

The experience of INAIL and SCHOLAS: re-narrate through sports as a facilitator of life project

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Abstract: This paper aims to present a research based on the narrative approach (Connelly and Clandinin, 1997, 2000) to explore the impact of the project activities promoted by the partnership between Inail and Scholas through the narration of people with physical disabilities acquired because of work accidents, involved in the projects of Scholas and Inail. Twenty-five semi-structured interviews were conducted, which were then subjected to thematic analysis (Braun, Clarke, 2019) using NVIVO software (Richards, 1999). With a narrative that can be defined as breaking (Neymer, 2004) The participants retraced their stories of life that suddenly change by drawing a defined and definitive boundary between a before and a after the accident at work but that reveal unexpected resilience capabilities, thanks to the role of sport as a facilitator of their life project.

Keywords: inclusion; life project; facilitators; barriers; disability.

1. Introduction

Disability in adulthood can occur because of road accidents, illness or accidents at work. In the European Union, around 4,900 people die from workplace accidents every year, and almost 5 million non-fatal workplace accidents are reported to the authorities (European Commission, 2023, Eurostat, 2024). An accident, which occurred from one day to the next, upsets the lives of those involved and of the entire family network that surrounds them: it irreparably changes their health conditions. In addition to physical suffering, there are all those difficulties related to the acceptance of one's condition, to relationships with others (family, friends, colleagues for example), to the impossibility of carrying out the same activities done up to that moment, both in terms of work and personal interests. Considering this, the person who becomes disabled in adulthood needs "[...] to question one's certainties and life habits, to find new relational and personal strategies" (D' Angelo, 2019, p.99). The onset of a condition of disability places the subject in front of a different perception of his or her body. In this regard, Murphy traces, from an emic perspective, the story of the progressive estrangement of the body of those who become disabled, of the assumption of the role of sick person and of respect for the rules of the disease. Murphy (2017, p. 13) argues that people with disabilities face four main transformations which are related to a reduction in self-esteem, the invasion of physical deficit thinking, existential anger (accompanied by guilt and shame) and "the acquisition of a new, total and undesirable identity" (p.13). And it is precisely the question of identity



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that becomes the repository of greater criticalities, placing the person with disabilities in a condition that Murphy defines as "liminal"; It is a form of suspension and indefiniteness of identity since "they are neither sick nor healthy, neither dead nor fully alive, neither outside society nor fully participating. They are human beings, but their bodies are deformed or malfunctioning, leaving their full humanity in doubt." (Murphy, 2017, p. 15). This produces the fracture between a before and an after, which becomes traumatic by it takes place around the principle of functioning. On the one hand, a body that has lost its status as a norm and on the other, the space-temporal coordinates of everyday life, social and work that remain within a normative characterization: before, the body moved in the category of what is considered adequate, but now it does not seem to support this dimension (Medeghini, Valtellina, 2006).

According to INAIL estimates, in Italy there are over twenty thousand people with disabilities acquired due to accidents at work every year, some of whom have a severe disability. INAIL (National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work) is a non-economic and financially independent public body that manages compulsory insurance against accidents at work and occupational diseases in Italy on behalf of the State. Since the first law, dating back to the end of the nineteenth century, the protection provided by INAIL has increasingly been characterized as a global and integrated protection system ranging from compensation to prevention actions in the workplace, to health and economic services, to treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration into social and working life of people who have suffered damage because of accidents at work or occupational diseases. According to INAIL estimates, in Italy there are over twenty thousand people with disabilities acquired due to accidents at work every year, some of whom have a severe disability.

Last year, the third edition of the reintegration and social inclusion project of Inail Campania and the international non-profit organization of pontifical right, Scholas Occurrentes, created by Pope Francesco in 2013, was launched. The project, entitled "Together we can change the world". Sport, Art and Technology, was carried out in webinar mode and aimed at Inail Campania patients.

It was decided to use sport as a vehicle to increase self-esteem and self-confidence, promote physical, psychological and social well-being with a view to quality of life understood as the subjective perception that an individual has of his position in life, in the context of a culture and a set of values in which he lives, also in relation to one's goals, expectations and concerns (Shalock et al., 2006). Sport also allows you to develop a sense of team and collaboration and finally the setting of goals to be achieved.

Other elements characterizing the project carried out were art as a device for personal and collective growth and to develop transferable skills and abilities at the level of social and community interaction together with technology as a transversal tool to promote creativity and propose initiatives that generate peace.

