



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Effect of 8-Week Soccer Training on Group Dynamics and Group Consciousness of Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of 8-week soccer training on group dynamics and group consciousness of individuals with educable intellectual disabilities. In this study, a one-group pretest-posttest model was used. The study included 8 male individuals aged 13-17 in a special education institution in Mersin province. Before and after the 8-week soccer training, 3 physical education teachers made independent observations and evaluated them with an observation form. According to the observation form pre-test and post-test mean scores, the % difference was calculated from descriptive statistics. When the pre-test and post-test percentage differences were examined; improvements were made in the areas of correct defense (40%), correct offense (40%), successful pass (40%), correct intervention (50%), goal to the opponent's goal (50%), ball control (60%), ball winning (50%), defensive error (20%), intervention to teammate (50%), goal to the wrong goal (20%), ball loss (40%) and team integrity (70%). As a result of the study, it was seen that long-term soccer training was beneficial in branch-specific skills, physical and mental development in individuals with intellectual disabilities. In addition, group consciousness was observed in individuals and behavioral changes occurred in this direction. Since there is a limited number of studies on group consciousness and group awareness in individuals with intellectual disabilities; it is thought that this study will contribute to the literature and guide future studies.

Keywords

Individuals Intellectual Disabilities, Group Consciousness, Group Dynamics, Football

INTRODUCTION

Disability refers to mental, physical or affective differences in an individual's body that have existed throughout human history. Types of disabilities are divided into four groups: visual, physical, hearing and intellectual disabilities (Bailey & Wning, 1994). 'Intellectual disability' is defined as the inability to benefit from normal education with a disability of one fourth or more compared to peers as a result of ongoing decline in

mental and psychomotor functions due to various reasons that may occur before, during and after birth (Baysal 1986; Eripek, 1996). Intellectual disability is defined as an individual's intellectual functioning below the normal level, as well as inadequacy in two or more adaptive behaviors such as communication, health, work life, social skills, home life, academic success, self-care skills, and safety (Ataman, 2005; Bertoti, 1999). People with intellectual disabilities experience various limitations in their daily lives according to the type

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and degree of disability and need support (Özsoy et al., 2006).

The most noticeable issue in individuals with intellectual disabilities is that their learning skills are slower (Lewis & Doorlag, 1999). Especially in physical education and sports activities, showing the movements in practice instead of verbal expression makes learning permanent. For this reason, the development of individuals with intellectual disabilities in the field of physical education and sports is faster than in other fields. Individuals with intellectual disabilities avoid leadership in sportive activities due to lack of self-confidence, prefer to obey group members and learn by imitation (Savucu et al., 2006). Educable intellectual disabilities constitute 85% of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Sportive activities provide mental, social and physical development of individuals with educable intellectual disabilities and emphasize their sportive abilities and skills. It also enables them to develop socially and individually, to be productive to society and to lead a healthy life (Bayazit et al., 2007). Individuals with intellectual disabilities have difficulty adapting to their environment because they cannot meet the expectations of society. Sportive activities develop a sense of belonging to a group or society, provide mental and physical skills, support psychological health, and positively affect all developmental dimensions (physical, mental and social). In this context, active participation of individuals with educable mental disabilities in sportive activities should be supported (İlhan & Esentürk, 2015).

Physical education and sports activities in education programs constitute an important place in terms of physical and physiological development of children. Activities to improve parameters such as strength, coordination, flexibility and speed contribute to the development of children's gross and fine motor skills (Özer, 2005). Football, which is an important team sport that enables the development of these skills, is very important for the physical development of children with disabilities and learning to act in a group. It is thought that participation of disabled individuals in football tournaments will enable them to have an active life, be healthier, gain values such as trust in the team, cooperation and friendship, and improve their communication skills (Yetim, 2014).

Individuals with intellectual disabilities make difficult and time-consuming friendships due to

their inability to move independently. Therefore, their friendships do not last long term. Their impatient and stubborn nature shakes the group dynamics in socialization. They prefer to model others instead of being a leader in group work (Özer, 2005). Group education contributes to creating group consciousness in children. Group consciousness is the ability of an individual with disabilities to converse with other peers in a common area, to work in cooperation and to share success. When group consciousness is formed through sportive activities with children, communication skills improve, efforts are made to overcome problems together, and they contribute to working in harmony with each other at the same time (Hill & Gutwin, 2004).

