



Investigation of the Emotional Intelligence Levels of University Students Working Voluntarily in Special Olympics

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate of the emotional intelligence levels of university students working voluntarily in Special Olympics. The research was designed with a descriptive survey model, one of the quantitative research methods. A total of 256 university students participated in the study. 135 students voluntarily worked in Special Olympic. 121 students didn't serve in Special Olympic. The emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Chan (2004) and used as Turkish by Aslan and Özata (2008) was employed as a data collection tool in the study. It was determined that the research data showed normal distribution. Then, it was decided that the parametric test was used. Independent samples T-test was preferred to compare the emotional intelligence levels of working voluntarily and non-working students in Special Olympics. Likewise, a t-test was used to investigate the emotional intelligence of volunteers according to gender. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the scores of working voluntarily students were statistically higher in the emotional appraisal, positive regulation, empathic sensitivity, positive utilization sub-dimensions and general emotional intelligence scores than the non-working students in the organization. But, according to the gender variable, there was no statistically significant difference between the participants in both sub-dimensions and the whole scale. According to these results, it can be said that emotional intelligence levels of individuals who serve voluntarily in organizations for disabled people, like Special Olympics, were higher. Moreover, it can be deduced that there is no difference according to gender in the emotional intelligence levels of the participants working voluntarily in Special Olympics.

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Keywords:

Emotional Intelligence, Special Olympics, Volunteers

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence is defined as a subset of social intelligence that includes the ability to observe one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to distinguish between them, and to use this information to direct someone else's thoughts and actions (Salovey, Brackett and Mayer, 2004). In other definition, emotional intelligence is expressed as the potential to be aware of and use own emotions in communication with oneself and others, also manage and motivate oneself and others by understanding emotions (Wraham, 2009).

As can be understood from the definition of emotional intelligence, this concept is closely related to the concepts of empathy and communication. In addition, individuals with high emotional intelligence are expected to have empathy (Yeniçeri et al., 2015) and communication skills (Lee and Gu, 2013).

Having empathy and communication skills is an important characteristic of a person. It can be accepted as some of the prerequisites to get a healthy social relationship. But empathy and communication with some

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individuals may be more difficult than usual. Considering the life of people with disabilities, this can be considered normal. In particular, it may be necessary for a great effort to communicate with people with intellectual disabilities. However, it is known that sport plays an important role in preventing such difficulties and contributes to the development of these individuals (Çevik and Kabasakal, 2013; İlhan, 2008; İlhan, 2009; Grandisson, Tétrault and Freeman, 2012; Güngör, Yılmaz and İlhan, 2019).

One of the largest non-governmental organizations in the world, the Special Olympics serves for this purpose. The Special Olympics aims to huddle other people together and individuals with special educational needs, to provide regular training and competition opportunities in various sports activities via sports, to improve their physical condition, motor skills and abilities, to show courage, to enjoy the happiness of their success, to strengthen their relations with the society through various activities other than sports and to provide their participation in social life. Many people, institutions and organizations also contribute to this process ("Special Olympics Turkey", 2019).

In the games, individuals who can communicate with mentally disabled individuals by guiding them and showing empathy, tolerance, and patience against their behaviour serve voluntarily. These people are called "volunteers". Volunteers are seen as one of the key stakeholders of the Special Olympics. It is thought that it is important to have some social skills to working as a volunteer in the games. In this respect, the aim of this study was to investigate of the emotional intelligence levels of university students working voluntarily in Special Olympics TURKEY.

Hypotheses

H₀: There is no difference between the emotional intelligence levels of male and female participants working in the Special Olympics.

H₁: There is a difference between the emotional intelligence levels of the participants working in the Special Olympics and participants not working.

2. Method

In this section, information was given about the research model, participants, data collection tool and data analysis.

2.1. Research Model

The survey model was used in this research. The survey model is a research model that aims to describe a situation that exists in the past or present (Karasar, 2009).

