

A Multi-Way Intervention to Improve the Social Acceptance of a Student with Learning Disabilities

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate how a student with learning disabilities is socially accepted by his peers in the classroom when social skills training and academic support are concomitantly provided. The participants consisted of 15 (7 female, 8 male) typically developing high school students attending Grade 1 and a student with learning disabilities. One-group pretest-posttest design was utilised. The research data was collected through the sociometric technique of peer nomination before and after the intervention programme. In addition, the effects of the implemented programme were examined via a semi-structured interview with the student with learning disabilities and his family. The data was analysed via the technique of sociogram, and descriptive analyses were conducted as well. The research results indicate that the programme in question was effective on the student with learning disabilities' social acceptance among his typically developing peers. Furthermore, the interviews with his family show that the implemented programme provided a variety of benefits for the student with learning disabilities.

Keywords: Social Acceptance, Students With Learning Disabilities, Typically Developing Students, High School Students

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INTRODUCTION

Students encounter social duties, such as initiating and keeping interaction, resolving conflicts, making friends and achieving common interpersonal goals with their peers at school every day (Pearl & Donahue, 2004). Some students have difficulty in performing these duties and face the risk of exclusion by their peers (Pijl & Frostad, 2010). A certain part of such students is composed of those with learning disabilities (LD) (Swanson & Malone, 1992). Although students with LD have difficulties mainly in reading, writing and mathematics (Kirk, 1963), they encounter several difficulties in social fields as well. Bryan (1974) first referred to these social difficulties in his paper titled "Peer Popularity of Learning Disabled Children". It was also found in subsequent studies that students with LD are more socially isolated and less accepted by their peers when compared to those without LD (Baydik & Bakkaloglu, 2009; Gresham & Reschly, 1986; Lorgier, Schmidt, & Vukman, 2015; Pavri & Luftig, 2001). Given that a majority of students with LD receive inclusive education, these students spend at least one third of their everyday life together with their typically developing friends. Any problems in LD students' social relations with typically developing peers may therefore negatively affect their emotional, social and academic development (Bender, 2008). Limited positive communication between students with LD and their peers not only reduces their social learning opportunities but also may lead to further exclusion in the future and negative psychological effects (Valås, 1999). In a meta-analysis, Parker and Asher (1987) argue that there is a considerable link among peer acceptance, school dropout, criminality, and psychopathology. In another research, Pijl and Frostad (2010) conclude that students with low acceptance by their peers run the risk of low self-concept.

According to Wiener and Tardif (2004), students with LD have less reciprocal friends, lower friendship quality, lower social acceptance, and lower academic self-concept than their peers have. Students with LD were also found to exhibit social skill deficits, high levels of loneliness, depression and problem behaviours. As Nabuzoka and Smith (1993) found out, students with LD are rejected and exposed to bullying, as they are shy, less popular, and fewer nominated as a leader, compared to typically developing peers. According to Wiener and Schneider (2002), compared to non-LD students, LD ones make less reciprocal friendships, make friends with those who have more problem behaviours, select younger ones as friends, and do not keep friendships for a long time. Students with LD have a lower quality of friendship, experience more conflicts and have more difficulty in solving problems related to friendship. Another remarkable point about the social difficulties of students with LD is that those problems continue in later ages as well (Bender, 2008). For instance, Estell et al. (2008) concluded that students with LD have lower social standing among their classmates from Grade 3 to 6. In the mentioned research, compared to typically developing peers, students with LD scored lower in terms of being nominated as one's best friend, had lower peer popularity, and scored lower in terms of being socially preferred. Vaughn, Elbaum and Schumm (1996) found that average and high achieving elementary students were more liked than those with LD, and the latter's social functioning remained quite steady, though the number of their reciprocal friendships increased during an education year (from fall to spring). A similar one-year research on children from Grade 2 to 6 shows that students with LD may face social rejection to a greater extent, even though they establish reciprocal friendships (Tur-Kaspa, Margalit, & Most, 1999).

