

RECREATION ACTIVITIES IN ADOLESCENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

HAZAR FATİH¹

Abstract

Aim. The aim of this study was to investigate the recreational activities of the adolescents with intellectual disability.

Methods. Participants were 34 adolescents (17 females and 17 males) with mild intellectual disability aged between 15 and 19 years. A questionnaire about recreation activities was obtained from the children. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics and recreational activities of the participants.

Results. Majority of adolescents with intellectual disability (70.6 %) spend their free time by listening to music, 44.1% watching TV, 35.3% playing computer games, 29.4 % meeting with friends/peers, 17.6% sleeping, 14.7% visiting his/her family elders/relatives, 11.8% reading books/newspapers/magazines, 11.8% dealing with hobbies, 11.8% playing a music instrument, respectively. Although 67.6 % of participants do sports/physical activity weekly in their free time, 32.4% do not do any sports/physical activity.

The types of physical activities they do in their free time when possible were 58.8% walking and 41.2% running. The majority of the adolescents with intellectual disability (82.3%) watch TV, 79.5% use social media tools and 85.3% play computer game/ mobile phone game/play station in every day

Conclusions. Recreation activities gain importance for the adolescents with intellectual disability. Participation in different types of recreation activities has benefits on adolescents with intellectual disability. As a consequent, encouragement of adolescents with intellectual disability to participate in recreation activities could be recommended.

The encouragement to participate in recreation activities of adolescents with intellectual disability may be from their families, siblings, friends, peers, teachers, trainers, recreation specialists and recreation service providers.

Recreation service providers and recreation specialists may organize and offer different recreation activities for adolescents with intellectual disability. This will provide children with intellectual disability to participate in organized and supervised recreational activities.

Key words: Recreation, participating in, mentally retarded, health, physical activity.

Introduction

Recreation activities are very important types of activities for all children as well as children with intellectual disability in helping physical, social and psychological health (Chien et al. 2017; Buttimer & Tierney, 2005; King et al. 2013). Recreation activities are defined as the activities that individuals choose to participate in voluntarily during their free time and they enjoy, get pleasure from these activities.

Children with intellectual disability have reduced cognitive functioning, communication, motor skills, and those factors influence their participation in recreation activities (Shields et al. 2014; Pratt & Greydanus, 2007; Westendorp et al. 2011).

People with intellectual disability could

participate in physical activity whether as a part of recreation activity. Researches suggest that physical activity has many positive effects for people with intellectual disability (Lin et al. 2010; Bartlo & Klein, 2011; Jones et al., 2007). Besides helping physical and psychological health, attending to recreational activities provides opportunities for social interaction and promotion of friendship as well (Kampert and Goreczny 2007), that are also some other important needs of adolescents with intellectual disability.

On the other hand, participation in recreational activities gives children happiness, helps developing skills and competencies, increase social interactions and self efficacy too (Hoogsteen & Woodgate, 2010; Powrie et al., 2015). Children has a high level of motivation to participate in

¹ Faculty of Sport Sciences, Aydın Adnan Menderes University, Turkey
E-mail address: fatih.hazar01@gmail.com

activities they prefer (Majnemer et al., 2010; Westendrop et al., 2011). Recreation and participating in recreational activities are accepted as an important life condition (Chien et al. 2017).

Because of the limited information about the recreation activities of children with intellectual disability in the literature (Shields et al. 2014;

Methods

Participants were 34 adolescents (17 females and 17 males) with mild intellectual disability aged between the ages of 15 and 19 years (mean age: 16.94±1.25 years).

A questionnaire about recreation activities was obtained from the children. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics and recreational activities of the participants. The numbers and percentages of recreational activities that children participated in were reported.

Results

Majority of adolescents with intellectual disability (70.6 %) spend their free time by listening to music, 44.1% watching TV, 35.3% playing computer games, 29.4 % meeting with friends/peers, 17.6% sleeping, 14.7% visiting his/her family elders/relatives, 11.8% reading books/newspapers/magazines, 11.8% dealing with hobbies, 11.8% playing a music instrument, 8.8% going to cinema/theatre respectively (Table 1).

