, participant E04 states that:

"...I think there's a lot of stigma. And I think there's stigma that happens, related to youth that people maybe don't feel like you have the skills and abilities that they do and aren't willing to kind of let youth be more independent... I think there's also a lot of stigma with people with disabilities, that there's an assumption that you're not able to do the things that the rest of us do because you have some sort of limitation. And there's not always as much thought to,

instead of just assuming that folks can't do things, how do we help them navigate their environment in a way that fits for them".

There is a need to assess and recognize participants' skills, abilities and limitations during leisure program planning.

According to participant E01: *"…I think, you know, the holistic development of these young people from an early age, to be able to self-affirm themselves and to show society but listen, I have got potential. And, also to sensitize society to say this, you need to intentionally get the input of these of people, because they have got something to offer… there is a need to have a specific side of the training and development or the intervention, the leadership intervention, very specific to the world of a person with disabilities.*

The findings of this subtheme reported the need for a well-thought-out program that can incorporate different dimensions. There is a need for to recognize participants in a program and accommodate their levels of skills and adopt according to their personal abilities.

4.2. Theme: Leisure education components

Leisure education can be used as a developmental process whereby people increase their understanding of leisure and the relationships among leisure, lifestyle and society (Edginton et al., 2004). The components of a leisure education program are intentional and aimed at achieving specific outcomes, which include active engagement, motivation, self-development and attitudes and values. The participants in this theme reported their knowledge and experience on how the components can contribute towards developing leadership during leisure education programs.

4.2.1. Sub-theme: Active engagement

Active engagement requires participants to be involved and more proactive in leisure education programs. Participants in this subtheme expressed that:

Expert E04 recognizes the importance of active engagement in a program, reporting:

"…But I do think one's ability to thoughtfully and meaningfully engage with the program is key to the outcomes that they're going to experience. I don't think that that's static, though, I don't think that it has to be the same the whole time. And so, it's really on the leader or the structure of the program to make sure it's set up for youth to feel like they want to be actively engaged in the program itself."

Expanding on the same notion, another participant stated that, active engagement involves:

"…I think, helping kids, giving them things that they like to do, that promotes active engagement, and creative engagement. You know, I think that's a really important thing and it's possible that these kids that you're talking about after school, like, when they come home to their communities, like you were saying, it's likely, and I don't know, you can tell me that they don't have those opportunities, as many opportunities to be active, engaged. Active doesn't just mean physical, but it should be physical. It should be engaging senses and

creativity, or excitement, or learning, you know, I think active is key to helping get benefits". Said participant E03.

One view highlights the point that it is meaningless to advocate for active engagement, if there is no personal commitment by those involved:

E01 said: *"...you need to have the willingness to say I want to be part of this, if you're going to be forced to be part of any process, you're not going to take anything from it. So, the first thing is you need to have a willingness to say I want to be part of this, I, I buy into this process, and I've got an expectation..."*.

In this subtheme, the participants reported that being actively engaged can be beneficial amongst youth with physical disabilities. However, one participant expressed that the engagement needs to be meaningful so it is impactful for the individuals taking part.

4.2.2. Sub-theme: Motivation

Motivation as a component of leisure education is critical. This can be either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. Participants engaging in leisure education programs can benefit and enjoy the activities if they are motivated.

E01 suggests that: *"...these young people if you refer to young people now, they always need to be motivated, you know? As all of us go through ups and downs and miles, these young people also go through ups and downs. Even more, more critical than then others. So, so, you know, they need to be a motivational component in there. Not only self-motivating them but also then being.... then motivating others. Because a lot of people, you know, if people reflect on, on what we regard as issues and challenges in life, and we look at these other people with disabilities of, you know, though, through the pain and sorrows that they go through, they can play an immense role in the motivation of other people"*.

E03 suggests that: *"...if I develop a skill or an ability, especially if I wasn't sure I could do it, or then I'm more confident in myself and I, I'm empowered by the ability to that I've learned something. And again, it's like the knowledge if I learned a skill, you and I could either teach somebody the skill as leadership, or I just have developed confidence and competence.*

Extrinsic motivation can be a valuable boost in encouraging youth with physical disabilities to engage more in leisure education programs.

E04 reports*: "... I think people don't realize that they are the role model until so what would bring it to their attention? And so, I can see situations where you either don't desire to be a role model or don't feel like they are, especially if you're trying to figure this out on your own. At the same time, you may not feel like you have the skills and abilities to show someone else how to do something..."*.

