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## EVALUATION OF THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF RECREATIONAL SPORTS ACTIVITIES ON ORPHAN TURKISH GIRLS' ATTITUDES\*

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to evaluate the social impact of recreational sports activities on Turkish Orphan girls' attitudes to take an advantage of the values conveyed by leisure activities such as sport, dance, social activities etc. to increase knowledge and skills as well as social capabilities (such as teamwork, fair play, tolerance) for disadvantaged groups in order to promote social inclusion. The method applied in this study was qualitative in nature. The participants 13-18 years-old 32 females orphans who had been living in the orphanage. Through 15 weeks periods, participants voluntarily attended physical activity programs. The data were collected via observation, by the five observers. As a result, although orphan girls started to increase some positive social behavior, they needed much more time to change all unwanted attitudes.

**Key Words:** Leisure Experience, Recreational Sport Activities, Gender

### INTRODUCTION

Sport, play and leisure activities provide safe and supportive environment for expression and provision of healthy alternatives, for school life, teamwork-cooperation, physical fitness-health, self esteem, awareness and respect for body, communication, social interaction, interpersonal skills and etc. (Doll-Tepper, G. 2004). The aims of recreational programs in leisure

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education are both short term including the learning of specific skills and long term such as development of life long leisure interests and attitudes. The process comprises the fostering development of values, attitudes, skills and knowledge relevant to leisure and its significant part of the socialization process of individuals into their society (Sivan, A. 2004). And also, physical activity and exercise provides psychological benefits including increase in confidence, internal locus of control, perception, positive body image, self control, sexual satisfaction, well-being and decrease anger, anxiety, depression, hostility and tension (Mirzeoğlu et al.,2004; Weinberg & Gould, 1995).

There are many approaches to the analysis of women's leisure and discussion ways on the past research (Shaw,1994, Henderson & Winn,1996). And also, young people can satisfy many of their basic needs & achieve happiness in many and varied ways during leisure time (Ruskin,H& at.al,1995). According to this point, the participation of leisure activities is ongoing process in which young people meet their personal social needs; building skills and competencies that allow them to be successful in their daily lives, grow to be happy and productive adults (Youth Development Team, Partners for Children, 2000). And also, direct involvement or experiences in leisure program experience, develops some kind of personal and leadership skills; teamwork-cooperation, problem solving skills, decision making skills, self esteem, communication, social interaction, interpersonal skills and etc. (Atara,2004; Elie,2004; Luetkens,2004; Ozbey Alkurt et al.,2004; Mirzeoğlu et al.,2004).

Accordingly to these literature, this type of researches and educational youth programs efforts must focus on conceptually based leisure programs approach (Little,1993; Rossman,1993; McCarville,1993; Edginton,1993) in schools, some organizations and alternative youth leisure time programs to help prevent delinquency, personal and youth development.

## **PURPOSE**

Because the lack of opportunities in orphanage, orphan girls should be encouraged to be involved in sport and physical activity at an early age. The purpose of this study was to show that how recreational physical activities affect the attitude toward regular sport participation of Turkish orphan girls. The aim of this research was to take advantage of the values conveyed by recreational sports activities in leisure time to co-operate students with each other to reach individual and collective goals with the help of the various leisure activities (connection and confidence) and to increase knowledge and

skills as well as social capabilities (such as teamwork, fair play, tolerance..) for disadvantaged groups in order to promote social inclusion.

## METHOD

The method applied in this study was qualitative in nature. The participants 13-18 years-old 32 females orphans who had been living in the orphanage in Bolu-Turkey. Through 15 weeks period, participants attended physical activity programs voluntarily (E-CENS Programing Technique: Remotivation: Foret, C.M, Carter M.J, Benedik J.R, 1993) (Table1): Dance, volleyball, basketball, badminton, outdoor activities and social activities (such as trekking, picnics, music, movie etc..)

| Phase | Technique   | Description   |
|-------|---|---|
| 1     | Climate of Acceptance/<br>Activate                | Create a warm, supportive and comfortable setting and atmosphere  |
| 2     | Bridge to Reality/Connect                         | Develop discussion around a theme, event or expose participants to new activities and ideas that help them learn, recall, interact, and share   |
| 3     | Share the World We live in/<br>Expand             | Discuss that day's particular topic. Bring out past experiences by encouraging participants to share personal experiences as they relate to the activity/discussion   |
| 4     | Appreciation of the Work of<br>the World/ Network | Participants think about or perform the activity as it relates to other people, the setting, and society as a whole   |
| 5     | Climate of Appreciation/<br>Stimulate             | Motivate through positive reinforcement (verbal and physical) or interactions with in the activity, thank for attendance, and encourage future attendance by providing information about next session or activities |