Although 67.6% of participants do sports/physical activity weekly in their free time, 32.4% do not do any sports/physical activity weekly in their free time. Adolescents with intellectual disability stated that they do physical activity in a week as 1-2 hour (52.9%), 3 hours and more (14.7%) and never (32.4%) respectively.

Oviedo et al. 2017), it gains importance to study the different aspects of the recreational activities and participating in the recreational activities of adolescents with intellectual disability.

Therefore the aim of this study was to investigate the recreational activities of the adolescents with intellectual disability.

The types of physical activities that adolescents with intellectual disability do in their free time when possible were 58.8% walking, 41.2% running, 29.4 % playing football, 23.5% activity with exercise equipments in parks, 23.5% playing volleyball, 23.5% playing basketball, 23.5% cycling and 23.5 % swimming (Table 2).

Adolescents with intellectual disability participate in the physical activities in their free time as a recreation activity mostly with their families; 55.0% with their parents-siblings, 27.5% with his/her friends.

The majority of the adolescents with intellectual disability (82.3%) watch TV every day. They watch TV on an average of 1-2 hours per a day (52.9%), 3 hours and more (29.4%) and never watch TV (17.6%)(Table 3).

The most of adolescents with intellectual disability as 79.5% use social media tools every day. They spend their free time in social media (facebook/twitter/instagram, etc.) on an average of 3 hours and more per a day (47.1%), 1-2 hours per a day (32.4%) and never (20.6%)(Table 3).

The vast majority (85.3%) of adolescents with intellectual disability play computer game/mobile phone game/play station every day. They play computer game/mobile phone game/play station etc. in a day, 1-2 hours per a day (52.9%), 3 hours and more per a day (32.4%) and never (14.7%)(Table 3).

Table 1. Types of recreation activities of adolescents with intellectual disability

How do you spend your free time?	%	n
listening to music	70.6	24
watching TV	44.1	15
playing computer games	35.3	12
meeting with friends/peers	29.4	10
sleeping	17.6	6
visiting family elders/relatives	14.7	5
reading books/newspapers/magazines	11.8	4
playing a music instrument	11.8	4
dealing with hobbies	11.8	4
going to cinema/theatre	8.8	3
going to cafe etc.	5.9	2
visiting/travelling	5.9	2
making exercise in a gym	2.9	1
participating in sport competitions	2.9	1
going to shopping	2.9	1
do nothing	2.9	1

Table 2. Types of pyhsical activity of adolescents with intellectual disability

Which type of physical activity(ies)/sport(s) do you do in your free time?	%	n
walking	58.8	20
running	41.2	14
football	29.4	10
volleyball	23.5	8
basketball	23.5	8
swimming	23.5	8
cycling	23.5	8
physical activity/exercise with equipments in parks	23.5	8
handball	5.9	2
gymnastics	2.9	1
going to gym	2.9	1

Table 3. Types of spending free time by watching TV, using social media, playing computer games, doing physical activity of adolescents with intellectual disability.

	3 hours or more % (n)	1-2 hours % (n)	Never % (n)
How many hours do you watch TV in a day?	29.4 (10)	52.9 (18)	17.6 (6)
How many hours do you spend in social media (facebook/twitter/instagram, etc.) in a day?	47.1 (16)	32.4 (11)	20.6 (7)
How many hours do you play computer game/mobile phone game/play station in a day?	32.4 (11)	52.9 (18)	14.7 (5)
How many hours do physical activity/exercise every week	14.7 (5)	52.9 (18)	32.4 (11)

Discussion

Recreation activities gain importance for individuals with intellectual disability at all age groups. Some studies showed the benefits of participating in these type activities for the people with intellectual disability (Chien et al. 2017; Murphy & Carbone, 2008; Kampert and Goreczny 2007; Law et al., 2006; Buttmer & Tierney, 2005).

