



Psychosocial Effect of Sport on Disabled Individuals

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Research Article

Volume 7 Issue 4

Received Date: November 15, 2024

Published Date: December 13, 2024

DOI: 10.23880/aphot-16000273

Abstract

Introduction: It is well known that sport is a necessary activity for a healthy and happy life and is important for all people. However, sport has a different meaning for disabled people. Because sport can open a new window for disabled people who already face many obstacles in their lives and live with the stress caused by these obstacles. Regardless of the type and degree of disability, moving, exercising, participating in sports activities gives pleasure to the individual, and the pleasure of moving increases the individual's motivation to live. In addition to its positive contribution to health, through sport the individual can share his loneliness with other people, make friends, learn solidarity, recognise his talents and have the opportunity to develop them, and develop positive feelings towards himself, his body and other people.

Methods: Phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the study. In phenomenological research, it is possible to focus on phenomena that are perceived in everyday life but do not have deep and detailed knowledge, opinions, understanding or insights.

Results: As a result of the interviews with 12 participants, it was found that people were generally unhappy before they met the sports branches. However, they stated that there were changes in their lives after their encounter with sport.

Conclusion: It was found that the preferred sports varied according to the disability status of the people. It was found that physical disability directed people to different branches.

Keywords: Sport; Disabled Individual; Benefits of Sport; Psychology; Mental therapy

Introduction

The concept of disability has existed in society throughout human history. At most stages of history, the perspective of disabled people has been different within the society. With the introduction of polytheistic religions in the world, having a disabled child in a family was considered as a punishment for the family, and according to this belief, the understanding that these disabled people should be driven out of the city or pushed into solitude in order not to attract the wrath of God in the society became widespread [1]. Throughout their lives, people take on different roles according to the expectations of the society in which they

live. However, the fact that these roles are not fully formed or realised due to some deficiencies is seen as an 'obstacle' or 'handicap' in society [2].

Individuals with physical disabilities can be defined as all types of physical conditions, including disabilities that occur as a result of a disease or accident in society and negatively affect the educational performance of the child [3]. People who have lost their physical abilities to varying degrees as a result of damage and disorders in the skeletal (bone), muscular and nervous systems for any reason before, during or after birth, and who have difficulty adapting to social life and meeting their daily needs in society, and who



therefore need protection, care, rehabilitation, counselling and support services, are called physically disabled, and the conditions that lead to this situation are called physical disabilities [4].

People with physical disabilities or chronic illnesses are classified according to the conditions that lead to physical disability. Physical disabilities resulting from the destruction of the central nervous system, Physical disabilities resulting from the destruction of the musculoskeletal system, congenital physical disabilities and chronic diseases, Other physical disabilities and chronic diseases [5]. Sport is a biological, pedagogical and social phenomenon that develops individual abilities psychologically and physiologically through physical activities and regulates the behaviour of individuals socially, bringing them to a certain mental and motor level. In other words, sport is a phenomenon that provides intellectual, mental and physical development of people and coordination and socialisation between these elements [6].

The presence of people with disabilities in the sports community has a number of factors that are analyzed in many academic fields such as social sciences, psychology and sports sciences. These factors can be meaningfully explained by basic concepts such as social equality, inclusion, self-esteem, self-confidence and change in social perception [7]. It is known that the number of people with disabilities who actively participate in sport has increased with the increase in the benefits gained from participation in sport, but they face various obstacles (such as peer bullying, ergonomic barriers) [8].

Man is a social being. Social relations within cultural conditions significantly influence the structure of society, culture and the individual. Individuals spend their lives adapting to their environment. This adaptation effort shows a progressive development from birth. It is said that socialization is a formation influenced by many factors. Socialization of an individual means, in one sense, learning the culture in which he/she lives and, indirectly, learning other cultures related to this culture. In another sense, it can be expressed as the individual learning to obey the rules and values of the group and adopting this set of values. This learning continues throughout life, from birth to death, and during this period the individual's relationships with people around him/her and other environmental factors play an important role in social adaptation [9].

Children with intellectual disabilities, like other normal children, have biological, social and psychological needs such as eating, drinking, loving, being loved, being accepted and succeeding. These needs must be met in order for them to survive in society [3]. People with intellectual disabilities

show inadequacies in the accumulation of adaptive behaviour, which is an important factor in the individual's adaptation to society. These inadequacies make the social adaptation of the individual in society difficult and may become impossible if necessary educational and psychological measures are not taken [10].

Many studies have shown how important it is for people with disabilities to spend their leisure time doing physical activities, and one of the benefits of this is that people with disabilities can develop an athletic identity thanks to the activities they do in their leisure time. In our country, there are approximately 44,000 licensed athletes under the umbrella of Physical, Hearing, Vision and Special Athletes Sports Federations. Turkey is represented by athletes in 22 branches of the Physically Disabled Sports Federation, 15 branches of the Sports Federation for Special Athletes, 24 branches of the Sports Federation for the Hearing Impaired and 8 branches of the Sports Federation for the Visually Impaired. In addition to regional and national competitions, disabled athletes also compete at European, world and Olympic levels [11].

