

The Role of Recreational Sports Activities in Improving Mental Health for Individuals with Special Needs -A Field Study from the Perspective of Educators at the Pedagogical Center (Deaf-Mute) in Beni Slimane, Medea-

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Abstract:

This study aimed at exploring the role of recreational sports activities in improving mental health for individuals with special needs (deaf-mute). The study was conducted on a purposive sample consisting of (15) male and female educators from the pedagogical center. The descriptive approach was employed through distributing questionnaire forms to the sample individuals. For the statistical methods used, we relied upon percentages and the Chi-Square test in analyzing the study results.

The study results confirmed the suggested hypotheses and highlighted the real role and the positive impact of recreational sports activities in improving the mental health of this special segment of the society. Therefore, the researcher recommended placing more emphasis on engaging in recreational sports activities and dedicating sufficient time to playing sports. Additionally, sports culture should be instilled within this special and sensitive segment of society. Moreover, sports competitions should be held between the deaf-mute community and other categories of individuals with special needs to enhance mental health among these segments.

Keywords: Recreational sports activities, mental health, individuals with special needs (deaf-mute).

1- Problem Statement:

Physical activities in general and recreational sports activities in particular, are considered significant social behaviors in the daily lives of individuals. These behaviors are integral parts of culture and education, as they play a crucial role in fostering individuals and providing them with valuable skills and expertise that allow them to adapt to society. Engaging in recreational sports activities hold a special position in modern societies. Playing sports became pivotal for all segments of the society, regardless of their gender, status, and age, as it greatly contributes to self development, provides entertainment, helps with muscle building, and improves mental health. It also facilitates reducing the severity of the tension that children face at school. (**Amine Anouar Al Khouli, 1996, p. 39**)

Disability produces psychological effects that can cause significant changes to an individual's personality and particularly impact their mental health. Therefore, proper and suitable care has to be provided for people with disabilities. Naturally, disabled people are different when it comes to accepting their condition. As a matter of fact, specific personality traits may become more evident in them, such as lack of self-confidence, pessimism, and dissatisfaction. Additionally, they don't

have a complete development of effectiveness and clarity of thought. These traits stem from continuous frustration and failure to cope with life in a normal way.

Both the school and the family provide help and support for people with disabilities to overcome these psychological issues and have a good mental health, an example of that is making full use of their time in order not to become inactive or idle, and avoid becoming corrupted. Progressive societies value this approach, emphasizing the importance of leisure time and incorporating it into recreational activities.

John Dewey views recreation as a significant and constructive activity that contributes to developing skills, values, and educational and psychological trends in individuals engaging in the activity, in addition to contributing to the improvement of mental health for individuals with disabilities. (Tahani Abdessalam Mohamed, 2001, p. 86)

Engaging in recreational sports activities benefits individuals with disabilities, one of the primary benefits is that it provides them with a significant boost in self-confidence. This depends on the type of activity and the individual's ability to succeed in it. Therefore, it is important for the educator to be aware of this point, as it is often said in psychology: 'Nothing succeeds like success.' Therefore, the educator has to provide the disabled individual with an activity that they can succeed in, because a confident disabled person becomes an active member in the social circles surrounding them, the first of these circles is the family, followed by the school, then the neighborhood, and finally the entire community. If the individual with a disability, with the help of their educator, is able to build self-confidence and become an active member of their community, they will achieve a high level of social adjustment.

In this day and age, experts and researchers in the domain of sports and recreation have been providing us with the latest methods and approaches to recreation, relying on a range of sciences and practical research that have made the individual engaging in these activities their focus. This is what led developed countries to witness a great evolution in the domain of recreation. As a result, recreation holds significant value and importance in the lives of modern societies and in their plans for a better future. Recreational sports activities are an effective way to provide psychological relief for individuals with disabilities. As a matter of fact, these activities help them acquire experiences that enable them to enjoy life, overcome the inferiority complex, and reduce mental stress. The impact of recreational skills extends to enjoying leisure time, fostering self-confidence, developing a sense of sportsmanship, promoting work and friendships, and ultimately breaking out of isolation and integrating into society. Therefore, recreational sports activities should be given ultimate importance due to the role they can play in overcoming psychological problems. Recognizing the significance of this aspect, we decided to address this research, which explores the role of recreational sports activities in improving the mental health of individuals with special needs (deaf-mute). Consequently, we have formulated our research problem as follows:

- **Do recreational sports activities play a role in improving the mental health of individuals with special needs (deaf-mute)?**

2- Hypotheses:

- **General Hypothesis:**

- **Recreational sports activities contribute to improving the mental health of individuals with special needs (deaf-mute).**

3- Research Significance:

- Deriving a set of scientific recommendations to serve as a reference for students in the domain of physical education and sports.
- Providing students and teachers with useful information in this area of research.
- Offering scientific material for researchers to benefit from, and to rely on its results or build upon them in new research addressing other potentially deeper issues.
- Directing attention to this sensitive group and segment within society.
- Informing the reader of the practical results of this research.

4- Research Objectives:

- The objective of this research is to highlight the role of recreational sports activities in improving the mental health of individuals with special needs (deaf-mute).

5- Identifying Research Terms and Concepts:

5-1- Recreational Sports Activities:

- **Contextual Definition:**

Recreational physical sports, in its specific context, are those games or sports practiced during leisure time that are free from intense competition. In other words, these are activities performed outside the formal federal and organizational structures. Recreational sports serve as a means to occupy free time, and for this reason, they hold significant importance in the lives of people, especially in developed nations. This type of sport is based on the principle of enjoyment and incorporates a philosophy of life, specifically the Heros philosophy in France. According to this perspective, there are two types of activity: federal recreational sports associated with capitalism, and the other being physical recreational sports related to pleasure, enjoyment, and achieving happiness and joy. (Amine Anouar Al Khouli, 1996, p. 77)

- **Operational Definition:**

A set of simple games that bring joy and pleasure to people

5-2- Mental Health:

- **Contextual Definition:**

Sound mental health can be defined as an individual's ability to experience happiness, uphold their various values in life, form genuine relationships with others, and their ability to return to their normal state after experiencing any shock or psychological stress. (Hussain Ali Fayed, 2000, p. 68)

- **Operational Definition:**

It is the level that can be achieved by individuals with special needs (deaf-mute) in feeling happiness and accepting others.

6- Research Methodology and Practical Procedures:

6-1- Scientific Method Employed:

Given the nature of our topic, and in order to diagnose the phenomenon and uncover its aspects, it was necessary to use the descriptive method due to its suitability for the nature of the study.

6-2- Research Variables:

The Primary Variable: This is the cause in the cause-and-effect relationship, i.e., the factor through which we aim to measure the results. (Deslandes Neve, 1976, p. 20)

In this research, the independent variable is **recreational sports activities**.

The secondary variable: This is defined as a variable that is affected by the independent variable and whose value depends on the influence of other variable values. As the values of the independent variable are adjusted, these changes will be reflected in the dependent variable. (Mohamed Hassan Allawi, Oussama, Kamel Rateb, 1999, p. 219). In our study, the dependent variable is **mental health**.

6-3- Research Population:

In our study, the research population consisted of educators at the Pedagogical Center (Deaf-Mute) in Beni Slimane, the Wilaya (province) of Médéa, totaling (15) male and female educators.

6-4- Research Sample and Selection Method:

The sample is a segment of the study population from which field data are collected. It represents a part of the whole, meaning that a subset of individuals from the population is chosen to represent the research population. (Rachid Zerouati, 2007, p. 334)

We aimed to achieve more accurate, objective, and realistic results by selecting the sample purposively, which included (15) male and female educators.

6-5- Research Scopes:

- **Human Scope:** This represents the number of individuals through whom this study was conducted, and it included (15) male and female educators.
- **Spatial Scope:** This represents the geographical framework within which this study was conducted. The practical study was carried out at the Pedagogical Center (Deaf-Mute) in Beni Slimane, Médéa.
- **Temporal Scope:** This represents the time frame within which the study was conducted. The research was carried out from 10/03/2024 to 10/05/2024.