In this study, the most popular activities of adolescents with intellectual disability were listening to music, watching TV, playing computer games, and meeting with friends/peers respectively. These results are consistent with the results of Melboe and Ytterhus (2017) that found activities of youths with intellectual disabilities at home playing computer games, listening to music, watching TV.

The most preferred physical activity types as a recreation activity of adolescents with intellectual disability were walking and running respectively. Because walking and running activities are easy to participate in and do not need high level skills, these may be reasons to be mostly preferred of them by adolescents with intellectual disability. These differences may be due to different

levels of physical, cognitive and social skills in adolescents with intellectual disability. King et al. (2013) mentioned about swimming, gymnastics, athletics and team sports as sport activities and participating in these activities.

The most of the adolescents in this study participate in physical activity types of recreation activities with their families whether parents and/or their siblings. These findings may suggest that families; parents and siblings of adolescents with intellectual disability may have a supportive effect on the participation in recreational activities of adolescents with intellectual disability. This also may have positive effect on the strengthening the ties within the family members. In a study by Begum and Blacher (2011), it has been revealed that connection of sibling provides an opportunity for adolescents with intellectual disability to watch and learn proper behaviors and necessary skills through observation and experience from their siblings. Therefore, adolescents' participation in recreational activities with their siblings may facilitate their developments in terms of their behaviors or required skills.

In addition, the findings in this study about participation of adolescents with intellectual disability in recreation activities mainly with family members; parents/siblings and friends are in consistent with previous research indicated that children with intellectual disability participated in recreation activities not alone but with others (King et al. 2013). This may be due to that adolescents with intellectual disability may need more support or encouragement to participate in recreation activities.

On the other hand, in a study, children's participations in recreational activities were less than their non-disabled peers' participations and children with intellectual disabilities not only take less part in social activities, they also seem to have less friends than children without disabilities (Solish, Perry, and Minnes 2010). So participating in recreation activities may have some benefits in social development of adolescents with intellectual disability. Because some of the recreational activities need group activity, participating in recreational activities also could help adolescents with intellectual disability to get rid of feeling loneliness and social isolation too.

Some other important issues for these adolescents is social interaction and inclusion (Abells et al. 2008), that could be facilitated by participating in recreational activities with others such as friends, peers, without any disability, etc. Participating in recreation activities with peers may facilitate the independence from family of children with intellectual disability (Richard, Hastings, Burns, & Beck, 2006).

Majority of adolescents with intellectual disability prefer spending their free time by watching TV, on social media (facebook/twitter/instagram, etc.) and playing computer game/mobile phone game/play station in a day. These results are consistent with the findings of King et al. (2013) explained some recreational activities including a range of sedentary activities such as watching TV, playing computer games and doing homework. Adolescents with intellectual disability may prefer these types of recreational activities because these may be easy to participate in for them. Another reason may be that adolescents with intellectual disability may participate in these activities without the need of any companion. They may feel more comfortable in these type activities.

References

- Abells D., Burbidge, J. and Minnes, P. 2008, Involvement of adolescents with intellectual disabilities in social and recreational activities. *Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, 14(2).
- Bartlo P., & Klein, P. J., 2011, Physical activity benefits and needs in adults with intellectual disabilities: systematic review of the literature.

In this study doing physical activity as a part of recreation activity also investigated. Two thirds of adolescents with intellectual disability participated in physical activity as a recreational activity in this study. Therefore adolescents with intellectual disability may gain the benefits of physical activity as clearly introduced in literature (Lin et al. 2010; Bartlo & Klein, 2011; Jones et al. 2007). Unfortunately one third did not participated in any physical activity in their free time in the study.

The findings in this study suggest that there are a number of recreation activities participated in by adolescents with intellectual disability. They participate to choose in these activities whether alone or with their families, friends and peers.

Conclusion

Recreation activities gain importance for the adolescents with intellectual disability. Participation in different types of recreation activities has benefits on adolescents with intellectual disability. As a consequent, encouragement of adolescents with intellectual disability to participate in recreation activities could be recommended.

