

## Effectiveness of a Local Game Course on Self-esteem of Educable Students with Mental Retardation

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### Abstract

This study attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of a local game course on self-esteem of mentally retarded educable students 8 to 13 years of age in Babol during academic year 2014-2015. In order to conduct a quasi-experimental research, a total of 86 male students at Khateheh Ramesh, a school based in Babol (Iran) were selected as population, among which 24 sample subjects were picked out through a random procedure and then divided into two groups of experimental and control each containing 12 subjects. The Cooper-Smith self-esteem inventory was administered as a pre-test on the two groups. The local game was then performed as an intervention program on the experimental group for 8 weeks, 3 sessions per week (45 minutes). Having completed the intervention course, the Cooper-Smith self-esteem inventory was administered again on the two groups. The data were analyzed through the covariance statistical procedure SPSS 16. The results indicated that implementation of a local game can significantly enhance the self-esteem of educable mentally retarded students. According to the results, it is recommended that a few hours of local-native games be included in sports programs for mentally retarded students.

**Keywords:** Local Game Course, Self-esteem, Educable Students with Mental Retardation

### Introduction

The mentally retarded suffer from numerous educational and social problems, putting the parents under extreme stress [1]. In each generation and era, there are certain people living in the society who are not normal in terms of mental activity. Mental retardation or postnatal growth failure is far from a new issue. Since the very day humans started living, it has been crucial to discuss the individuals incapable for any reasons to coordinate with the society [2]. Mental retardation is a common developmental disorder is a chronic disease throughout life, estimated to have afflicted about 5.7 million American citizens. People with mental retardation tend to remain in isolation rarely participating in group sports and programs, where the consequent immobility and isolation remarkably put them at risk of chronic diseases [3]. In its Statistical Yearbook -2008-2009, the Iranian Exceptional Education Organization reported that a total of 70,736 exceptional children studying in Iran, among which there are 39,039 children diagnosed with educable mental retardation [4]. The tenth definition given by the American Association for Mentally Retarded (AAMR, 2002), states that mental retardation involves incapacity or disability in mental performance, adaptive behavior and academic, social and intellectual skills, which occurs prior to age of 18 years. The mentally retarded individuals face numerous social and emotional issues facing. Difference from others along is enough for them to be treated differently in social situations. Being labeled as idiot by a group of children would certainly damage their self-esteem. In fact, studies have shown that sense of self-esteem in mentally retarded children is lower than in normal children [5]. Self-esteem is one of the key factors contributing to the growth and development of human personality. Since the self-esteem level plays a key role in mental health, clinical and social psychologists emphasize the importance of self-esteem [6]. Self-esteem is the value we assigned to ourselves [7]. Maslow regarded self-esteem as a human need, arguing that all members of a society (with the exception of some patients) have achieved a usually stable value where they need to self-respect and respect other people's self-esteem [8]. The need for self-esteem or self-worth and self-respect is among the natural human needs. Inherently, humans are social beings whose

