



NEW ASPECT OF THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF YOUNGSTERS WITH HEARING DISORDERS THROUGH SPORTS

* DASHEVA, D., * DJOBOVA S., * VELİNOVA V., * GERGOVA, A., * MUTAFOVA, J.

*National Sports Academy "V. Levski", Sofia, Bulgaria

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Sports can provide physical activity and recreation that yield psychological and physical benefits. According to Roy Shephard (1995) the potential benefits include improvement of mood-state, reduction of anxiety and depression, increased self-esteem, improved perceived health, and long term reduced risk of many chronic diseases.

The number of people with physical disabilities who engage in sports and other physical activities has increased dramatically in the past decade, due to increased number of opportunities in terms of policy and attitude change, establishment of national and international sports associations, assistive sport devices, etc. Persons with disabilities are entitled to the same human rights as everyone else including full access to recreational and competitive sport. But in reality still many persons are deprived of this right including the youngsters with hearing difficulties. Despite the above mentioned facilities, they are facing also big number of barriers which does not allowed them to achieve equity with their peers in terms of independence and social integration. By facilitating the access to sport and developing sports programmes for persons with disabilities we are trying to stress and develop their abilities.

One of the projects developed by the National sports academy for persons with hearing difficulties was "Sports for life" with the financial support of the Youth project of the European Commission.

Sociometry is one of the methods of socio-psychology developed by the psychiatrist Jacob Levi Moreno (1934). He developed methods to analyse interpersonal emotive relationships within a group. His methods can be used to identify informal leaders, social rankings and isolated individuals. It shows the patterns of how individuals associate with each other when acting as a group toward a specified goal. As Moreno says, "Choices are fundamental facts in all ongoing human relations, choices of people and choices of things. It

is immaterial whether the motivations are known to the chooser or not; it is immaterial whether [the choices] are inarticulate or highly expressive, whether rational or irrational. They do not require any special justification as long as they are spontaneous and true to the self of the chooser. They are facts of the first existential order. ” (1953). And as the choices are based on certain criteria, we selected such responding on our goals. The best responding tool to our needs was the Sociometric questionnaire developed by prof. J. Mutafova (1971) who shows the motivation and the relationships among the members of small sport groups.

The aim of the study was to examine the effect of the involvement in the active sports training programme of the youngsters with hearing disorders on their social integration, and particularly their motivation towards participation. The sociometric study was applied in order to asses the behavior of the participants in the group, and also to monitor the process of the changes in the socialization as well to see the extent of this changes.

Subject of this study were the Participants in the project “Sport for our life” which was organized under the Youth project of the European commission. The total number of the participants was 41. The sports included in the project were ski, swimming and sport aerobics, which were carried for 5 months. The subjects of this particular study are the ten who took part in the three sports offered. The mean age of the group is 23,3.

For assessing the sociometric status we used the standardized sociometric test, developed by Mutafova (1971), which is based on the original model of Moreno. For assessing the preferred goal perspective of the participants we used the standardized by the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy of NSA version of Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire (TEOSQ) developed by Duda and Nicholls (1989). The tests were filled in by the participants at the beginning and at the end of the program.

For the statistical analysis we applied t-student test in order to compare the results of two related samples at the beginning and after the programme with level of significance $p < 0.05$. From the TEOSQ (Table. 1) analysis at the beginning of the programme we found out that the entire group was task oriented with mean score on task orientation 4.12 (SD 0.42; min 3.4; max 4.9) and mean score on ego orientation 1.51 (SD 0.26; min 1; max 1.8) with high reliability (1.12 Cronbach Alpha). Applying the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test shows high consistency in the group (Z 0.83 for Ego and Z 0.60 for Task orientation).

At the end of the program we found statistical significant differences as compared to the beginning, related to the task orientation of the group ($p = 0.03$). The program did not affected the Ego orientation ($p = 0.19$). These results confirm some previous findings that the sport training enhances in the young people the responsibility towards accomplishment of certain sport goal.

Table 1

	Pre \bar{X}	S	Post \bar{X}	S	Δ	t	P
Ego	1.51	0.26	1.39	0.29	0.12	1.40	0.19
Task	4.12	0.42	4.57	0.43	0.45	2.64	0.27

The high task orientation comes in support of our observations and some previous findings that this individuals are investing considerable amount of time and effort in their sport. Based on the literature Task oriented athletes use a lot of feedback about their performance. Also persons with disabilities need more feedback which is clear indication from the coaches how to improve the training process of the disabled athletes. Indisputably at the end of the programme the participants were more motivated to continue with the sport and we believe this result will be confirmed with our next study.