When the literature is examined, it is seen that physical education and sports are beneficial for mentally disabled individuals; socialization (Babkes 1999; Çevik & Kabasakal, 2019; İlhan, 2008), motoric features (Akin & Yüksel, 2016; A.Şahin & F.Şahin, 2020; Keller, 1983; Konar & Şanal, 2019; Şehmus, 2015), attitudes towards sports (Dursun et al., 2019; İlhan, 2009) studies have been found that evaluate the effects of fenugreek on self-care skills (İlhan et al., 2015; Kurtuluş & Cavkaytar, 2022). In many of the studies in the literature, the physiological or psychological effects of physical education and sports activities on mentally disabled individuals were examined, the phenomenon of socialization was studied, and their attitudes towards sports were evaluated. Group awareness and group consciousness in mentally disabled individuals; students need to cooperate with their peers, socialize, chat and be successful in harmony with each other. However, when the literature was examined, it was seen that there was a limited number of scientific studies on this subject (Yaman, 2015). In this direction, the aim of our study is; To examine the effect of 8-week football training applied to trainable mentally disabled individuals on group dynamics and group consciousness. It is thought that our study will contribute to the literature, fill this gap in the literature, and guide future studies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Model

In this study, a one-group pretest-posttest model was used. In this model, an independent

variable is applied to a selected group. Measurements are made both before the experiment (pre-test) and after the experiment (post-test) (Karasar, 1999).

Participants

Eight male individuals with educable intellectual disabilities between the ages of 13-17 were included in the study. The informed Parental Consent Form was signed by the parents before starting the study. While the population of the study consisted of students with educable intellectual disabilities, the sample group consisted of 8 male students between the ages of 12-18 in a special education institution in Mersin province.

Data Collection Techniques

Experimental design

Before starting the study, the group consciousness and group awareness behaviors of the children with mental disabilities were evaluated by the private teachers using a questionnaire. Then, for 8 weeks, the football trainings in the program were applied by the football trainer with the Football UEFA B license certificate and the trainers in the study whose branch is football. Afterwards, three physical education teachers evaluated the group consciousness and awareness behaviors of their students again.

Football Training Program

The soccer trainings were conducted 2 days a week (Monday and Wednesday) for 8 weeks as described below. Researchers with soccer coaching certificates gave the trainings.

Table 1. Football training program

Week 1	-Concept Teaching (pass, shot, goal, goal, goal, goalkeeper, color, team colors, lines, field area, corner kick, crown, pole, whistle and referee) (10 min.) -Warm-up (10 min.) -Passing Practice (5 min.) -Introduction of the pitch (5 min.) -Recognizing Red Teammates -Yellow Recognizing teammates -Pretest (double goal match) (10 min.)
Week 2	-Concept teaching will continue (10 min.) - Warm-up (10 min.) -Pass and shooting practice (10 min.) -Determination of goalkeepers -Double goal match (10 min.), making sure that the colors of the goal posts are the same as the colors of the teams (10 min.) There will be verbal clues during the match (Yellow team pass, throw to the player in yellow jersey, etc., red team, throw to red, etc.).
Week 3	-Concept teaching will continue (10 min.) - Warm-up (10 min.) -Passing and shooting practice (10 min.) -Two teams will play a short match and identify the problems in the match as a result of the impression, stop the game and make explanations (10 min.) -Evaluation of the children at the end of the day (question and answer)
Week 4	-4. As of the week, leaving the explanation of the concepts as of the week and making warm-ups and matches by dividing into teams based on what has been explained for 3 weeks (Team warm-ups will be separate) -Warming (10 mins) -Passing and shooting practice in their own half (15 min.) -Double goal match (15 min.)
Week 5	-Warm-up (10 min.) (in their own half field) -Passing and shooting practice (10 min.) -Double goal match (15 min.) -Evaluation of the day with the children
Week 6	-Warm-up (10 min.) (in their own half court area) -Passing and shooting practice (10 min.) -Double goal match (15 min.) -Evaluation of the day with the children
Week 7	-Warm-up (10 min.) (in their own half court area) -Passing and shooting practice (10 min.) -Double goal match (15 min.) -Evaluation of the day with the children

Week 8	-Warm-up (10 min.) (in their own half court area) -Passing and shooting practice (10 min.) -Double goal match (15 min.) -General evaluation.
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Observation Form Applied Before and After Football Training Program

The observation form was administered by physical education teachers who made observations independently of each other through the researchers before and after the football training. The teachers observed the group dynamics and group consciousness behaviors of the students and gave scores between 0-10 for each parameter in the observation form. The scores given by 3 special education teachers were averaged and calculated. The effect of soccer training on students' group dynamics and group consciousness was evaluated by summing the scores (Appendix-1).

Research Publication Ethics

Before starting the study, ethical approval dated 01.04.2024 and numbered 016 was obtained from Mersin University Sports Sciences Ethics Committee. In addition, a signed voluntary consent form was obtained from the parents of the participants in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

Data Collection

The study data were collected in a special education institution in Mersin province between 15.04.2024-15.06.2024. Before the participants in the study started their soccer training, an observation form was filled out by 3 independent physical education teachers to evaluate the group dynamics and group consciousness of the students. Teachers' student evaluation scores were calculated by taking the average. The 8-week football trainings were carried out by the researchers as specified in the program. The observation forms applied before the soccer training were made again at the end of the training by the physical education teachers who made observations. According to the results of the observation forms filled out by the teachers, the group dynamics and group consciousness behaviors of the participants were evaluated.