6-6- Research Tools:

- **Questionnaire:** We employed the questionnaire as a tool in this study because it is the most suitable tool for the descriptive method. Additionally, it is an effective tool that enables obtaining facts, data, and information. One of the advantages of this tool is that it allows for the collection of data from samples in the least amount of time and effort. **(Hussain Ahmed As-Shafi'i, Suzan Ahmed Ali Morsi, 2002, p. 203-205)**

The questionnaire contained (12) questions formulated in a clear and understandable manner.

6-7- Scientific Foundations of the Tool (Psychometric Properties of the Tool):

Table (01) represents the validation of the questionnaire (expert validity):

Reviewers	Academic Rank	University	Decision:
01	Full Professor	University of Bouira	Approved with some modifications
02	Full Professor	University of Messila	Approved with some modifications
03	Associate Professor (A)	Médéa University	Approved with some modifications

6-8- Statistical Methods: We used the following statistical methods in this research:

- **Percentages (Triangular Calculation Method):** After collecting all the questionnaires from the trainers, we proceeded with data entry and sorting. This process involves counting the frequencies of each response to every question in the questionnaire. Subsequently, percentages are calculated using the triangular calculation method.

To verify the results, we calculate the Chi-Square (χ^2). We then compare the calculated χ^2 value with the critical χ^2 value after determining the level of significance (0.05) and degrees of freedom. **(Farid Kamel Abu Zina and others, 2006, p. 212-213)**

- **Chi Squared Test:**

This test allows us to compare the different results obtained from the questionnaire. It consists of:

Observed Frequencies: These are the frequencies obtained after distributing the questionnaire.

Expected Frequencies: These are the total frequencies divided by the number of proposed responses (choices).

The Chi-Square Table contains:

Tabulated Chi-Square: This is a fixed value that we compare with the calculated Chi-Square (χ^2 Calculated Value) to make a statistical decision.

Degrees of Freedom: Calculated using the formula $[n - 1]$, where n represents the number of proposed responses.

Level of Significance: We compare the results at this level, with most researchers using significance levels of 0.05 or 0.01.

7- Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of the Questionnaire Results:

Table No (02) represents the percentage, calculated Chi-Square (χ^2), and tabulated Chi-Square (χ^2) for the questionnaire results:

Questions	Answers	Frequencies	Percentage %	Calculated Chi-Square (χ^2)	Tabular Chi-Square (χ^2)	Degree of freedom	Significance level	Statistical Conclusion
01	Yes	13	87%	11.56	3.84	1	0.05	Significant
	No	02	13%					
02	Yes	14	93 %	12.44	3.84	1	0.05	Significant
	No	01	07 %					
03	Yes	15	100%	15	3.84	1	0.05	Significant
	No	00	00%					
04	Yes	10	67%	8	3.84	1	0.05	Significant
	No	05	33%					
05	Yes	14	93%	12.44	3.84	1	0.05	Significant
	No	01	7%					
06	Yes	13	87%	11.56	3.84	1	0.05	Significant
	No	02	13%					
07	Yes	15	100%	15	3.84	1	0.05	Significant
	No	00	00%					
08	Atmosphere of harmony	11	73%	09	3.84	1	0.05	Significant
	Aggressive atmosphere	04	17%					
09	Yes	15	100%	15	3.84	1	0.05	Significant
	No	04	00%					
10	Yes	14	93%	12.44	3.84	1	0.05	Significant
	No	01	7%					
11	Yes	13	87%	11.56	3.84	1	0.05	Significant
	No	02	13%					
12	Yes	15	100%	15	3.84	1	0.05	Significant
	No	00	00%					

• **Analyzing and Discussing the Results:**

As indicated by the answers in the table above:

- We observe from the responses to the first question that 87% of the sample individuals believe that individuals with disabilities (deaf – mute) feel comfort and enjoyment while engaging in recreational sports activities, whereas 13% responded otherwise. This difference in results is confirmed by the Chi-square test, where the calculated value (11.56) is greater than the tabulated value (3.84). Therefore, the differences in the results are statistically significant.
- As for the second question, we find that 93% of the sample individuals believe that individuals with disabilities can develop mutual trust with their peers when engaging in recreational sports activities, while 7% think otherwise. This difference in results is confirmed by the Chi-square test, where the calculated value (12.44) is greater than the tabulated value (3.84). Therefore, the differences in the results are statistically significant.
- Regarding the third question, we observe that 100% of the sample, meaning all participants, believe that recreational sports activities instill self-confidence in individuals with disabilities (deaf and mute) while performing tasks within the group. None of the participants disagreed. This difference in results is confirmed by the Chi-square test, where the calculated value (15) is greater than the tabulated value (3.84). Therefore, the differences in the results are statistically significant.
- Regarding the fourth question, it appears that 67% of the sample individuals believe that recreational sports activities contribute to boosting the morale of individuals with disabilities (deaf and mute), while 33% believe otherwise. This difference in results is confirmed by the Chi-square test, where the calculated value (8) is greater than the tabulated value (3.84). Therefore, the differences in the results are statistically significant.
- Regarding the fifth question, it shows that 97% of the sample individuals responded that recreational sports activities help individuals with disabilities to release their psychological inhibitions from other activities, while 7% responded otherwise. This difference in results is confirmed by the Chi-square test, where the calculated value (12.44) is greater than the tabulated value (3.84). Therefore, the differences in the results are statistically significant.
- Regarding the sixth question, it shows that 87% of the sample individuals responded that recreational sports activities allow individuals with disabilities to express themselves more freely and demonstrate their abilities, while 13% responded otherwise. This difference in results is confirmed by the Chi-square test, where the calculated value (11.56) is greater than the tabulated value (3.84). Therefore, the differences in the results are statistically significant.
- Regarding the seventh question, it shows that 100% of the sample individuals believe that recreational sports activities help individuals with disabilities come out of their isolation and feel loved by others, while no one responded otherwise. This difference in results is confirmed by the Chi-square test, where the calculated value (15) is greater than the tabulated value (3.84). Therefore, the differences in the results are statistically significant.
- Regarding the eighth question, it shows that 73% of the sample individuals believe that recreational sports activities create an atmosphere of harmony among individuals with disabilities (deaf-mute), while 17% responded otherwise. This difference in results is

- confirmed by the Chi-square test, where the calculated value (09) is greater than the tabulated value (3.84). Therefore, the differences in the results are statistically significant.
- Regarding the ninth question, we notice that 100% of the sample individuals believe that recreational sports activities have a positive impact on the general health of individuals with disabilities (deaf-mute). This difference in results is confirmed by the Chi-square test, where the calculated value (15) is greater than the tabulated value (3.84). Therefore, the differences in the results are statistically significant.
 - The tenth question shows that 93% of the sample individuals believe that recreational sports activities help individuals with disabilities cope with their problems within the group during the session. However, 7% believe the opposite. The differences in the results are confirmed by the Chi-square test, where the calculated value was 12.44, which is greater than the tabulated value of 3.84. Therefore, the differences in the results are statistically significant.
 - The eleventh question shows that 87% of the sample individuals answered that recreational sports activities help individuals with disabilities alleviate stress and anxiety. Meanwhile, 13% answered the opposite. The differences in the results are confirmed by the Chi-square test, where the calculated value was 11.56, which is greater than the tabulated value of 3.84. Therefore, the differences in the results are statistically significant.
 - Finally, the twelfth question reveals that 100% of the sample, meaning all individuals surveyed, answered that recreational sports activities provide individuals with disabilities (deaf and mute) an opportunity to overcome depression and outbursts. No one answered the opposite. The differences in the results are confirmed by the Chi-square test, where the calculated value was 15, which is greater than the tabulated value of 3.84. Therefore, the differences in the results are statistically significant.

8- Discussing the Results:

Through analyzing the results, it became evident that individuals with disabilities (deaf-mute) feel comfortable and enjoy playing recreational sports, i.e. thinking, analyzing, predicting, interpreting, making the suitable decisions, organizing, and negotiating. **(Kheireddine Hammi, 2005, p. 54-55)** The analysis of the results also showed that recreational sports activities enable individuals with disabilities (deaf-mute) to acquire self-confidence when performing their tasks in a group. Additionally, playing these sports boosts their morale and helps them release their psychological inhibitions from other activities. As a matter of fact, recreational sports activities work on fulfilling pupils' need for movement and activity. Moreover, it trains their senses and develops their ability to use them. Additionally, such activities help absorb emotions, train both large and small muscles, and achieve balance. **(Houda Mohamed Nachef, 1993, p. 80-81)** Recreational sports activities help individuals with disabilities break out of isolation and feel accepted by others. They also assist in integrating them into society and provide an opportunity to overcome depression and outbursts. Additionally, these activities help individuals with disabilities manage stress and anxiety, and address their problems within the group during the session. Overall, recreational sports have a positive impact on these individuals, allowing them to handle life issues more effectively. **(Tayeb Nayet Soulaymane and others, 2004, p. 26-27)** The teacher (educator) is responsible for selecting suitable activities for pupils both in and out of the classroom. Through these activities, the teacher aims to achieve educational and pedagogical goals and to implement and apply them in practice.

Conclusion:

We started our research from the unknown, and we now conclude this humble work with what is known. We started with what was mysterious, and now we conclude with what is clear. We started it with problems and hypotheses, and we are now concluding it with solutions and results, as every beginning has an end, and every starting point has a defined and intended goal. And now, we write the conclusion of our research, in which we will try to present the essence of the topic, evaluate the extent to which the intended goal has been achieved, and propose future hypotheses to aid researchers in continuing or re-examining the study from different perspectives. We started with definitions and terms, and this was embodied in the collection, processing, and analysis of information, relying on a methodological approach that adheres to the necessary guidelines and commitments. Our primary objective was to remove the ambiguity and confusion we encountered at the beginning of this topic. Therefore, one of the most important steps we took was to organize the work within a scientific and methodological framework.

Our study was not a mere coincidence or random endeavor, but was driven by conviction, with the overall aim of understanding the role of recreational sports activities in enhancing the mental health of individuals with special needs (deaf and mute). After going through the fundamental stages that every researcher experiences, we were able, even if in a simple way, to demonstrate that recreational sports activities play a significant role in improving the mental health of individuals with special needs. Furthermore, these activities help make the disabled person a more social individual by encouraging group work, interaction within the group, good relations with peers, and the release of all the pent-up pressures that cause social isolation. This, in turn, prepares them for professional life and integrates them into society.

• **Recommendations:**

We recommend:

- Providing the necessary pedagogical tools and means for individuals with disabilities in all private institutions.
- Paying more attention to individuals with special needs and meeting their psychological and social needs.
- Allocating special training sessions and study days for educators at special needs schools.
- Putting more emphasis on relying on recreational sports activities because they have a social nature and contribute to improving individuals' mental health.
- Paying more attention to recreational sports activities and allocating sufficient time for practicing sports.
- Instilling a culture of sports within this special and sensitive segment of society.
- Organizing sports competitions between the deaf and mute and other groups with special needs to develop the social aspect among these groups.

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- **Annexes :**

• **Survey Questions:**

1. Do individuals with disabilities (deaf – mute) feel comfortable and enjoy themselves while participating in recreational sports activities?

YES NO

2. Can an individual with a disability develop trust with their peers while participating in recreational sports activities?

YES NO

3. Do recreational sports activities help individuals with disabilities (deaf – mute) feel less fearful of others?

YES NO

4. In your opinion, do recreational sports activities contribute to boosting the morale of individuals with disabilities (deaf – mute)?

YES NO

5. Do recreational sports activities help individuals with disabilities release their psychological tensions from other activities?

YES NO

6. Do recreational sports activities allow individuals with disabilities to express themselves more freely and showcase their abilities?

YES NO

7. Do recreational sports activities help individuals with disabilities break out of isolation and feel accepted by others?

YES NO

8. Do you think that recreational sports activities develop an atmosphere of harmony, an aggressive atmosphere among individuals with disabilities (deaf –mute)?

YES NO

9. Do recreational sports activities have a positive impact on the overall health of individuals with disabilities (deaf – mute)?

YES NO

10. In your opinion, do recreational sports activities help individuals with disabilities cope with their problems within the group during the session?

YES NO

11. Do recreational sports activities help individuals with disabilities alleviate stress and anxiety?

YES NO

12. Do recreational sports activities provide individuals with disabilities (deaf – mute) with an opportunity to overcome depression and outbursts?

YES NO