In addition to the above-mentioned studies, it is possible to find a series of research results indicating that students with LD are lonely as they are less accepted by their peers (Conderman, 1995; Frederickson & Furnham, 2004; Kuhne & Wiener, 2000; Lorgier et al., 2015; Mand, 2007; Margalit, 1991; Margalit, Tur-Kaspa, & Most, 1999; Nabuzoka & Smith, 1993; Pavri & Monda-Amaya, 2000; Schmidt, Prah, & Čagran, 2014; Schwab, 2019; Yu, Zhang, & Yan, 2005). When those research results are assessed as a whole, it can be said that there are significant difficulties in social development of students with LD. In line with the related studies, it is very crucial to answer following questions: "Why these students are exposed to social rejection?", "What can be done to improve the social acceptance of students with LD?". Vaughn, Zaragoza, Hogan and Walker (1993) and Putnam, Markovchick, Johnson and Johnson (1996) analysed peer rejection of students with LD from two

points of view. The first point is low academic achievement, and the other one is social skill deficits of students with LD. The present study analyses the problem from the mentioned points of view.

Academic Skill Deficits

Students with LD have problems in early literacy skills in the preschool period (Schneider, Roth, & Ennemoser, 2000). After starting school, they have difficulty in academic skills, e.g. reading (80%), writing and mathematics (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001). Academic failure may be considered as characteristic of students with LD. Most of these students are identified by academic failure after starting school. According to Peleg (2009), students with LD reported higher levels of test anxiety and lower levels of self-esteem than their non-disabled peers did. Students' with LD academic performance was possibly impaired by their intense distress. Academic failure can lead to lower motivation, higher anxiety and introversion among students with LD. Moreover, those academic difficulties can result in gradual estrangement from school and peers and can eventually lead to school dropout (Sutherland & MacMillan, 2001). These factors make it difficult for students with LD to be accepted by their peers. It is attested that academic achievement enhances social acceptance (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003). Supporting students with LD academically can therefore help improve their social acceptance.

Social Skill Deficits

Social skills comprise abilities to start a conversation, to ask a question, to apologise, to make decisions etc., which are used in school and everyday life (Kavale & Mostert, 2004). Having and using these skills affect one's social development and relations in a positive way. Social skill deficits are seen as characteristic of students with LD (Forness & Kavale, 1996). According to the Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities (ICLD, 1987), social skill deficit is a feature distinguishing many students with LD from students with other learning problems. In a meta-analysis, Nowicki (2003) found that students with LD have lower peer acceptance and poor social skills. According to Wiener and Sunohara (1998), mothers of students with LD claimed that their children had problems in reading social clues; therefore, they frequently and unintentionally distanced themselves from their friends, and their problems of impulse control led to conflicts. Al-Yagon (2012) found that adolescents with LD had more socio-emotional problems, had difficulties in making bilateral relations, had a variety of behavioural problems, and had more troubles in their relations with parents and teachers than typically developing peers had.

In a longitudinal study (from kindergarten through Grade 3) by Vaughn et al. (1993), it was found that students with LD exhibited lower social skills and higher levels of behaviour problems than their peers with average and high achievement did, and these behaviour problems continued in later years. The researchers determined a relationship between social skills and academic achievement. They observed that students' with LD behaviour problems stem from attention deficit, anxiety, and introversion. Moreover, students' with LD levels of peer acceptance were significantly lower than those of students with average and high achievement. Estell et al. (2008) likewise found that students with LD lag behind their typically developing peers in terms of acquiring social skills and have difficulty in meeting their deficits in social skills. As it is understood, social skills constitute another crucial factor to improve the social acceptance of students with LD.

Present Study

In their meta-analysis, Forness and Kavale (1996) demonstrated the positive effects of social skills training on students with LD. However, they observed that these effects remain limited when compared to those on typically developing students, as also evidenced by Kavale and Mostert (2004). Forness and Kavale (1996) addressed the importance of academic support in students' with LD self-esteem and peer acceptance. They emphasized the need for social skills training considering that the deficits thereof cause difficulties for students with LD in learning and academic environments, as well

as in relation to their self-concept. These results impel researchers to embark on a quest to find different ways to improve social acceptance of students with LD. Between academic improvement and social skills training, researchers thus need a coordination much closer than observed in studies carried out up to now. Techniques of social skills training ought to comply with those of academic training (Forness & Kavale, 1996; Kavale & Mostert, 2004). Accordingly, we think, it is crucial to provide academic support in company with social skills training in order to enhance the social acceptance of students with LD. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to investigate the effects of co-providing a student with LD with social skills training and academic support on social acceptance by his peers. We sought answers for the following research problem:

- What is the effect of providing a student with LD with social skills training along with academic support on social acceptance by his peers?