Materials and Methods

Research Model

Phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the study. In phenomenological research, it is possible to focus on phenomena that are perceived in everyday life but do not have deep and detailed knowledge, opinions, understanding or insights [12].

Study Group

The study group of the research consists of 12 members, 6 males and 6 females, who are members of Bozok Zinde Sports Club, a private gymnasium in Yozgat / Sorgun district. Affinity sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used to determine the study group of the research. Therefore, all participants are members who prefer to exercise in a private gym. The participants were given detailed information about the study and the study was conducted with voluntary participants. It was explained that the data obtained would only be used for scientific purposes. To minimise data loss during the interviews, the interviews were recorded with a voice recorder. The interviews lasted about 12-15 minutes.

Data Collection Tool

Semi-structured interview was used as the data collection technique. The purpose of using semi-structured interview technique in the research is to explore the topic in

depth by asking additional questions to the answers given by the participants. The interview is one of the most common data collection techniques used in qualitative research. This is because it is powerful in revealing the feelings, thoughts and experiences of the participants through dialogue. The interviews were conducted individually with the members of the hall a total of 10 times. The interviews were conducted in the Bozok Zinde sports hall between 25.04.2024 and 30.04.2024. The duration of the interviews varied between

12-15 minutes. The preparation of the interview questions started with a literature review. Based on the information found in the literature, interview questions were formulated. These interview questions were presented to the field experts. Necessary corrections were made according to the suggestions of the field experts and finalized.

The following questions were generally asked of participants during the interview Table 1;

Questions
1. Can you give any information about your disability?
2. Can you give information about your general psychological state?
3. Can you tell me how you feel before and after doing sport?
4. What are the mental, emotional, physical and social benefits of sport for you?

Table 1: The following questions were generally asked of participants in the interview.

Results

As part of the study, respondents were asked questions (Table 1). The first question asked if you could give any information about your disability. The following answers were given.

Participant 1: My arm was severed in a traffic accident and I have been like this for 10 years. But after I met sport, it was easier for me to get used to this situation. It was not easy for me to get used to the situation when my first arm was broken, there were many times when I hated myself and felt incomplete, but with time I got used to it, I accepted it and I started to learn to live like this. Before I started doing sport, I had a feeling of weakness and I wanted to gain strength through sport. After I started doing sports, I had a hard time at first, I didn't think I could do it, but as time went on, I continued because I felt I could do it, and I started to have a strong body. It felt very good to feel strong and to forget my deficiency. The physical benefit of the sport was that I had a stronger body, the social aspect was that I made friends who did not care about the pitying looks of those around me and admired my struggle. Emotionally, it made me feel better about myself, I'm not saying I'm very good, of course, but I've become someone who has made good progress compared to my first time.

Participant 2: I've been visually impaired since birth. I do not feel well, 30 years in the dark is not easy. I live with my family, I am a civil servant in the state, being a civil servant is my only chance in life, I think it is my only chance in life that I don't have financial difficulties, my consolation is that I give my family an immediate raise and I am immediately offended but I can't prevent it, I feel that no one understands me, it is also good that I can travel alone despite being visually

impaired. I started doing sport on the advice of my doctor, my body mass index was in the overweight category, my acquaintance with sport started with this, but I continued because it was good for me and made me feel good. After losing weight, the muscle building made me feel a firmer and stronger me in my body, I could not see my physique, but the physique I felt gave me a more confident and self-assured me after starting my sporting life. It made me feel beautiful even though I couldn't see it. Before I started doing sports, I felt overweight, but I did not do any activity other than walking, first with the help of my friend and then with the help of my sports instructor, I was able to do sports on my own. Both my instructor and my friend were very helpful and made me feel good about myself. Physically, I lost weight and gained muscle mass. Emotionally, it helped me to be a woman at peace with my figure and to meet new people. Socially, it helped me to have coffee friends and a place in the neighbourhood and it helped me not to be condemned to my own darkness.

Participant 3: I am a veteran, it happened when I was in the military, military service is like a nightmare for men, you know it was my trauma, it was not acceptable to go healthy in my life and come out with a lost right leg, but 12 years passed and although it took time to get used to it, it got used to it. Being a person who trusts in his Lord has made me hold on to life and accept that this is a test, I was promised before I went into the military and my fiancé left me after this event and was not with me in a difficult time.

Participant 4: I was a sportsman and used to play football. I lost my leg in a road accident and was depressed for many years. But over time I have worked with disabled football teams and sport has been good for me. Mentally and emotionally I feel very good now.

Participant 5: He has a congenital muscle problem and this situation makes me very sad and I want to be like everyone else. I was depressed before doing sports, but I recovered after doing sports.

Participant 6: I have a bone disease, I can't do many sports, but even watching sports makes me happy.

