The World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations endorse peer support to help individuals with disabilities effectively manage their health and achieve full inclusion and participation in all areas of life. While research on peer support interventions is increasing, the results are not yet conclusive, and more information is needed regarding the design and outcomes of such interventions. Previous systematic reviews have examined various modes, modalities, and doses of peer support, which may have contributed to the inconclusive findings. Therefore, we have investigated the features and outcomes of structured, time-limited peer mentorship activity programmes.

**INTRODUCTION**

The World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations endorse peer support to help individuals with disabilities effectively manage their health and achieve full inclusion and participation in all areas of life. While research on peer support interventions is increasing, the results are not yet conclusive, and more information is needed regarding the design and outcomes of such interventions. Previous systematic reviews have examined various modes, modalities, and doses of peer support, which may have contributed to the inconclusive findings. Therefore, we have investigated the features and outcomes of structured, time-limited peer mentorship activity programmes.

**METHODS**

Our study looked at time-limited programmes that offered physical exercises or leisure activities for two or more consecutive days up to one month. Only programmes with face-to-face peer mentorship were considered, where at least 30% of participants had an acquired spinal cord (SCI) or brain injury (ABI). We used a mixed methods systematic approach for our review. We searched the following databases: CINAHL, EMBASE, PsycINFO, PubMed, Rehabilitation and Sports Medicine Source, SPORTDiscus, and Web of Science Core Collection. Two reviewers independently screened and extracted data while evaluating study quality with the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool. Our review followed PRISMA guidelines and employed an “advanced convergent qualitative meta-integration synthesis” design.

**RESULTS**

Ten studies published between 2001 and 2021 are included: five qualitative, four quantitative, and one mixed methods. Included in the programmes were 260 participants, the majority being adults with SCI. The main focus of these programmes was to improve the participants’ independence, health, and quality of life. Most programmes were peer-based, with an average of four participants per mentor, and seven were based on the Active Rehabilitation concept. None used a theoretical framework.

We created multiple outcome categories and grouped them into three higher-order categories: Cognition and Emotions, Independence, and Social Life. Our research showed that individuals with SCI and ABI experienced positive changes in their confidence, motivation, knowledge, understanding, and sense of acceptance. They also established new friendships. Moreover, individuals with SCI reported improved skills and independence. However, we could not conclusively determine the impact on community participation and life satisfaction. These positive outcomes were facilitated by the safe and supportive environment created by peers and peer mentors.

**CONCLUSION**

The synthesis of qualitative and quantitative findings in the present systematic review suggests that structured, time-limited peer mentorship activity programmes have a positive impact on the cognitive and emotional outcomes, independence, and social lives of participants. The impact on life satisfaction and community participation remains to be determined. Such programmes can support community-based rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities in alignment with WHO’s sustainable developmental goals, despite their short duration. However, the evidence is limited due to the small number of heterogeneous studies. It is recommended that programmes incorporate theoretical frameworks in their design, and further high-quality studies and follow-up research are necessary to explore any long-term effects.