METHOD

Research Design

A one-group pretest-posttest design was used. The research is a special case study in the same time, as a student was examined in detail via different data collection sources related to his social acceptance.

Participants

The research was carried out with 15 typically developing students attending a high school in a south-eastern city of Turkey and a student diagnosed with LD. Although the classroom comprised 20 students in total, the data was collected from 16 students, since two students did not participate in the first implementation, and another two did not participate in the second implementation. Seven of the participants are female, and nine are male. The ages of the typically developing students range from 15 to 16. Ali, who is the one diagnosed with learning disabilities, is a 16-year-old male student. His mother and father have bachelor's degree. He did not have any problem in the pre- and post-natal period. His speech development was delayed, however. His family received support from language and speech experts for Ali who did not acquire speaking skills until he was 3-4 years. Ali's speech-related problems continued until he started school. His family also reported that Ali had difficulty in activities requiring eye-hand coordination.

According to the other data obtained from the interview, LD symptoms were not observed in Ali's family. His parents reported that Ali's major problems emerged after he began school, though he had difficulties in finding playmates in the pre-school period. His introversion and the problems he had in reading and writing were followed by an examination process to establish a diagnosis. Nevertheless, Ali was not diagnosed with any disorder following the initial pedagogical and medical examinations. Eventually he was diagnosed with LD in the last examination in 2016. The examination report particularly mentions of the significant difficulties Ali had in academic and social skills. The tests indicated his IQ score (WISC IV) as 90 points. Ali was included in this research, because (1) he and his parents were voluntary to participate, and (2) he was socially isolated from his peer classmates as understood from the interviews with his family and the school counselling service.

Data Collection

The sociometric peer nomination technique was used to determine Ali's social position in his classroom and the change of that position. Peer nomination is the most commonly used sociometric technique to reveal the social position (popular or rejected) of students with LD (Frederickson & Furnham, 1998; Margalit & Al-Yagon, 2002). This technique requires students to sort out of their classmates complying with certain sociometric criteria (e.g., name three classmates you like to play with" or "name three classmates you like to work together with) (Avramidis, Strogilos, Aroni &

Kantaraki, 2017). The question in this research is as follows: *Name three classmates with whom you like to be always together within the classroom.*

We also conducted an interview with the student with LD and his family. The questions on the family interview form are as follows: (1) *Have you observed any academic and social changes in your child following the implemented programme? How?* (2) *Have you observed any changes in Ali's communication with you during this process? How?* The questions on the student interview form are as follows: (1) *Have you benefitted from this process in academic and social terms? How?* (2) *Have you enjoyed this training programme? How?* While preparing these interview questions, the opinions of a special education specialist and a measurement and evaluation specialist were taken. The special education specialist explained his views on the suitability of the questions for the purpose of the research. In addition, the support was obtained in consultation with a language specialist about whether the questions were understandable or not. The validity of the interview questions was tried to be ensured by taking all these measures. The interviews lasted for averagely 10-15 minutes. The data was recorded via a dictation machine and by taking notes at times during the interviews.

Implementation

A meeting was held with Ali and his parents prior to the implementation, in addition to obtaining information about Ali from the school counsellor. We exchanged views on the content, weekly frequency, and duration of the intervention programme in question. All these meetings were held at different times, with the researcher and Ali, with the researcher and Ali's parents, and with all of them being together. During this process, Ali was seen to have difficulty in expressing himself (self-disclosure) and reading comprehension in academic terms. He had some difficulties in activities requiring motor skills and eye-hand coordination as well. On the other hand, it was noted that Ali played and enjoyed table tennis, albeit being not good at it. The intervention programme was rearranged accordingly. The final form of the programme was sent to two specialists with PhDs in special education, and it was finalised in accordance with their assessments. Consequently, the programme was structured on three dimensions: (1) developing reading comprehension skills (2), developing social (self-disclosure) skills, (3) supporting psychomotor (tennis) skills. In each implementation day, a cognitive strategy training was provided to improve Ali's reading comprehension skills during the first 40-minute session, followed by a social skill training to enable him to express himself in the second 40-minute session. Table tennis was played in the last 40-minute session in order to help him develop social and psychomotor skills. The sessions were planned to take place two days in a week and to last for 12 weeks (through March-April-May).