2. Materials and Methods

To explore the impact of the project activities and the point of view of the participants on the initiatives promoted by the partnership between Inail and Scholas, 25 autobiographical interviews were carried out. It was decided to use a narrative approach as autobiographical narratives can be considered as a process in which truth is constructed by involving author and listener and are at the same time the position

that the subject has taken in front of events and experiences, resulting in being, for the same, truth (Pulvirenti, 2015). The narrative device allows subjects to rethink their experiences and actions by reconstructing their meaning and highlighting their possible development prospects, bringing to light the intentions, motivations, ethical and value options implied in them, inscribing them within a network of culturally shared meanings, recognizing their continuity and unity; each continuum within the experience of a person that acquires a unitary meaning is thus recognizable as a "narrative unit" (Connelly, Clandinin, 1997, 2000) and becomes part of a sequence/interweaving of units characterized by directionality and meaning. The narration builds and unravels experiential sequences from events, events, situations to which it confers unity and draws cognitive elements based on specific heuristic interests. In this way, it comes to take on its own and peculiar epistemological connotation, as it generates forms of knowledge that respond to requests for clarification of meaning and significance regarding events, experiences and events understood as phenomena on which a hermeneutical process is exercised. The exploratory research conducted involved 25 participants who live with a condition of disability acquired because of accidents at work, including 20 men and 5 women, aged between 30 and 50. The corpus of interviews was subjected to a thematic analysis according to the indications of Braun and Clarke (2019) with the help of the Nvivo software (Richards, 1999). The analysis of the corpus of data was carried out following the following six steps, indicated by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. The familiarization with the data, which began already in the selection phase, proceeded with a careful reading and rereading of the audio-recorded and unwound interviews. In this phase, particular care has been taken to follow the phenomenological epistemic imperative that asks to maintain a "dialogic relationship" with the other who is a "you", as Mortari (2010) recommends, "it is necessary to be vigilant so that the words with which the other is said are kept in a situation of freedom from the devices of meaning proper to the researcher" (p. 20).
2. The relevant units of analysis have been identified, through the support of the NVivo software (Richards, 1999) and the initial labels have been assigned based on the characteristics of the data. In this phase, two researchers worked independently on the textual corpus and subsequently met to compare and discuss the initial list of labels.
3. Labels were aggregated into potential themes and all data for each potential theme was collected.
4. A first thematic "map" was generated, after the verification of the emerging themes. Also in this phase, the analysis was carried out by two researchers who compared each other to arrive at a shared name of the themes and sub-themes.
5. An analysis was made on the recurrences of the themes and sub-themes. The list has been revised and refined to ensure internal consistency.

The them explored during the interviews concerned the life story of the participants, referring specifically to the events and people who have contributed significantly to the construction of their identity; their experience regarding the projects promoted by Scholas and Inail; the role played by sport in their lives; the difficulties encountered following the accidents that caused the accident at work and how these difficulties were managed and with the support of whom. The participants also told

how they experienced the lockdown period caused by the pandemic. From the analysis of the interviews, the focal themes that characterized the project experience emerged, in particular the aspects that highlight its effectiveness on the life paths of the participants:

1. Access to the sports experience
2. The facilitation of the life project
3. Learning new skills as a tool to combat loneliness
4. The construction of a new look at one's condition of disability understood as a new existential condition
5. The identification of needs related to the work dimension
6. The reconfiguration of the meanings attributed to one's life.

3. Results

During the interviews, the participants highlighted how the projects promoted by the collaboration between Inail and Scholas have allowed participants to access the sporting experience through the FutVal project, a project for the social reintegration of people with disabilities from work through sports and art. The meetings began with lessons in sports psychology on topics such as the connection between the mind and the body and the awareness of the four main emotions (anger, fear, sadness, joy). This will also be followed by art education lessons, to teach how the skills acquired through art can be transformed into a valuable tool for social interaction. Specifically, some participants narrated that they had filmed, even if only through a sports exhibition, a sport practiced before the accident, in other cases to become passionate about new sports, knowing the possibility of learning about sports that they imagined impossible to practice by virtue of their disability:

"In Salerno I participated in a basketball event that I really liked but unfortunately the distances are complicated, but I liked it a lot because there was getting involved and being with others. I got to know other people with whom we confronted each other".

"It was a very positive experience also because I resumed athletics after years of no longer training and thanks to this project, I felt the desire to start again".