Youth with physical disabilities can benefit from being internally and externally motivated. This notion can be universal across youth with and without physical disabilities, as motivation has a big impact on people in general and is arguably particularly important for youth with physical disabilities.

4.2.3. Sub-theme: Self-development

Leisure education program domains can help facilitate development in one's life domains. This requires that one become determined to upskill and learn relevant skills to function in their surrounding areas.

E04 suggests that: *"…So I think it's important to still be able to identify things that you are comfortable doing in your free time… identifying your strengths and weaknesses, and be having a degree of insight to understand, wow, that's an area that I just don't do as well on and I know, I need some help with". So, to be able to, and at some place that you need to maybe work and grow and develop."*

"So, I think having that level of insight to know that you there are areas in which you still need to learn is also translates when I think of, and selfishly… that's important to know where boundaries are, like, what am you are good at, and what am I not good at? So that, I'm not going to take a lead on something that I just know, isn't a strength of mine, I'm going to bring in someone else or make it a team effort, but I'm not going to do that piece on my own. Because I'm just not very skilled at it". E02.

Self-development amongst youth with a physical disability is an important endeavour to ensure that they can undertake day-to-day tasks and activities. Youth with physical disabilities need to be at the forefront of their development because they can advise on the specific areas where they want to focus.

4.2.4. Sub-theme: Attitudes and values

Attitudes and values as a domain in leisure education programs can be both positively influential and simultaneously negative. This depends on external and internal factors such as peers, self-beliefs and motivation.

E02 participant said *"… I think another key group for the youth and youth with physical disabilities is friendship. Because that's just so important for youth development. Right? And that's so important of how you learn how to interact with each other and, and, and cooperating and sharing and leadership, development."*

E04 states: *"…think we used to do values when we did the leisure program that I did in an inpatient psych setting. And so, the values are kind of a grounding force, right? And so, when you feel more grounded, and I would imagine what goes along with that is you feel more confident in who you are and what's important. But if part of my values is I don't know something about creating a sense of belonging or helping people feel welcomed, that's going to translate to how I'm approaching the programming that I deliver or from a leadership perspective how I'm leading others, if it's important to me that everyone feels welcome, and everyone feels like they have a voice."*

E01 states that: *"…Values that they have formed. So, if somebody is motivated, and if they contribute to another people's motivation. If they actively engaged, if they are involved in processes, if they self-reflect they will be able to have the appropriate values, and, you know, the capacity to not only look at society in a certain way, but also to look at themselves in a certain way".*

The values and attitudes of youth with physical disabilities are no different from mainstream society. The values are rooted in the individuals themselves and their abilities to lead themselves and have the confidence to undertake roles in society.

4.3. Theme: Leadership development

Leadership development in this study context relates to relationships leaders adopt within a peer setting during leisure programs, to be in a hierarchical advantage where all youth are offered opportunities to adopt adult-like roles (Shaikh et al., 2019). In this theme, the findings reported under the subthemes below indicate how leadership development is operationalized. The context of leadership is related to leisure education specifically, for youth with physical disabilities. The sub-themes under this theme include leadership potentials during leisure education and the challenges of developing leadership.

4.3.1. Sub-theme: Leadership potentials during leisure education

Leadership skills development like many others is the outcome of a focused leisure education program. For this study, leadership development is regarded as a key instrument to be developed by youth with physical disabilities.

Participant E02 said: *"So, communications, not just talking, it's also how you listen to others. So, there are all different leisure activities, and leisure education, activities that you can use, to promote all that. I think another area that's almost seen as its own, it is seen as, as an intervention, but it's values clarification, but I think you can incorporate that into leisure education…"*.

The structure of leisure education programs must be focused on leadership development as a key outcome so that activities can help facilitate exactly that, participant E05 said:

"… leisure education is a process, of leisure awareness, leisure skills, leisure resources, social skills, I mean if you look at some of the goals and outcomes, for each of those areas, it all has implications on leadership. A lot of it can help youth become self-determined through leisure. And that's definitely a skill set that they can transfer in leadership development."

Skill-based programs are capable of facilitating specific critical skills, participant E03 said:

"…I can't imagine any other reason that an individual with any type of limitation, couldn't be a leader, and, you know, there are leaders, leaders need followers, you can't be a leader unless you have people who follow so that there has to be followers to be a leader. And I think, you know, the whole idea of shared leadership is also a really important thing. And people can be leaders in one situation, you know, it makes me think of leadership and leadership isn't just the person in charge."