The second phase involved the implementation of peer nomination pre-test within Ali's classroom to see the development of his social acceptance level. Voluntary classmates of Ali were included in the research after permission was received from the school administration. The interviews with the participants lasted for averagely 10-15 minutes. The data was recorded through the notes taken by the students. The classroom data was collected by the school counsellor, considering that the researcher's presence in the classroom might affect Ali negatively. The pre-test was followed by the intervention programme for Ali. The conduct of that programme was assisted by two 4th grade students receiving education in the department of Psychological Counselling and Guidance in the university where the researcher works. These university students were selected considering that (1) they have successfully completed the courses of social skill training, learning disabilities, and group counselling, and (2) they could easily communicate and carry out activities with Ali as their ages were closer to his. The intervention programme was implemented after the researcher provided the assistant students with a weeklong (eight sessions) briefing about the conduct of the programme. The sessions of reading comprehension and social skill training were conducted at the drama hall of the university where the researcher works, while the table tennis practice was performed at the playing field within the same campus.

Sample Practice

Session: Reading Comprehension

Duration: 40 minutes

Reading comprehension strategies (activating prior learning and making a guess before reading; re-reading in cases of failure to understand and underlining important parts during reading; summarising and identifying the main theme after reading) were practically demonstrated on the text with the counsellor.

- In this session, Ali was asked to apply the strategic steps before, during and after reading on a given text.
- At this phase, counselling was made as long as the participant needed when applying the strategies.
- In line with the requirements, the participant was provided with clues, feedback, and corrections.

Session: Social Skills

Duration: 40 minutes

A drama play was performed with roles changing, in order for Ali to express himself and discuss his problems comfortably. When he was asked to represent the essential problems with his family, he played a role in which his father said that Ali played with phone too much.

- First, one of the students played Ali's father, while Ali played himself.
- Second, Ali played the role of his father, while the student took on the role of Ali.
- Third, Ali played one of his friends, while two of the students played Ali and his father.

In this way, it was aimed

- * to reveal Ali's lucid feelings and thoughts about the hassles he encountered at home.
- * to assess his thoughts on how his father and friends understand him, and to understand their feelings of closeness to Ali
- * to reveal how they view themselves (how his father and friend get along with Ali in the eyes of Ali)
- * to enable Ali to disclose himself, sharing his feelings and thoughts better through drama

Session: Table Tennis

Duration: 40 minutes

- Table tennis was played between Ali and the two assistant students.
- As table tennis is played between two people, Ali was made to feel like winner, defeated, and spectator who favours one of the players.
- Thus he was made to express his feelings by congratulating the winner and rejoicing or getting sad when his favourite player won or lost.
- He was enabled to develop his eye-hand coordination and to control his motor skills via table tennis.
- As he was skilled at table tennis to a certain extent, he was made to taste the feeling of achievement in an easier way.

The researcher and the assistant students met each week to assess the intervention sessions. A peer nomination post-test was applied in Ali's classroom after the end of the 12-week intervention process. A meeting was also held with Ali and his family after the programme.

Data Analysis

The peer nomination employed to ascertain Ali's social acceptance levels among his classroom peers both in the beginning and the end of the intervention programme was analysed by constructing a sociogram, whereas the interviews with Ali and his family were analysed descriptively.

FINDINGS

This section includes the results related to the social acceptance levels of the student with LD among his classmates before and after the intervention programme implemented in accordance with

the aim of this research. The opinions of Ali and his family about the efficiency of the programme were presented as well.

The results obtained from the peer nomination test carried out in the classroom of the student with LD prior to the intervention are shown in Figure 1.