"The sport I used to do, judo, is a healthy sport. At Villa Baldini we did a small demonstration. It engages your mind a lot and this demonstration reminded me how important sport is to me." "Thanks to INAIL I had the opportunity to participate in some sporting events, I got to know sports that I didn't think could be done in my condition"

The sports experience was a crucial dimension for the participants that allowed access to new relational contexts in which to try their hand and feel part of a group, a group that stimulates sport and in which they access the possibility of re-signifying their disability condition, their mental patterns and improving the ability to manage their emotions:

"Thanks to this project I am learning a lot, including how to control anger and be more optimistic"; "Almost all the guys I met with Scholas I encouraged them to play sports because I started playing sports in 2012 thanks to a very dear friend of mine from Sardinia who is a Paralympic champion".

"Participating in this group I realized that disability lives only in our brains."

"Archery was an experience that attracted me but that I had never practiced; It excited me, not so much to hit the target, but to be part, to feel the wind and the sun on my skin, to experience these emotions with all the participants".

"This group allowed me to overcome some patterns that I perhaps had up to that moment".

The sporting experience also allows you to accompany changes in self-image and takes on a therapeutic value:

"Sport has been therapy for me, mentally and physically."

"I never played sports before the amputation of my leg and sport was my salvation because with sport, I was able to fight my disability, to become a normal person"

Sport promotes not only sociality but also the exploration of one's limits and resources, making the possibility of becoming a champion real, exploring not only one's limits but also one's resources, training and strengthening them:

"Sport has allowed me to be among people, to meet many people and has allowed me today to become a champion.

"For us disabled people who are missing a limb, sport is therapy".

"Sport has put me back in the game, I have resumed studying, I am rethinking my humanity"

For most of the participants, learning about sport through Scholas and Inail allowed them to give meaning to their lives and to be involved in social work through the creation of sports groups, to become a point of reference for other people in the same condition, thus promoting a culture of sport for people with disabilities:

"We, as an old group of Inail, are sowing so that others after us not only reap the fruits but continue our work".

"Thanks to Scholas and Inail and sport, I have given meaning and a goal to my life. I am trying to create a sports group and I will soon have the appointment as a FISPE regional referent".

The narratives of the interviewees also make it possible to grasp what participation in the projects promoted by Inail and Scholas has meant and what continues to mean, understood as an identity and inclusive agent in acquired disabilities, as a facilitator of the life project that allows you to start again thanks to the dimension of the group, activating moments of socialization that allow the creation of significant bonds:

"The Scholas - INAIL project makes us understand that being united helps to be reborn".

"The Scholas-Inail project is giving me energy to face the problems I have to face".

"After the accident I met Inail which has been by my side until today without ever giving me up. Thanks to them I have also undertaken many projects, including the Scholas project that brought me out of my glass bubble".

"The Scholas-Inail project has made it possible to compare ourselves with other people with disabilities who understand the difficulties and their emotions".

"The friends you met thanks to the projects of Inail and SCHOLAS help you to be optimistic and look to the future".

The restart becomes concrete thanks to the interventions of Inail in terms not only of economic support but also and above all in terms of human support and personal autonomy thanks to the work of the professionals of the Inail team, allowing

you to take back the reins of your life also through the acceptance of your new existential condition following the accident:

"The project has allowed me to be among people, to meet many people and has allowed me today to become a champion. For us disabled people who are missing a limb, sport is therapy"

"Thanking God, we try not to miss anything. This also happens thanks to INAIL which is very close to us".

"Sport has put me back in the game, I have resumed studying, I am rethinking my humanity"

"I suffered from the fact that I could not move alone, go out alone, but thanks to INAIL now I feel I don't have to depend on anyone".

"Until three years ago I didn't even have a wheelchair because I didn't want to accept being like the others, like my mother who has been in a wheelchair since birth. Then thanks to the psychological support of Inail and seeing that without a wheelchair I could not do anything, I was convinced and now I feel more autonomous".

"The support of Inail has allowed me to take my life back into my hands, to build new habits and to feel that I am capable of doing everything".

"Without the Inail annuity I don't know how we could have done".

The activation of online meetings promoted by Scholas and Inail during the lockdown following the pandemic caused by COVID-19 allowed participants to combat experiences of loneliness and isolation and to feel committed to the acquisition of new skills:

"I lived the lockdown experience better because with the online meetings I felt mutual help".

"The online meetings were a way to stay in touch and share experiences."

"It helped me to participate in online meetings because I was able to learn how to do new things and so I also got distracted".

"Time went by faster because I felt committed to learning and doing things I had never done before."