In terms of program structure, participant E04 shares the same sentiments and gave an example of one of the projects they're involved in, reporting that:

"…A lot of the programming that we do is youth and adults working together in partnership, and it takes some additional training to get that make sure the adults see the youth is equals, or as equal contributors to the program or the project they're doing…"

"…if I'm trying to support someone, from a leader perspective, that model can be used. But if I'm also trying to support someone from a leadership development perspective, and the reason I bring it up is because it still has that piece about competence. And there are always ways to support someone's competence depending on what the area is, so whether that's leadership development or leisure education, helping people to be more, more knowledgeable about the topic at hand, is, is inherent is a key piece of this, self-determination theory."
Said participant KR02.

For leadership to be developed by youth with physical disabilities, they require commitment and dedication from relevant stakeholders, such as leisure service providers. This is emphasized by the participants to show that it takes an effort from all stakeholders to ensure there is a successful engagement and participation by youth with physical disabilities.

4.3.2. Sub-theme: Challenges when developing leadership

Recognizing the unique nature of people with physical disabilities, it is safe to anticipate that there might be challenges in their day-to-day lives. These challenges can be present during their leisure time and subsequently impact their skill development.

Participant E05. *"I think, I think leisure probably plays a different role in that development, and understanding the importance of helping get through some of those psychological barriers that can happen with more of that traumatic requirement, versus a child or youth that has always lived with their disability…".*

E04 says: *"… Similarly, along those lines of the stigma is that some people may, consciously or unconsciously kind of, you know, be supporting youth without disabilities, there may be some sort of stigma or prejudice, the assumption that you've had disabilities, we shouldn't put them in leadership roles, because maybe that's not something they can attain. And so really seeing all youth and all abilities have views on a level playing field, that they are all very deserving of, of whatever opportunities they want to have."*

E01 argues that: *"… I also think this specific disability has got a role to play, you know? There're generic inputs in leadership in a broad front where anybody can change and continue to learn to make an input. But then there's a part of influencing decision-making and leadership, where a specific disability has got a limiting effect on the people making the input. You cannot expect somebody with a.... blind person or a deaf person, to have the same paradigm as other people have. So, that is a reality and I think people can go around if that reality is also something that, that people need to be aware of, and that's why it's good if people with disabilities are part of communities where there is diversity".*

There are challenges that youth with physical disabilities experience, as stated by participant E05:

"…I think it's a lot of it is because families have so much influence, and what the child can, can do. Again, I think, reaching the parents to be able to.... so, a child with a physical disability can be involved in a program, you know, two hours a day, and do the things that are helping them develop emotionally and physically

and socially, cognitively. But then, that when they go home, if, if that's not transferring to the home, then that, that isn't beneficial, you know, that's, that's still a constraint. And that is going to affect what that child could feel like they can do overall.".

The participants in this subtheme reported that challenges that may confront youth with disabilities can include factors that are attributed to personal and social factors. These challenges are often man-made and require efforts to be overcome. It is feasible that youth with physical disabilities can overcome the challenges that can be a characteristic of leadership skills.

4.4. Theme: Leisure education and leadership programs

Using leisure education programs as an agent for leadership capacity building, youth with disabilities would be able to take on positions and influence themselves, their peers and their communities. The need to develop guidelines is required and justified to develop guidelines to facilitate leadership skills amongst youth with physical disabilities (Malema, 2022). In this theme, the participants gave suggestions on what would constitute a well-rounded structure of a program. The sub-themes in this theme include program components and challenges within the program.

4.4.1. Sub-theme: Program components

Leisure education programs are tailored specifically to the participants. The scope and intended focus of such programs embrace the notion of two components; namely, leisure and education and skills development, which focuses on leadership building.

E05 reports that: *"…I think peer mentoring programs are going to be key, and even younger children. And you can facilitate some of that to like with older, you know, older peers, being role models for younger peers, but you've kind of got to set up the older peer group to be able to do that".*

Leisure education has the potential to facilitate leadership skills development. This is possible through activity-focused programs that would offer an opportunity for engagement, participant E02 said:

"…I do think leisure education can enhance leadership development through just, you know, them being able to go through the process of understanding what they like to do their leisure awareness, understanding what they need to do through laser skills, which give them the confidence to overcome."

E03 has a different perception, suggesting that:

"…I think, think leisure education should be broader in one sense, unless its leisure skill development, and then you have to teach some certain skills. I mean, you have to do that. And that's also part of leisure education. I think, the whole idea of educating and helping them problem solve and think through no matter what the situation is."