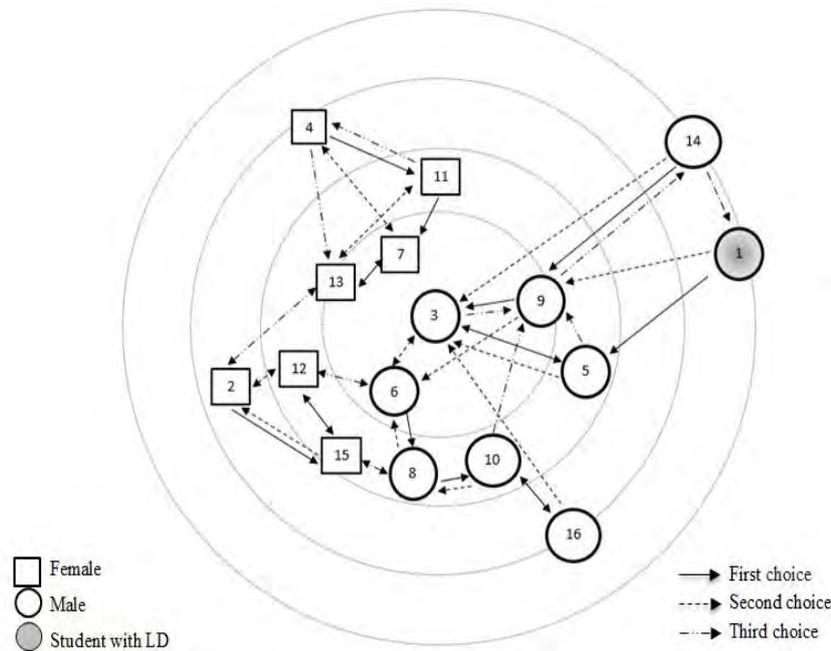


Figure 1. Pre-intervention sociogram of the classroom

Figure 1 shows that the students 3, 6 and 9 were the most nominated ones with the highest level of social acceptance among their classmates. Student with LD Ali and the student 14 were the least nominated ones, on the other hand. It is understood that these two students were excluded from the student groups within their classroom when compared to their typically developing peers. It can be said that both students have difficulties in terms of social acceptance in their classroom. While the student 14 had a reciprocal friendship (with the student 9), none of the classmates Ali chose named him as friend. Ali was chosen only by the student 14 who also remained outside the groupings. It is of note that Ali was the third choice of the student 14. Therefore, it is clear that his classmates did not prefer Ali as their friend before the intervention. While the participants were asked to name three students within the scope of the programme, Ali named just two of his classmates, not writing down a third one. It can be concluded that Ali was lonely in his classroom and had difficulty in making reciprocal friendships. Besides, the first choices of the female students were often the female ones, and those of the male students were the male ones. It is another finding of the research that Ali was not chosen by any of his female classmates.

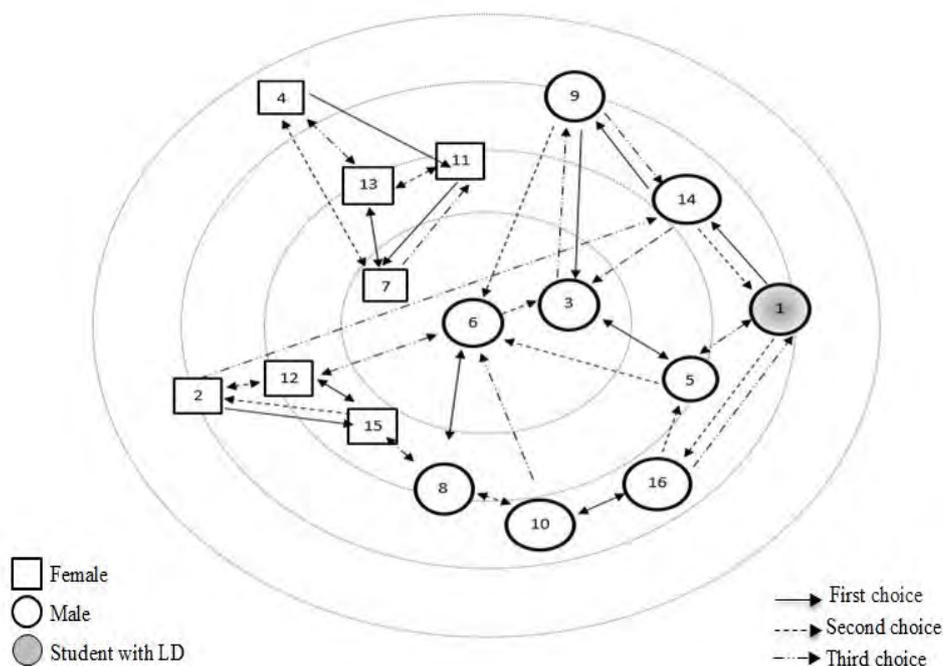


Figure 2. Post-intervention sociogram of the classroom

The post-intervention data presented in Figure 2 indicate that the students 3 and 6 were the most nominated ones just as they were before the intervention. On the other hand, student with LD Ali was preferred by three classmates this time, which is indicative of a positive development regarding Ali's social acceptance among his classmates. The most outstanding result is that Ali's friendships became reciprocal in tandem with the intervention programme. The students 5 and 16 nominated Ali as their friend, albeit as the third choice, and the student 14 nominated Ali as friend as the second choice. In this context, it can be inferred that Ali made reciprocal friends. The fact that Ali was not the first choice of any of his classmates even after the intervention is a remarkable data. As it was the case before the intervention, the first choices of the female students were the female ones, and those of the male students were the male ones, which can be interpreted as a sign of the continuing social distance between the female and male students within the classroom. In conclusion, social acceptance of the student with LD increased and he acquired reciprocal friendships in line with the conducted intervention programme.