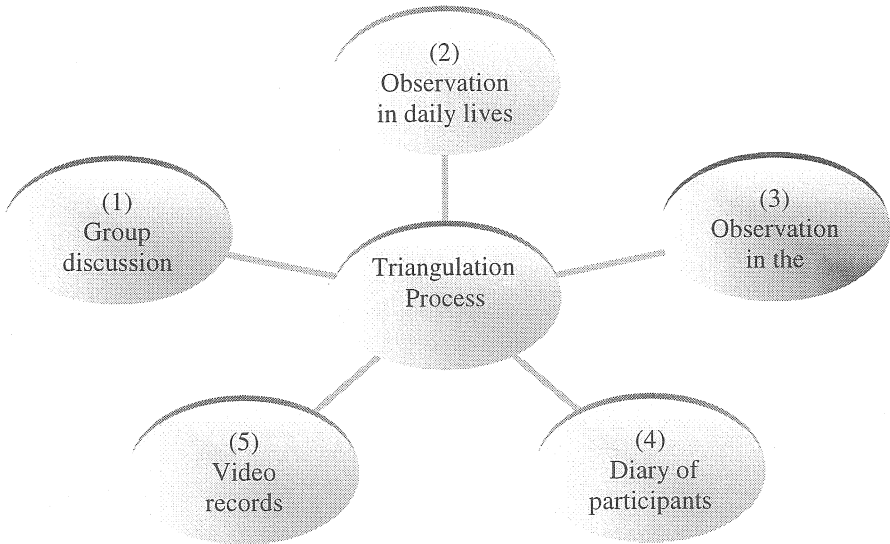
**Table 1:** A-CENT Technique: Five Phases of Remotivation (Foret, C.M, Carter M.J, Benedik J.R. 1993;pp:52)

## Data Collection

The data were collected via observation, by the five observers (Boarding orphans' social service specialists and teachers, recreational activity leaders and the other researchers). By means of triangulation for reliability and validity, several perspectives and methods are combined. Partially-structured field work, were used as observation techniques: These observation parts in study were; (1) Group discussion and evaluation with briefing and debriefing

questions (Sakofs&Armstrong, 1996; Luckner&Nadler, 1997; Halliday, 1999), (2) Observation in daily lives and (3) Observation in the duration of the leisure time activities of participants, (4) Diary of participants and (5) Video records & photographs (Figure:1).

**Figure 1:** By means of triangulation for reliability and validity; several perspectives and methods are combined



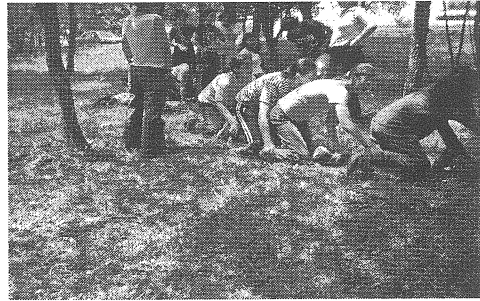
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The value of physical activity is to promote physical and mental health. In addition when more girls participated or attended the physical activity programs: such as; dance, volleyball, basketball, badminton, outdoor activities and social activities, (such as trekking, picnics, music, movie etc..) they could be more effective in their social life.

Recreational sport activities in leisure time were used to promote students' positive behavior development. Therefore, instructors encouraged them to feel better, to take responsibility and to show tolerance of each other with the help of activities. And the last stage was the participation of volleyball match among high school students in the traditional festival for schools in Bolu. At this festival, students showed their ability during the matches. After the match spectators & media were closely interested in their successful

performance. As a result self confidence, self satisfaction and awareness of their capacities, increased social interaction with leaders/instructors, friends or dance partners and families were observed. Participation in this kind of leisure activities or programs brings the opportunity to experience leisure as a life change (Foret, C.M, Carter M.J, Benedik J.R. 1993;pp:54)

In leisure time many young orphanage girls, didn't want to participate the recreational sport activities. However the program in this research succeeded, because the program was flexible and enjoyable. Furthermore the leaders motivated participants during all stages of the program. Nowadays, young girls prefer more democratic situation and to have enjoyment and fun. According to Culp, setting of the program is important, as well as having variety. It might give an opportunity to

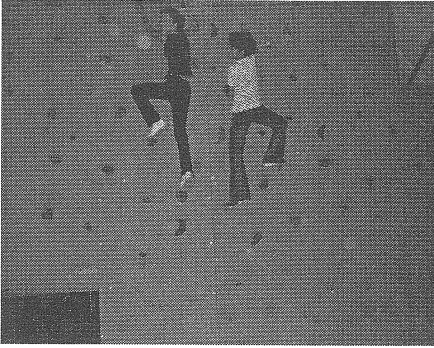


the participants to see what would they do and not. This study, helped experiential education of the participants and also provided a vehicle for enhanced communication between leaders/instructors, friends or dance partners or families. Accordingly to the data, this type of researches and educational youth programs efforts must focus on conceptually based leisure programs approach (Little, 1993; Rossman, 1993; McCarville,1993;Edginton,1993) in schools and alternative youth leisure time programs to prevent delinquency and to help youth development.

Furthermore, researchers observed more enthusiasm as a result of participation in to recreational activities. It was interesting that some participants displayed some improper behaviors like being nervous, hitting the others and hitting or kicking the ball when playing games during the first two weeks. However, three weeks later these behaviors were disappeared. After third weeks, it was seen that all girls enjoyed to participate in physical activity

and they became active participant. Interviews were a “voice” for girls and provided an opportunity to define the meaning of physical activity and sport in their own words.

During the research period, orphan girls were aware of their social interaction and interpersonal skills which were getting better and better. In addition the girls had a knowledge about the prevention of drugs, tobacco & alcohol and provision of healthy alternatives. They also learned the structure and the rules of some sports and games. They started to show tolerance to each other in terms of lack of skill, unpleasant words and behavior during the physical activities. As a result, it was suggested that recreational sports programs can be used as an alternative program for involvement of youth in leisure time.



## CONCLUSION

It was concluded that recreational programs which provide safe and supportive environment can help orphan girls to achieve happiness in many and varied ways during leisure time and to help an opportunities to learn new skills and to have meaningful social interaction. Therefore, governments of developing countries like Turkey, should promote recreational programs to encourage and motivate the participation of youth to increase positive social impact.

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