The encouragement to participate in recreation activities of adolescents with intellectual disability may be from their families, siblings, friends, peers, teachers, trainers, recreation specialists and recreation service providers.

The participation in recreation activities of adolescents with intellectual disability may help the community and social inclusion of these individuals.

It also could be recommended that, recreation service providers and recreation specialists may organize and offer different recreation activities for adolescents with intellectual disability. This will provide children with intellectual disability to participate in organized and supervised recreational activities.

Further researches are needed related to many aspects of recreation activities for adolescents with intellectual disability. In addition, future research should focus on identifying barriers to and facilitators of participation in recreation activity adolescents with intellectual disability.

- American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 116(3), 220–232. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1352/1944-7558-116.3.220>.
- Begum G., & Blacher, J., 2011, The sibling relationship of adolescents with and without intellectual disabilities. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 32, 1580–1588.
- Buttimer J., & Tierney, E., 2005, Patterns of leisure participation among adolescents with a mild

- intellectual disability. *Journal of intellectual disabilities*, 9(1), 25-42.
- Chien C. W., Rodger, S., & Copley, J., 2017, Differences in patterns of physical participation in recreational activities between children with and without intellectual and developmental disability. *Research in developmental disabilities*, 67, 9-18.
- Hoogsteen L., & Woodgate, R. L., 2010, Can I play? A concept analysis of participation in children with disabilities. *Physical and Occupational Therapy in Pediatrics*, 30, 325-339.
- Jones M. C., Walley, R. M., Leech, A., Paterson, M., Common, S., & Metcalf, C., 2007, Behavioral and psychosocial outcomes of a 16-Week rebound therapy-Based exercise program for people with profound intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 4(2), 111-119.
- Kampert A. L., and Goreczny A. J., 2007, Community Involvement and Socialization among Individuals with Mental Retardation. *Research in Developmental Disabilities* 28(3): 278-286.
- King M., Shields, N., Imms, C., Black, M., & Arden, C., 2013, Participation of children with intellectual disability compared with typically developing children. *Research in developmental disabilities*, 34(5), 1854-1862.
- Lin J. D., Lin, P. Y., Lin, L. P., Chang, Y. Y., Wu, S. R., & Wu, J. L., 2010, Physical activity and its determinants among adolescents with intellectual disabilities. *Research in developmental disabilities*, 31(1), 263-269.
- Majnemer A., Shikako-Thomas, K., Chokron, N., Law, M., Shevell, M., Chilingaryan, G., et al., 2010, Leisure activity preferences for 6- to 12-year old children with cerebral palsy. *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology*, 52, 167-173.
- Melboe L. and Ytterhus, B., 2017, Disability leisure: in what kind of activities, and when and how do youths with intellectual disabilities participate? *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 19(3); 245-255. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15017419.2016.1264467>
- Powrie B., Kolehmainen, N., Turpin, M., Ziviani, J., & Copley, J., 2015, The meaning of leisure for children and young people with physical disabilities: A systematic evidence synthesis. *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology*, 57, 993-1010.
- Pratt H. D., & Greydanus, D. E., 2007, Intellectual disability (mental retardation) in children and adolescents. *Primary Care: Clinics in Office Practice*, 34(2), 375-386.
- Richard P., Hastings, D., Burns, C., & Beck, A., 2006, Maternal distress and expressed emotion: Cross-sectional and longitudinal relationships with behaviour problems of children with intellectual disabilities. *American Journal of Mental Retardation*, 111, 48-61.
- Shields N., King, M., Corbett, M., & Imms, C., 2014, Is participation among children with intellectual disabilities in outside school activities similar to their typically developing peers? A systematic review. *Developmental Neurorehabilitation*, 17, 64-71.
- Solish A., A. Perry, and P. Minnes., 2010, Participation of children with and without disabilities in social, recreational and leisure Activities. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 23 (3): 226-236.
- Westendorp M., Houwen, S., Hartman, E., & Visscher, C., 2011, Are gross motor skills and sports participation related in children with intellectual disabilities? *Research in developmental disabilities*, 32(3), 1147-1153.