Effects of the Intervention Process on the Student

The student with LD and his family were asked to give insight into the effects of the intervention process on him. This section includes an analysis of the in-depth interviews with the student with LD and his parents, who were included in the process.

Parent Opinions

It was inferred from the interview with Ali's parent that the implemented programme was effective for their child to develop social, academic and motivation skills.

The mother expressed her opinions as follows:

We observed that Ali developed mainly in the social field. We noticed that he made a few friends for the first time following a particular phase of this training. We saw for the first time

such behaviours as meeting with his friends somewhere and going with them to cinema. He is talking to these friends on the phone as well. Previously he lacked self-confidence but I can say that his self-confidence has increased after this process.

I notice that recently he has been more responsive in terms of doing his homework. Previously he did not care much about whether or not he had any homework. I can say that he has developed in this sense. Previously we had to compel him to sit at the table to study but now he is concerned on his own responsibility, saying "I have to do my homework", "I have to solve test questions", etc.

The father explained the benefits of the programme as follows:

I observe that this process has significantly contributed to my son. It has effects especially on his socialisation. He has made more friends. I can say that his level of understanding has also developed slightly. I notice the development of this skill when I study with and listen to him. More importantly, I witness that he makes jokes when talking to his friends on the phone or face to face, a feature that was inexistent in the past.

There has been a positive change in his communication with us. He was already positive and moderate previously. I can say that he has reached a good point in expressing himself. I think these kinds of programmes are important especially for students with difficulties. In both private and state schools, there are regulations mostly aiming at normal and supernormal students. There is not much regulation for such abnormal children. Therefore, I think, these kinds of programmes are important for the social development of such children.

In the eyes of his parents, the implemented programme has contributed to Ali's development of social skills in particular and has been effective in terms of making and keeping friendships. They also observed enhancement in Ali's self-confidence.

Student Opinions

During the interview, the student with LD emphasized that the implemented programme was effective for him to develop social, emotional, and communicative skills. He stated that the process contributed to him in terms of sharing something interpersonally, expressing himself better, and developing friendship skills.

The student with LD expressed his thoughts as follows:

I can say that it has been useful for my interpersonal communication. I feel better when communicating with my friends, family, and people around me. I could not express myself comfortably before this programme. I began to express better after the programme. Now I can better manifest my emotions.

I can say that it has been partly useful for my courses. I can say that it has reflected much on my social relations.

Joining in this training was enjoyable. I am happy to join in that. They say that I have a different and nice voice. Maybe I can make radio programme in the future.

Ali reported that he found the intervention programme enjoyable and was pleased to have participated in it. He stated that the programme contributed significantly to disclosure of his feelings and thoughts. He made and maintained friends in this way. It is possible to conclude that the programme in question was effective seeing what Ali's friends, parents, and Ali himself put forth.

DISCUSSION

This research was carried out to investigate the effects of co-providing a student with LD with social skills training and academic support on social acceptance by his peers. First, it was detected that the student with LD had a lower level of social acceptance compared to his peers before the intervention. This result is in agreement with the results of other studies showing that students with LD have lower levels of social acceptance (Firat & Koyuncu, 2019; Frederickson & Furnham, 2004; Lorger et al., 2015; Schmidt et al., 2014; Yu et al., 2005). Similarly, as a meta-analysis by Nowicki (2003) indicates, students with LD have higher social risks and lower social statuses compared to students with average and high academic achievement. The fact that students with LD have difficulties in academic fields like reading, writing, and mathematics (Gersten et al., 2001), social skill deficits (Kavale & Forness, 1996) and behavioural problems (Sze, 2010) may prevent their acceptance by peers. It was seen that implemented intervention programme increased Ali's social acceptance among his peers. This result indicates that supporting students with LD in terms of academic and social skills can be influential in increasing their levels of peer social acceptance.