All the interviewees highlight how participation in the projects framed in the partnership between Scholas and Inail have made it possible to interpret their disability condition differently as an existential condition, allowing them to face and metabolize the difficulties related to the reconstruction of a new life in the light of this new existential condition, never feeling abandoned but always supported by the professionals of Scholas and Inail, learning to experience the difficulties related to the condition of disability as a life process, to re-discover one's own skills:

"Listening to the story of those who have already been there can help other people."

"We have learned not to feel disabled because we know how to do more things than the able-bodied."

"Inail made me discover the possibility of riding a motorcycle despite my disability".

"These projects have made me discover the desire to help others and be an example."

During the narratives of themselves and their lives, the needs of the participants emerged; The objective of the narratives was also to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the project and derive a needs analysis useful in the re-design phase from which to build a shared reflection on the projects to be carried out in the future,

starting from these needs, connected to the work dimension, as a fundamental identity dimension, which not only allows you to support your family but which has to do with self-realization:

"I can't stay at home and not work."

"Work has always been important because it makes you productive and I miss that."

"All the work I did before the accident helped me to be who I am"; "Most of the things I've learned in my life are due to my work experiences."

In some of the stories told by the participants, the work was functional to cope with the change of life following the accident:

"The many work commitments allowed me not to think about what happened following the accident".

"When I was working, I was distracted, and this helped me to better manage the anger caused by what had happened to me after the accident".

All the interviewees hope to be able to return to work, continuing to look for work despite the difficulties:

"I have never lost hope of returning to work, I know it is a difficult thing, but I don't want to give up. Every day I look for a job even if there are a lot of difficulties"

"Sometimes I get down because when you have a disability it's harder to find a job, but then I think about my family, and I go on anyway."

Work not only allows you to protect your family financially but becomes an opportunity to cultivate time and space for self-development, outside the family context:

"Working has always helped me to have moments that are just mine, outside of the family".

"I need to work both to give economic security to my children and my wife and because it serves me to feel better about myself"

The partnership between Scholas and Inail and the support of friends and family allowed the participants to insert new points of reference into their lives from which they could also reconfigure the meanings attributed to their lives and their priorities, following the experience of the accident:

"For me at the beginning life after the accident was a tragedy, then thanks to the support of Inail and then Scholas, things improved".

"They were hard and dark years, then thanks to the people I met through Inail and Scholas and with the help of my family and my boyfriend I started smiling again".

"With their help and that of my family, I was able to turn the accident into a positive event that changed me for the better."

"It was not easy to accept another change, to go from having to sit forever to amputation. Friends, family, Inail and Scholas are helping me a lot".

The new existential condition allowed some of the participants to review their lives and improve them:

"I realized that all together we can work together to help people in the future."

"Paradoxically, my life has changed for the better, I can spend more time with my children and have moments for myself."

"In my previous life I was working only after the accident did, I realize that I had to devote more time to my family."

"I feel lucky, I had a second chance to live better."

For some of the interviewees, the experience at the Inail Protest Center in Budrio was a key element in changing the perspective with which until then the events of one's life were interpreted and the way of dealing with them, identifying new resources and supports:

"Before going to Budrio I had lost all hope, I felt like the only one who had that problem. Then in Budrio I met other people who were in the same condition as me, people who had managed to solve their problem".

"Thanks to the support of the Budrio team, the problem has been solved momentarily".

"I am often asked what you want to be when you grow up, when I grew up I realized that I want to be happy.

It doesn't matter what physical conditions one lives. We must not let ourselves be robbed of happiness. For me, happiness was also meeting Scholas who made me discover new things".

"I never imagined that there were running and walking prostheses. Inail and the experience in Budrio have helped me to believe that everything is possible".

"Inail and the doctors of Budrio made me discover the technology of prostheses".

"All this has helped me understand that I can do things like everyone else, it satisfies me to help people like me who live with disability".

"Despite the fears that one has, we try to give a sense of tranquility to the family and to live things with optimism and I understood this by comparing myself with the other guys of the Scholas-Inail group".

"Thanks to the experiences made with Scholas and Inail I have learned that the condition of disability due to the accident is a new way of life"

"My disability is an opportunity to look at the world from a different perspective, from the bottom up".

"My condition has helped me not to use disability as an excuse and to teach my children to go beyond the sitting position or the missing limb."

4. Discussion

The life stories encountered in these interviews have in common the encounter with the condition of physical disability that occurred at a certain moment in the life of the narrators, generating in them, after moments of discouragement, a positive reaction, which made resilience its driving force through the dimension of authenticity with the Other, through the projects promoted by Inail and Scholas.