Leisure education can be holistic, focusing on a variety of domains to ensure that participants are developed all around. Participant E01 said:

"…I think the fact that leisure is a discipline where people interact with each other, so people have contact with each other and other people. It is inevitable that people will be exposed to different personalities and different behaviours, and they will, in a certain sense, measure themselves or coordinate themselves

with other people. These people could then be people without any disabilities or other people with disabilities, and how they then react within that."

It might be worth considering an amalgamation of activities to facilitate leisure education programs. This is necessary as it offers a broader opportunity to participants and could potentially facilitate learning prospects. Participant E04 said:

"...there are a lot of and I think, kind of blending and merging some of the things that have been talked about. So, are there ways to provide a foundation of information, but also support individuals to be learning themselves and like, basically scaffolding this process over a series? And we haven't even talked about kind of like, the structure of a program and how it's not just a one, like, at least in my mind, this isn't a one-time thing, it's a multi, multi-week or whatever."

The components of a leisure program depend on the outcomes set by the activity leader and organizer. Youth with physical disabilities can develop their leadership skills by taking on initiatives and getting involved in the programs rather than being participants only.

E05 suggests the following: *"...So, and peer mentoring, you do need to make sure it can be long term because what's going to be so important is when the kids are growing up that they can give back to, to the and be a role model to the new, younger children that are coming into your program. So, it needs to be sustainable."*

KR02 said: *"...I think building relationships with other people their age, but adults, because the networking side of what their needs are, is going to be even greater. So, you have to make sure that when they're not with the program anymore, whether it's, you know, at home, or when they're at school, or when they graduate, or maybe they've aged out, or an adult, now, you've got them to a point where they know how to communicate and build their relationships."*

E03 has a different perspective, suggesting that:

"...give people license to just watch TV or whatever, you know, that's not very active engagement. But people need that. Sometimes you come home, you just don't want to do anything, but just watch TV…. I think all of those values, attitudes, motivation, active engagement. I mean, I think you've nailed it that those are should be elements of any program there that are given, when do you teach these certain skills versus, like, concrete skills, versus I'm going to call them soft skills, I guess more like problem-solving and decision making and that kind of thing…, the elements of knowledge, skills and attitudes."

A practical example was made by Expert E04, detailing that:

"I think that blending of kind of increasing self-awareness or competence, but also engaging with participants in a way that helps them feel self-determined, or the facilitates that kind of self-determined action, and not only self-determined but increases that kind of contribution back".

The need for programs to be specific and fitting to participants is important. No program can "fit all" the needs and preferences of participants. It is important to understand the participants' leisure needs and preferences, so their participation is meaningful in an activity of their choice, to experience the essence of leisure and related benefits thereafter.

4.4.2. Sub-theme: Challenges within programs

Every program is designed and implemented with plans to mitigate some challenges and possible mitigating factors. However, for people with disabilities, it is important to plan programs, make necessary adaptations, be accommodating and provide sufficient access to available opportunities.

One participant reported about overcoming the stigma of a disability:

E05 reports that: *"… people with physical disabilities can be confronted by the emotional part is getting past the stigma of people* [in their society] *thinking that someone who has a physical disability can't do these things…"* Additionally, people with physical disabilities can be stuck up on the mentality of "can't".

Challenges about accessibility to facilities by youth with physical disability is expressed by one participant, mentioning that:

E05 continues to say: *"The physical access is extremely important. It just affects them just even to be able to do an activity or go and get a cup of coffee, or drink… just to go into a restaurant with their family, or, to go with their friends to get a soda… it is isolating… I mean, if you're isolated, there's depression, anxiety, and then all the things offshoots of that it can affect you physically, you know, your physical health will decrease…".*

Some of these challenges emanate from leisure service providers, E04 reported a lived experience, reporting that:

"…so, we've gone on trips along with people with disability as part of, you know, someone who's worked in leisure and work with people with disabilities, even when you're very intentional things can go wrong, when we would call places ahead and say, Do, you have an accessible entry into your facility? And they say, yeah, and you show up, and they don't so. So I think some of that makes it difficult to try to plan and make decisions when you don't necessarily know until you're in it, or until you get there that even when you're being proactive, it's hard sometimes to identify what barriers are going to exist and how you can navigate those… there are still like I mentioned a lot of places that may say they're accessible."