Second, it can be said that the multi-way structure of the intervention programme was effective in reaching successful results in this research. The areas in which the participant has difficulties and the areas in which he can improve were detected at the onset of the research. Accordingly he was provided with cognitive strategy training to develop comprehension skills, and self-disclosure training to develop his social skills. He was included in table tennis to develop psychomotor, eye-hand coordination, and attention skills. In their meta-analyses, Forness and Kavale (1996) and Kavale and Mostert (2004) found that interventions of social skill training for students with LD had limited effects. Given that individuals' social development is a multi-dimensional and integral process, supporting students with LD only in a particular area is not expected to be sufficient for their social development. For instance, the fact that the participant has had problems in eye-hand coordination since his infancy may have prevented him from joining in plays that are the basic social activities in childhood. The deficiency in academic skills may also have negatively affected his participation in academic activities in the classroom. These are the very factors that lead to social exclusion of students with LD. Families and researchers need to evaluate students with LD in detail, to reveal their strengths and weaknesses, and to contribute to the development of those weaknesses in an integrated way, which is important for social development of students with LD.

Third, none (except one) of his classmates nominated Ali as his/her close friend before the intervention. "My father says I am playing with mobile phone too much, but none of my friends sends text messages to me, so I am not much interested in mobile phone", Ali said in a pre-intervention session. Hence, the participant can be said to have difficulties in establishing cordial and reciprocal relations with his classmates. Previous studies also argue that students with LD have troubles in making reciprocal, qualified, and long-term friendships (Vaughn et al., 1996; Wiener & Schneider, 2002; Wiener & Tardif, 2004). This leads students with LD to loneliness. It is emphasized in the relevant literature that students with LD are lonelier than their peers are (Pavri & Luftig, 2001; Valås, 1999). Having compared students with LD and typically developing ones, for example, Valås (1999) found that the former were less accepted by their peers, had lower self-concept and felt lonelier. It can be said that social and academic skill deficits cause students with LD to be lonely and distanced from social interaction. Although social skills are needed to initiate social interaction, the latter is needed to develop social skills as well. LD students' lack of interaction with their peers can lead to underdeveloped social skills, which in turn can eventuate in a vicious cycle for their social development. That is to say, social and academic skill deficits can cause lower peer acceptance; lower peer acceptance can cause loneliness; loneliness can cause less social interaction; less social interaction can cause underdeveloped social and academic skills.

Fourth, as understood from the paper hitherto, students with LD need more familial support than their typically developing peers do. Being supported by their parents in a favourable domestic environment is crucial for the socio-emotional development of students with LD (Idan & Margalit, 2014). Learning disability causes developmental retardation in one or multiple areas, mainly in

information processing and motivation, as well as academic and social skills. Any retardation in these areas might negatively affect the interaction of students with LD with their families. As Schmidt et al. (2014) found, students with LD have more difficulty in communication with their family members than the non-disabled have. However, the fact that families are confused about what to do and where to consult to overcome those difficulties is another problem situation. This can sometimes lead to delay in diagnosis and intervention, as it was the case with the participant in this research. Delays in intervention can further the negativity in child-family communication. It is of importance, therefore, to inform families about learning disability, as they are expected to have a pioneering role in academic and social development of students with LD.

Finally, during the interview with him, Ali expressed that he found the intervention programme useful and enjoyed having participated in it. In this regard, it can be said that the programme in question has a high social validity. During the interviews with them, his parents reported that the programme enhanced Ali's motivation and self-confidence. He was also reported to behave more responsibly regarding his homework. It can be concluded that the intervention programme contributed to the development of self-regulation skills, which is of prime importance for students with LD.

Limitations and Implications

This research has several limitations, despite the fact that it puts forth significant findings about social acceptance of students with LD. First, the intervention programme to increase social acceptance was applied on just one student, which limits the generalisation of the findings. Further effects can be observed by implementing an intervention programme on larger groups. Second, regarding the social acceptance within the classroom, the participant was not nominated by any of his classmates as their first choice. The change of peer acceptance was handled in a four-month period. Four months could not be enough to evoke a change in student perceptions. Hence, longer periods of interventions and longer periods of evaluations to see the effects of those interventions are fundamental. Finally, the efficiency of the intervention programme was analysed over the participant's level of social acceptance in his classroom and the interviews with his parents. To what extent the participant developed in reading comprehension and social skills was not assessed in a way specific to the participant.

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