Participant 7: I have been doing sports in many branches of visually impaired sports since 2008 and I have been involved in sports in one way or another, but when I stopped doing sports for 2-3 years, unfortunately it led to weight gain and the appearance of different diseases. In a social sense, thanks to sports, I have visited about 25 to 30 provinces of Turkey and I have made friends with people I have met in these provinces.

Participant 8: I am visually impaired, but even if I cannot develop myself in some sports, I listen to sports branches, even this gives me my freedom.

Participant 9: I am in a wheelchair, I did not get used to it at first, I was bad, but when I met the basketball branch, I progressed in this field with my wheelchair and now I am very happy.

Participant 10: I am 85% visually impaired, lateral nystagmus is the name of my disease, which means that the nerves between the eye and the brain dry up, so the light does not go to the back of the eye. I was unhappy before I started doing sport, but after I met him he became my best friend.

Participant 11: I was born with 75% sight loss and have a quiet personality. I have a structure that does not like to get involved in events. Before I start doing sport, I have 40 foxes running around in my head, but after I do sport, I have a structure that says, "God forbid", and during sport, because I am totally focused, I am kind of disconnected from the outside world, and that is good for me. It is nice to stay physically strong and fresh, emotionally excited, proud, happy, mentally experience this atmosphere, dream, especially for greater success, socially see new places and make new friends. I am usually calm, but I react to a wrong and unfair situation, I can get angry from time to time, I feel pleasant and excited when I do sports, especially when there are national and international tournaments related to my favourite branches, especially when I am in the game, it is not to be beaten, we have won trophies as a team in futsal and goalball branches in the past and this pride is enough.

Participant 12: Although I don't have enough strength in my

arms, I still went swimming and now I'm making progress in that area.

Discussion

In this research, the effects of sport on the lives of 12 disabled people who practice sport in a private sports hall in Yozgat/Sorgun district were investigated and the results were found to be consistent with the findings in the literature. The results show that the participation of disabled people in sports activities has a positive effect on their physical, emotional and social lives and makes a significant positive contribution to their lives.

As a result of the study prepared by Bizic [7], it was concluded that sport is a means of social participation for disabled people and supports their psychosocial life. Similar results were obtained in this study. It was found that the participants observed an increase in physical health and self-confidence with their participation in sport, and that they played a more active role in their social environment. Kiuppis [8] observed that the adaptation of people with disabilities to social and community life became easier after their encounter with sport. In this context, the study concluded that the participants in the study expanded their social networks through sport, acquired an athlete identity and became more visible in society. The results of the two studies are consistent.

On the other hand, another finding of this study is that sport has a positive effect on the emotional health of individuals. This finding is in line with the studies conducted by Özer [3], who concluded that the participation of disabled people in sports activities increases their self-confidence and life satisfaction.

This study concluded that participation in sport has important effects not only on physical health but also on psychosocial factors such as social acceptance and belonging. Yavuzer [9] observed that the processes of individual adjustment to social life and adaptation to social rules are accelerated by sport. These multidimensional benefits provided by sports support individuals with disabilities to participate more effectively in social life and personal empowerment [1,10].

After the review, personal characteristics, motivational factors, self-confidence, psychological resilience, self-awareness, stress management, regulation of emotions and stimulation, attention control and factors that cause stress in para-athletes were revealed [13]. The study suggests the importance of creating an accessible environment, promoting equal engagement in mainstream society, and celebrating human diversity to empower PWDs. It also calls for improved

coordination, increased funding, and greater inclusion of PWDs in decision-making processes to address the existing gaps and ensure equal access and opportunities for all [14]. In conclusion, the findings of this study confirm the positive effects of sport activities on the physical, emotional and social well-being of individuals with disabilities found in the literature. The findings from such studies once again show that sport can make a significant difference in the lives of disabled individuals and is an important tool for increasing social participation.

Conclusion

The study group of the research consists of 12 members, 6 men and 6 women, who are members of Bozok Zinde Sports Club, a private gymnasium in Yozgat / Sorgun district. Affinity sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used to determine the study group of the research. It was stated that the data obtained would only be used for scientific purposes. In order to minimise data loss during the interviews, the interviews were recorded with a voice recorder. The interviews lasted about 12-15 minutes. As a result of the interviews with 12 participants, it was found that people were generally unhappy before they met with sports branches. However, they stated that there were changes in their lives after meeting with sport. It was found that the preferred sports varied according to the disability status of the people. It was found that physical disability directed people to different branches. It was found that the participants observed an increase in their physical health and self-confidence with their participation in sport and that they took a more active role in their social environment. It was concluded that the participants in the study expanded their social networks through sport, gained an athlete identity and made themselves more visible in society. The results of the two studies are consistent. On the other hand, another finding from this study is that sport has a positive effect on an individual's emotional health. In addition to this, the disabled individual who does sports learns to establish good relationships with his/her environment, cooperation, tolerance and sharing, expresses his/her feelings comfortably, and thus increases his/her quality of life and motivation for life [15].

Acknowledgement

Special thanks to all the subjects who willingly who were took part in this study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Informed Consent Statement.

All the subjects who were took part in the study provided informed consent.

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