satisfaction with self-respect will bring about a feeling of confidence and self-esteem, ability, capability, merit and competence, thus finding their existence useful, effective and productive [9]. Disability is factor contributing to all areas of self-esteem (social, academic, family, and physical etc.) reducing self-esteem [10]. Mentally retarded children face certain problems for satisfying their natural needs, with which normal children are less common in trouble [2]. Self-esteem is one of the important factors compelling an individual to act effectively and work with great perseverance and assiduity. A person who has low self-esteem is more likely to forget about goals and follow in the footsteps left from others [11]. In a society where people have high self-esteem and self-concept, there will be great resistance against all kinds of stress, psychological pressure, accidents and sudden ordeals. The symptoms of self-esteem include: Commitment and responsibility, ability to communicate healthily, control over thoughts and feelings, correct perception of reality, a sense of usefulness, purpose and self-awareness [12]. Games are and have always been there throughout history. They have been the lifetime companion of infants, children and adolescents [13]. Game is a normal activity, fun, amazing and full of mystery. It is a means of expressing feelings, building relationships, describing experiences, revealing hopes and self-actualization. The problems of children can be resolved through playing a game consistent with the dynamic structure therapy. In fact, game is a practice assisting children to resolve their issues on their own and at the same time reflects the fact that a game is like a natural means for children so as to understand the self and their psychological characteristics to be considered [14]. Games are among the factors significant contributing to the lives of children. Feelings expressed by children arise to a great extent from gaming experiences (both successful and failed). A great portion of children time is essentially dedicated to the so-called world of games. These activities are a useful means to help children identify themselves, their body and motive talents [15]. Playing games in general and specifically in the local circumstances is crucial for children. Many parents believe that such activities merely serve to spend away the child's time for purpose of entertainment, while it can be argued a large part of the child's identity and experience are acquired in games. Children experience different roles in a game, imagining themselves as different characters with specific tasks. Therefore, game is not merely entertainment for children [16]. Yaratani et al (2010) believe that self-esteem develops throughout life, when we are growing up, face failures, successes, how to deal with family members, dealing with teachers, coaches, religious authorities and peers leading to basic formation of self-esteem. Mobility and exercise bring about efficiency and productivity in individuals, thus leading to an increase in self-esteem [17]. Physical inactivity and depression are conducive to low self-esteem, depression and isolation [18]. Research have shown that exercise programs not only bring about mental health, coping with anxiety and depression, but also increase self-concept and self-esteem [19]. In their study, Madadi Zavareh et al. (2007) examined the impact of games on the self-esteem of blind students (6 to 11 years old) at Aba-Basir School in Isfahan. The results showed that games could significantly enhance self-esteem in students [20]. Ashford et al (2006) believe that if a society encourages people to exercise and play, there will be higher self-esteem, physical and mental health [21]. Danger (2003) examined the child-centered group game therapy on children with speech problems, the results of which demonstrated that a child-centered group play therapy could help reduce speech problems in the experimental group to varying degrees [22]. In addition, the results of these method have shown positive relationships in improvement of self-esteem. In Iran, there is a diversity and multiplicity in local-native games. According to psychologists and professionals, the mentally retarded children suffer from self-esteem problems, while sports activities can promote health and increase self-esteem in individuals. This study intended to determine the effect of a local game course on self-esteem of mentally retarded children 8 to 13 years of age in Babol. Hence, the following hypothesis was proposed: A local game course is effective in enhancement of self-esteem in mentally retarded children 8 to 13 years of age. The semi-empirical method and a pre-test, post-test were employed with a experimental group and a control group.

#### **Statistical population and sample**

The statistical population comprises the entire educable mentally retarded male students (85) with chronological age of 8 to 13 years based in *Khatereh Ramesh* School in Babol during the academic year 2014-2015. A total of 24 educable mentally retarded male students were selected through a random sampling procedure to be divided into control and experimental groups. The sampling procedure, therefore, took

place as the subjects available. Since the sampling was not completely random, this was considered as a quasi-experimental design.

**Research instrument**

Cooper Smith Self-Esteem Inventory: Cooper Smith (1988) obtained a self-esteem scale based on a revision of Rogers and Diamond Scale (1954). The Self-esteem Scale contains 58 items, 50 items related to the four sub-scale of public esteem, family, educational, social, and 8 items concern a polygraph, where the grading procedure involves zero and one with the higher score in this test representing a higher level of self-esteem. The correlation between test scores for boys and girls are 0.96 and 0.71, respectively. The reliability of the scale was obtained through test-retest for boys and for girls at 0.90 and 0.92, respectively [23]. The validity of Cooper Smith Self-Esteem Inventory was mentioned by Rattle (1977) to be 0.82. The retest reliability coefficient of the test and its simultaneous reliability were reported to be 0.78 and 0.71, respectively. In another study, Forest (1990) mentioned the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for Self-esteem Scale to be 0.85 [24].

**Methodology**

At the beginning of investigation having completed the preliminary review over several local games [25, 26], a certain number of games were selected for the study. The selected games in this research included dodgeball, haft-sang (literally *seven stones*) and jump-rope. Then, after obtaining permission for attend the schools under Babol Education Department, the selected school was visited to obtain the officials and parents agreement on the research project. The pretest was scored by teachers of each grade assisted by a consultant. A week later, the intervention program was launched, followed by administration of Cooper-Smith as pretest, where the students participated in 24 local game sessions each taking 60 minutes (three days a week). The meetings were held under the school principal, teachers and consultants according to predefined program, during which the control group did not take any courses. At the end, the Cooper-Smith self-esteem test was administered as a post-test was on the two groups.