Data Analysis

Excel program was used for data analysis. The % difference was calculated from descriptive statistics according to the observation form pre-test and post-test mean scores.

RESULTS

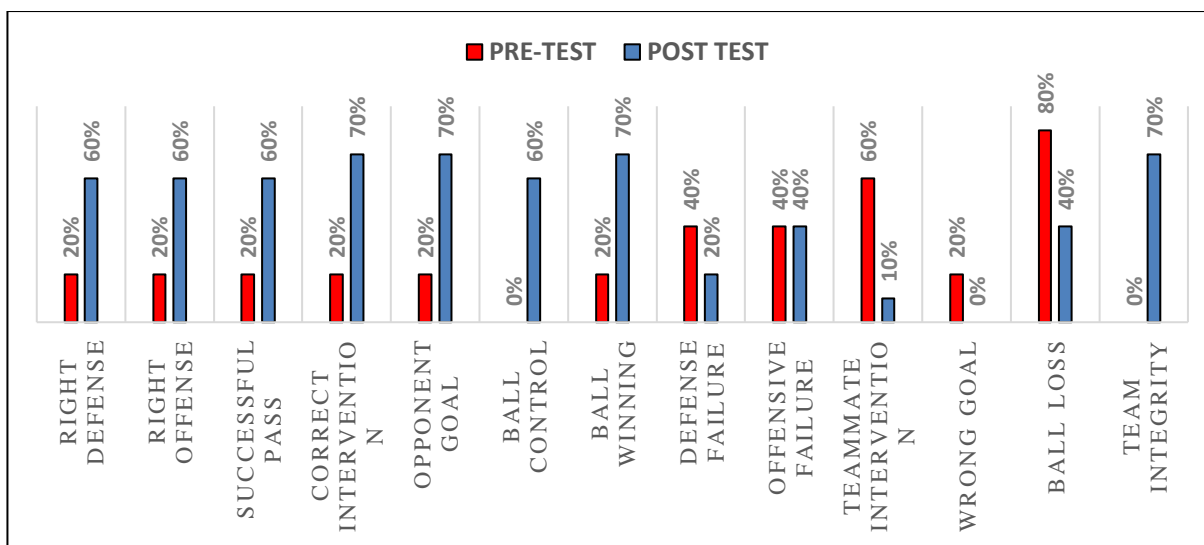


Figure 1. Results of the observation form applied before and after the football training program

According to the results of the observation form applied before and after the 8-week football training in Figure 1; it is stated that individuals showed different levels of development in both physical and mental areas by gaining group

awareness. When the pre-test and post-test percentage differences are examined; improvements were made in the areas of correct defense (40%), correct offense (40%), successful pass (40%), correct intervention (50%), goal against

the opponent's goal (50%), ball control (60%), ball winning (50%), defensive error (20%), interference with teammate (50%), goal against the wrong goal (20%), ball loss (40%) and team integrity (70%) (Figure 1).

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to create group dynamics and group awareness by applying 8 weeks of football training to trainable mentally disabled individuals. The study findings show that football training provides group awareness in individuals (team integrity, scoring a goal against the opponent's goal, interfering with a teammate), physical (ball control, successful pass, ball loss, ball winning, correct defense), mental and social (team integrity, interfering with a teammate).) has shown that it provides benefits in developmental dimensions. Group studies can be used in many different ways to provide individuals with skills and awareness in mental, social and behavioral dimensions (Partona & Manbyb, 2009). Group activities for disabled individuals enable individuals to understand themselves and their peers, to concretely grasp the difficulties experienced in adapting to society, and to find out how they can change these behavioral patterns. Group activities enable group participants to express their emotions, confront themselves, and provide opportunities to change. Performing physical education and sports activities through group work is important for social and behavioral change, especially in educable mentally disabled individuals (Yalom, 1992).

The effects of physical education and sports activities on the social development of mentally disabled individuals have been examined by many researchers. İlhan (2008) examined the effect of sports participation on social development in mentally disabled children. As a result of the study, social development was observed in the individuals in the experimental group who participated in sports activities. Through sports activities, mentally disabled children exhibited positive behavior in the sub-headings of participating in group activities, communicating with their peers, and being a sharer. It has been stated that this development is caused by participation in group activities and interaction with peers. Similarly, McMahon (1998) stated that recreational sports activities are effective in integrating mentally disabled individuals into

society, social acceptance and making friends with their peers. Again, in the study conducted by Yaman (2015), it was stated that educable mentally disabled children who participated in sports activities for 14 weeks improved in competition, teamwork, group membership, tolerance and self-confidence. In this research, in which 15 trainable mentally disabled individuals participated, it was concluded that as a result of 14 weeks of sports activities, 60% of the individuals (9 people) were able to team up with their friends, and 80% (12 people) were happy with their teammates when they won. The results of this research are parallel to our study findings. It can be said that mentally disabled individuals can exhibit behavior towards belonging to a group/team through sports activities and group work.