The challenges reported above include stigma, accessibility and at times, exclusion from the leisure spaces. These challenges can be considered universal and require mediation. Although leisure service providers often plan to eliminate accessibility and adaptations, they can at times find themselves facing unique challenges when they host people with disabilities within their spaces. This requires careful and delicate planning and care.

5. Discussion

The current study sought to explore and describe expert knowledge on how leisure education can be used to develop leadership among youth with physical disabilities. The participants of this study were renowned experts with diverse knowledge and experience in conducting research and training in the field of leisure, recreation and youth (with and without disabilities). Their insights offer a significant opportunity to align South African trends with global practices. Their knowledge is informed by previous and current research of theirs, which then became a valuable

element for the current research, to learn and promote values in this topic. Teplitskiy et al. (2019) recorded that expert's opinions and advice are used in major decision-making processes and for many reasons. Additionally, Hesse et al. (2017) indicate that experts' opinions can be used as a starting point to provide an assessment in areas that may appear to have uncertainty in a particular project.

The study findings are reported in four main themes: leisure engagement, leisure education components, leadership development, and leisure education and leadership programs. The findings of this study suggest that youth with physical disabilities can develop capacities through intentional leisure education programs. These programs can be meaningful to youth with physical disabilities and have a developmental impact, which can include leadership. The findings from this study indicate that leisure education programs for leadership development need to be intentional to achieve the intended outcome. A leisure program can promote positive attitudes and values while simultaneously improving activity skills (Kono et al., 2024). This notion is promoted by the Leisure Ability Model domain of leisure education as emphasized by Austin (2009), Hoffman and Long (2020), and Stumbo and Peterson (2021).

The findings of this study shed some light on what components can be included on a leisure education component. The findings in this study emphasize the four core-domains which include: self-development, motivation, active engagement and values and attitude. This component aligns with literature which reports that leisure education includes elements of education and leisure and can be defined as content, context and process (Sivan, 2017). As content, leisure education looks comprehensively at the subject matter and that includes the provision of information and knowledge related to leisure, the teaching of skills and providing opportunities for participation in recreational activities (Sivan, 2017). Furthermore, as context, leisure education involves the use of leisure space/setting and situations for education. As a process leisure education can be used as an intervention for transition development over the lifetime (Sivan, 2017).

The findings of this study further reported about the leisure education and leadership development components. This includes skills development and becoming actively involved in the programs for meaningful engagement. Ettekal and Agans (2020) questioned how to engage youth in forms of leisure that intentionally contribute to their positive development. This is possible, by adopting Sivan's (2017) notion that suggests that knowledge, skills values and attitudes related to leisure are fundamental to education and can be used to guide educational activities, programs and curricula to achieve learning outcomes. Shannon et al. (2016) believe that "leisure education provides the tools, approach and a set of principles that can affect change at an individual and environmental level by promoting engagement with the issues, knowledge and contextual factors impacting problem-solving and decision-making". Leisure education offers youth with physical disabilities opportunities to develop in critical areas for their leisure skills. Leisure education can benefit everyone regardless of whether they live with, or without, disabilities.

This is important to understand this so that youth with physical disabilities can achieve their objectives and develop holistically as individuals. Additionally, the findings highlight some challenges, such as accessibility and societal challenges. These reported challenges are surprising because sport and recreation continue to be

short-resourced for certain groups regarding the allocation of resources to promote and develop sports in the country (White Paper on Sport and Recreation of South Africa, 2012). Therefore, accessibility and social inequalities will remain consistent challenges in South African communities until an intervention to address the resource allocations is made. This will remain a challenge based on the findings from the study. The lack of commitment particularly in South African context, where leisure and recreation programs are not given preferences can lead to low participation rates.

6. Implication and recommendation

The aim of this study was to explore and describe knowledge by experts about leisure education to develop leadership among youth with physical disabilities. The findings of the study have an impact on two major sectors: public leisure sectors, where the onus rests on relevant office bearers in government to ensure to offer basic leisure and recreation services to cater to all citizens. The government has a duty not to infringe on people's rights when offering leisure and recreation services, and no one should be marginalized in the process. The second implication is on private leisure sectors because the majority of services are offered in the form of a transactional service meaning that people pay for the leisure experience. Therefore, adapted programs must meet the expectations of the people paying for the services. Therefore, it is recommended that leisure education be prioritized with the intention of raising awareness of people's leisure, resource and skills development during participation.

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Data availability: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, MM, upon reasonable request.

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