The sociometric analyses at the beginning of the programme are showing pure state of communication among the group members and undisputable leadership by the programme organiser. This result supports the task orientation confirmed by TEOSQ. At the end of the program the formal leader is changed and there is increase in the positive and negative attitudes (Fig. 1). We consider this as very positive and this confirm that sport could be very helpful in socialization aspects. Looking at the non formal relations (Fig. 2) we see that the leader is stable and at the beginning there are only positive attitudes. At the end of the program we observe some negative relations. It is clear evidence that sport affect the way of acceptance of the others, it induce critical thinking and provoke the self. This also confirms the role of sport for the process of empowerment of the persons with disabilities. The negative relations are affected by the weak sport performance. The participants are becoming more demanding towards their friends which is evidence for personal growth. The sociometric results are in accordance with the high Task orientation.

Figure 1. Formal relations before and after the program

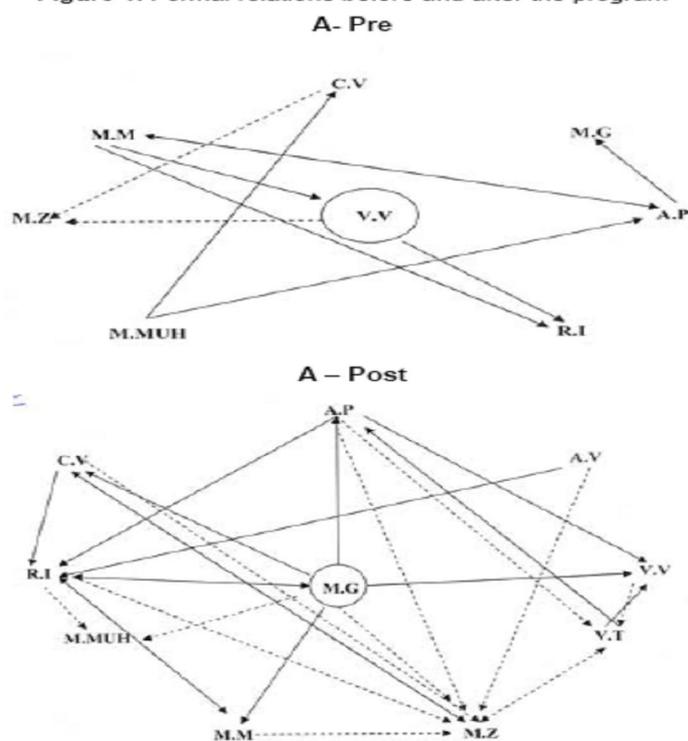
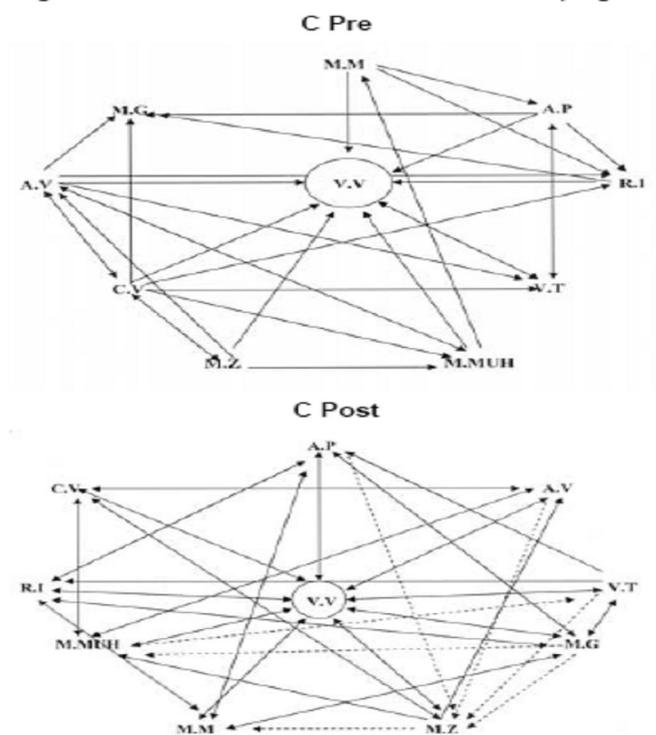


Figure 2. Informal relations before and after the program



There are numerous evidences for the benefits of sports participation by individuals with disabilities. We have chosen the approach of assessing the goals orientation in order to help the sports professionals to design better sports programmes for persons with disabilities.

The results show that athletes with disabilities could achieve high results in sports due to their high motivation towards the task. And we confirmed previous findings that sport approach is one of the ways of resocialisation and empowerment of the individual. In this light we would work towards development.

There are not many studies in the literature concerning the psychology of the disabled persons and specifically those involved in sports. More light on the motivational nature and the group sociodynamic could help the coaches to set up individual and team development plans when working with athletes with hearing disorders.

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