2.2. Participants

The participants of the study are 135 Gazi University students working voluntarily at the Special Olympics Central Anatolia Region Games and 121 students not working in the games. A total of 256 university students participated in the study. The participants of the study were selected by convenience sampling method. In the convenience sampling method, the researcher selects the sample group by starting from the most accessible responders until reached required number, or works on samples or situations which are the most accessible and provide maximum saving (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013). Participants answered the emotional intelligence scale on a volunteer basis.

2.3. Data Collection Tool

In the study, Emotional Intelligence Scale, which was originally developed by Schutte as a 33-item version and then used a 12-item version by Chan (2004) and adapted to Turkish by Aslan and Özata (2008) was used as a data collection tool. The Emotional Intelligence Scale has four sub-dimensions. These sub-dimensions are emotional appraisal, positive regulation, empathic sensitivity, and positive utilization. There are three items in each sub-dimension. The scale is a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). In the study of Aslan and Özata (2008), reliability values (Cronbach Alpha) were calculated as .87, .83, .88 and

.85, respectively. For the present study, Cronbach alpha was calculated for sub-dimensions as .82, .83, .86, and .80 respectively. In addition, Cronbach alpha was calculated for the whole scale as .87.

2.4. Data Analysis

Normality distribution was analyzed by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. It was found that the significance value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was .007. For this reason, Skewness and Kurtosis values were examined and it was determined that these values were between -1.5 and +1.5. It states that the distribution of data was normal (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Therefore, independent samples t-test was preferred in a paired comparison.

3. Results

In this section, the findings obtained from the analysis of the research data are presented in the tables and interpreted. Findings showing the emotional intelligence scores of the participants working voluntarily in the Special Olympics and the participants not working in the games are given in Table 1, and the findings showing the emotional intelligence scores of the participants working voluntarily in the games according to gender were given in Table 2.

Table 1. Participants' emotional intelligence scale scores

Variables	University Students	N	\bar{X}	SD	t	p
Emotional appraisal	Working Voluntarily	135	12,80	1,61	4,91	,001*
	Non-working	121	11,64	2,13		
Empathic sensitivity	Working Voluntarily	135	12,29	1,86	3,95	,001
	Non-working	121	11,36	1,90		
Positive regulation	Working Voluntarily	135	13,10	1,51	6,28	,001*
	Non-working	121	11,58	2,30		
Positive utilization	Working Voluntarily	135	12,99	1,45	4,88	,001*
	Non-working	121	12,04	1,63		
Emotional Intelligence Scale	Working Voluntarily	135	51,19	5,27	6,27	,001*
	Non-working	121	46,64	6,32		

*p<0,05; \bar{X} : Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

When table 1 was examined, in the sub-dimension of emotional appraisal, it was seen that the mean score of the working participants was 12,80±1,61, the mean score of the non-working participants was 11,64±2,13. In the sub-dimension of empathic sensitivity, it was understood that the mean score of the working participants was 12,29±1,86 and the mean score of the non-working participants was 11,36±1,90. In the positive regulation sub-dimension, it was drawn attention that the mean score of the working participants was 13,10±1,51 and the mean score of non-working participants was 11,58±2,30. In the sub-dimension of positive utilization, it was seen that the mean score of the working participants was 12,99±1,45 and the mean score of the non-working participants was 12,04±1,63. In general emotional intelligence score, it was understood that the mean score of the working participants was 51,19±5,27 and the mean score of the non-working participants was 46,64±6,32. It was seen that the participants working voluntarily in the Special Olympics had a statistically significant higher score than the non-working participants in the scores obtained from both the sub-dimensions and the whole scale. According to these findings, it can be said that university students working voluntarily in Special Olympics have higher emotional intelligence level than non-working university students.