From the stories told, in fact, it is possible to say that the title of the Scholas and Inail project "Together we can change the world" permeates the experiences of the participants who through this social inclusion project have been able to experience being part of a group that supports the development and exploration of oneself through sociality and the sharing of one's own experiences and life events, providing them with a new meaning in terms of rebirth and re-start through the sporting, artistic and technological activities promoted by the human and professional alliance of Scholas and Inail. The participants told stories of rupture, stories that change suddenly, without being able to return to being the same but which reveal unexpected and decisive resilience skills, also activated by the sporting experience that becomes a source of strength to return to life and a decisive factor of support in existentially difficult moments. Sport seems to play a crucial role in the narratives of the inter-

viewees as it becomes both a source of empowerment, as it allows the reconquest of good self-esteem and access to new relational contexts, and a context of emancipatory actions (Russo, 2013; Ghirlanda, 2003). We could say that the projects promoted by Scholas and Inail have allowed participants to re-narrate themselves, to re-remember, to re-construct and to re-read their past in the light of the traumatic event of the accident, discovering a new self-capable of re-adapting their life project or building a new one. These considerations are in line with the relevant scientific literature which has always highlighted the numerous physical, mental and social benefits of physical activity for people with disabilities together with the ability of sport to stimulate inclusive processes (Ramsed et al., 2023; Darcy & Dowse, 2013; Damiani, Tafuri, Colzani, Gomez Paloma, 2019; Gomez Paloma, Sgambelluri, 2012; Maher et al., 2022; Brittain et al., 2020; De Anna, 2005; 2007; Di Palma et al., 2017; Di Palma, Ascione, 2017). From an ICF perspective (WHO, 2001) we could define sport in terms of facilitator of the life project of people who acquire a physical disability, reverberating on the entire construct of Quality of Life. In the participants' interviews, sport trains resilience as it activates personal and social resources (Vaccarelli, 2016).

5. Conclusions

The interviewees, in their stories, make the gift of the word, capable of warming souls and generating encounters and relationships. For these reasons, the word opens the doors of empathy that pushes the listener to change their mental representations and, therefore, the possible stereotypes that interfere in the relationship with the other. It is the sense of belonging to that story, to that humanity of which one shares, for the time of the story, the destiny that allows one to re-evaluate one's mental attitudes towards the other and perhaps even to discover them for the first time. Therefore, the narrative allows the first and fundamental inclusive action aimed at contexts: that of overcoming the stereotype. The awareness of the listener also improves, who, identifying with the stories of the participants in the Scholas and Inail projects, understands the difficulties faced by the protagonists, acquires knowledge about the many possibilities offered by sport, art and technology, gaining decision-making competence. With specific reference to sport, the life story hinged on this dimension, informs us in the first instance of the existence of sports realities for people with disabilities, of which the best-known Paralympic Games are only the tip of the iceberg, and, in the second instance, of the important identity and social dynamics that physical activity supports, of which the rehabilitation nature is only a part. This leads to a third decisive inclusive action with respect to the context, namely that of generating in the reader/listener a reflective attitude about the infinite possibilities of resilience and the importance of being able to think about the creation of increasingly accessible and inclusive contexts (D'Angelo, 2019) on the basis of the educational and training value recognizable in the experiences narrated by the participants of the projects promoted by Scholas and Inail Campania to change the world together.

The stories told by the participants allow them to focus attention on the dimension of corporeality and new ways of narrating and narrating one's own corporeality following a condition of physical disability. The participants in the project promoted by Inail and Scholas allow us to reflect on the management of the precariousness and mutability of the body, which pervades everyone's existence in a normative way, becomes more critical when it comes to dealing with an exceptionality that makes the

individual different from others, placing him in front of the need to face the problematic nature of a special relationship with himself, with others and with the context. In this complex process, sport becomes a vehicle for the enhancement of one's image and conscious change. Corporeity brings into play crucial aspects of the identity process in disability, a constant evolutionary challenge aimed at accepting the "sick body" and its limits. The theme of change, which can be found in all the narratives of the participants, is configured in the circumstances described as the ability to transform oneself and become active in the complex relationship between possibility and project. The body itself becomes a "narrative object" first in terms of loss and inadequacy, so when faced with the question Why don't you work anymore, the reasons given are different; "I can't", "I'm paralyzed", "I'm not workable". Yet the educational care put in place by the actions promoted by the projects promoted by Inail and Scholas has made it possible to give space to the body and movements of the participants through the narrative device as "a key space of educability in the field of disability, that is, to make the body a narrator and develop learning experiences that take shape starting from the narratives of the body" (Priore, 2022, p.320).

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