The hypotheses were evaluated through the covariance analysis so as to determine the effectiveness of the local game on self-esteem of educable mentally retarded students.

**Findings**

The hypothesis was as follows: "A local game course is effective in enhancement of self-esteem in mentally retarded children 8 to 13 years of age."

As can be seen in Table 1, given that parametric tests assume the scores are normally distributed, i.e. the variance must be identical between the two group scores, the Levine test was used. As a result, the variable self-esteem showed a significant level greater than ( $p > 0.05$ ), meeting the equal variance requirement at 95% confidence level, permitting the application of covariance analysis.

Table 1. The Levine test for variance equality assumption at the post-test stage

Variable	Test time	F-Value	First degree of freedom	Second degree of freedom	Significant level (P)
Self-esteem	Pretest	0.531	1	22	0.471
	Post-test				

The data in Table 2 illustrate that a local game at the post-test stage leader to higher self-esteem is educable mentally retarded students ( $P > 0.05$ ). The research hypothesis concerning "A local game enhances self-esteem in educable mentally retarded children" is proved.

Table 2. Report on the post-test covariance analysis

Variable	Source changes	Degree of Freedom	Mean of squares	Coefficient f	Significant (P)	Statistical power
Esteem	Pretest	1	304.735	99.749	0.000	1.000
Self	Group membership	1	77.458	24.830	0.000	0.989

### Discussion and conclusions

This study attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of local games on self-esteem of educable mentally retarded students 7 to 13 years of age. The results of this study showed that local games increased self-esteem in the experimental group, which could be observed during and after the local game sessions. After attending the game session, the parents sent positive feedback about their interactions with children, which seems that the interactions play a role in increased self-esteem and promoted self-confidence in children. The findings are consistent with the those of previous research, although the method and type of intervention program may be different. The findings of this study are consistent with those obtained by Madadi et al. [20], Ashford et al [21], Danger [22] and Aghayeenejad [27]. Generally, the level of self-esteem contributes to how relationships are built with others and mental health. Self-esteem is a vital necessity for every human being and is essential for normal growth and health [28]. In explaining the impact of local games on higher self-esteem among educable mentally retarded children in this study, it can be argued that children playing in groups were experiencing more interaction and developing their ability to express themselves with others. Therefore, self-expression can be one strategy to increase children's self-esteem in the experimental group. Those who have high self-esteem than those who have low self-esteem are better adapted to different situations [29]. High self-esteem can to some extent compensate for certain childhood problems. A child who is feeling good about themselves can better get along with problems. They may face such problems in a way there have never been anything uncomfortable [30]. Game is a means by which the child can figure out how to connect with the outside world and recognize its benefits and restraints. Game is a means by which the child's natural feelings and emotions and fears and doubts and wishes are expressed, which is in turn a means for the child to communicate with the outside world and the way the child learns how to be emotionally calm and make rational decisions, gain confidence and become more emotionally mature. On the other hand, the development of the child's self-understanding and self-concept rely on the skills that a child has achieved during childhood. What the child perceives in themselves is associated with the skills in the outside world and the role assigned to them. Hence, when the children get an opportunity they will express their strengths in a group game and collective expression. At the same time, the children compare themselves and their capability with that of peers, thus viewing themselves more confidently and more proudly than in the past broadening their scope of self-knowledge [31]. Since most children are less able to express their feelings verbally and cognitively, a game can be a natural and objective medium to cope with the world [14]. Finally, it seems that games used in this study helped change the beliefs and mental images of retarded children concerning other people and peers who participated in the games, thus enhancing their self-esteem. This result was obtained based on scientific principles and theories that had already been developed, and logically led to a beneficial outcome. Hence, officials and trainers associated with the mentally retarded children and disabled children are recommended to use the games involved in this research to complete school curriculum, thereby to enhance the self-esteem in people with mental retardation. Moreover, it is suggested that similar research be conducted on other groups of exceptional students such as vision impaired, hearing impaired and physically disabled.

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