Table 2. Emotional intelligence scores of participants working voluntarily in the Special Olympics according to gender

Variables	Working Voluntarily	N	\bar{X}	SD	t	p
Emotional appraisal	Female	88	12,86	1,63	,232	,534
	Male	47	12,68	1,60		
Empathic sensitivity	Female	88	12,37	1,83	,046	,504
	Male	47	12,14	1,93		
Positive regulation	Female	88	13,14	1,60	,890	,645
	Male	47	13,02	1,32		
Positive utilization	Female	88	13,01	1,58	2,492	,838
	Male	47	12,95	1,17		
Emotional Intelligence Scale	Female	88	51,39	5,65	,843	,538
	Male	47	50,80	4,49		

\bar{X} : Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

When table 2 was examined, in the emotional appraisal sub-dimension, it was understood that the mean score of females working voluntarily in the Special Olympics was $12,86 \pm 1,63$ and the mean score of males working voluntarily in the Special Olympics was $12,68 \pm 1,60$. In the empathic sensitivity sub-dimension, it was seen that the mean score of females working voluntarily in the Special Olympics was $12,37 \pm 1,83$ and the mean score of the males working voluntarily was $12,14 \pm 1,93$. In the sub-dimension of positive regulation, it was drawn attention that the mean score of females working voluntarily in Special Olympics was $13,14 \pm 1,60$ and the mean score of the males working voluntarily was $13,02 \pm 1,32$. In the positive utilization sub-dimension, it was understood that the mean score of the females working voluntarily in Special Olympics was $13,01 \pm 1,58$ and the mean score of the males working voluntarily was $12,95 \pm 1,17$. It was seen that according to the gender variable, there was no statistically significant difference between the participants in both sub-dimensions and the whole scale. According to these findings, it can be deduced that there is no difference in the emotional intelligence levels of the participants working voluntarily in the Special Olympics by gender.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

As a result of the study, it was determined that the emotional intelligence levels of the university students working voluntarily in the Special Olympics were higher than the students not working in the games. In their research, Gerits et al. (2005) examined the emotional intelligence of nurses who care for people with severe behavioral problems and stated that female nurses have high emotional intelligence. In addition, Gerits, Derksen, and Verbruggen (2004) stated that nurses working with extremely aggressive individuals with mental retardation have emotional intelligence levels better than average. In this respect, it is thought that the results of other studies support the current research results. It is indicated in the literature that emotional intelligence level of people who spend time with people with intellectual disabilities and care for them should be high, if that is not high, they should be educated so that they might have higher emotional intelligence level. Zijlmans et al. (2011) developed an educational program aiming to develop emotional intelligence and applied this program to staff working with mentally disabled individuals and determined that the emotional intelligence of the experimental group changed significantly compared to the control group.

According to another result of the study, no difference was found according to gender between the emotional intelligence levels of the participants working voluntarily in the Special Olympics. When the researches in the literature were examined, it was seen that in the research of Mandell and Pherwani (2003), female participants have higher emotional intelligence score than male participants. In the research of Katyal and Awasthi (2005), have stated that females have higher emotional intelligence than males. Similarly, in the research of Extremera, Fernández-Berrocal, and Salovey (2006), have found that females had higher emotional intelligence than males. Likewise, it was found that females had higher emotional intelligence than males in the research of Cabello et al. (2016). In the research of Ahmad, Bangash, and Khan (2009), have reported that male participants had higher emotional intelligence scores compared to female participants. The current research results differ from other research results. This may be due to cultural differences in the countries where the researches were conducted.

As a result of this study, it was concluded that the emotional intelligence levels of the university students working voluntarily in the Special Olympics were higher than the students not working in the games and in addition, it was found that there was no difference between students working voluntarily in the Special Olympics by gender. It is thought that emotional intelligence is an important skill for an individual. For this reason, it is suggested that people should be encouraged to work in organizations such as Special Olympics. Moreover, it is thought that the study will contribute to the literature. But this study was limited with variables of working in the Special Olympics and their gender as a demographic variable. More comprehensive researches can be conducted with more variables.

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