Individuals with intellectual disabilities may have problems feeling a sense of belonging to society, a group or a team. Researchers found that physical education and sports activities applied to mentally disabled individuals; He states that it is important for making friends and adapting to the environment (McMahon, 1998), behavioral change and development of learning skills (Stainback, 1983), perception-self-concept development (Rippe et al., 1998) and recovery of behavioral disorders (Koçak, 2016). Babkes (1999) stated in his study results that mentally disabled individuals who participate in physical education and sports activities socialize and develop more than their peers who do not do sports. Pınar and Tekinarslan (2003) stated that peer-mediated teaching provides benefits for mentally disabled individuals in terms of belonging, sharing skills, self-introduction and asking for information. Again, in a study conducted by İlhan (2007), it was stated that physical education and sports activities reduced behavioral problems and improved adaptation to the environment in educable mentally disabled individuals. Similarly, in our study findings, it was observed that through group activities such as team sports, the individual can feel belonging to a group/team, socialize, and communicate closely with his/her peers. Group activities can improve the sense of belonging in mentally disabled individuals and can be used as an important tool in adapting to the environment and their peers.

In our study findings, it was found that football training provides not only social and mental but also physical development (ball control, successful passing, ball loss, ball winning, correct

defense). When the literature was examined, the effect of sports activities, especially football training, which benefits all developmental dimensions, on football skills in mentally disabled individuals was examined. Afacan and Kılıç (2021) gave basic football training to 22 male participants with mental disabilities between the ages of 15-21, 3 days a week for 10 weeks. As a result of the study, it was stated that there was an improvement in football-specific movement skills (ball control, dribbling, passing, and movement with the ball). It was also stated that the participants' coordination, balance and strength parameters increased similarly. Similarly, Barak et al. (2019) stated that there was an increase in the parameters of football skills such as shooting, dribbling and passing of mentally disabled individuals who participated in

We think that this study will contribute to the literature, as there are limited studies on the subject of sports activities to increase group consciousness and group awareness in mentally disabled individuals. For this reason, the originality of the study subject constitutes the strength of our study. More scientific research is needed on this subject. One of the limitations of our study is that our measurement tool is based only on teachers' observations. In future studies, the effects of sports activities, and especially football-based training, on all developmental dimensions (social, mental and physical) in mentally disabled individuals can be examined. The use of scales and field test applications along with observation tools in monitoring the social, mental and physical development of disabled individuals will contribute to the generalizability of the findings.

As a result of this study, it was observed that 8-week football training provided development in physical, mental and social areas in trainable mentally disabled individuals, and that individuals gained group awareness by feeling belonging to a team/group and made behavioral changes in this direction. Considering the psychological, physical and social benefits that physical education and sports activities create for mentally disabled individuals, it is understood that they are an integral part of education. In private education and rehabilitation centers, more emphasis should be given to sports activities, especially team sports and group activities. Sports activities should not include sports competitions but should include recreational activities that can teach group awareness (Toptaş Demirci, 2019). The program to be implemented for

football training. Again, Çalık et al., (2019) stated in their study that football training applied to individuals with mild and moderate mental disabilities provides motor development (balance, coordination and football skills). When the relevant literature results are evaluated, they are parallel to the findings of this study. No study has been found that gives different results on the subject. This shows the need to conduct more studies in the relevant field and with different branches. It can be said that long-term football training provides benefits in branch-specific skills and motor development in mentally disabled individuals. The reasons for these findings may be that football training is made fun with various equipment (ball, funnel, goal, etc.), demonstrated through practice and group work.

children with educable mental disabilities must be well-planned and sustainable. For this purpose, programs that include different sports branches should be organized according to each individual's proficiency level and disability. For mentally disabled individuals to live an active and healthy life in the school environment and social life, the necessary investments, training programs and equipped personnel deficiencies must be completed.

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved and supervised by the Mersin University Sports Sciences Ethics Committee (Number:016), dated April 01,2024)

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Author Contributions

Study concept and design: NEA, BA, AS; Data Collection: GA, EG, DSSU, YEA, BA, AS, BE, EE; Analysis and Interpretation of Results: NEA, GA, EG; Draft manuscript preparation: NEA, GA, EG, DSSU, YEA; All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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