

“STAR TRACK” PROJECT: ATTRACTING SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS TO ENGAGE IN SPORTS ACTIVITIES AND IMPROVING THE INTERPERSONAL SKILLS THROUGH SPORTS ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

The “Star Track” Project action research is aimed to attract Special Needs Students (SNS) to be involved in sports activities and improved their interpersonal skills by engaging in sports activities actively. This study was carried out due to the fact several SNSs in SMK Kampong Soeharto, have little interest in participating in sports activities and there are SNS who are still weak in their interpersonal skills. The main objective of the study was to identify the main reason of SNS's non -involvement in sports activities and why it is difficult for them to master the interpersonal skills. Therefore, "Star Track" Project is implemented to address the issues. A total of 5 special needs student with learning difficulties, 2 boys and 3 girls have been identified, to involved in this research. The method used to identify the problems was initial observation and then followed by questionnaires and interviews to collect data. Through the questionnaire analysis data findings out that the main factors of SNS are not interested in sports activities is less exposure to the sport environment. Second factor is less encouragement from the parents and the next factor is the SNS consider there are not talented in sport. The results of the interview session also found that poor interpersonal skills are due to communication problems, inflexibility to adapt and lack of self -confidence. Through the analysis, the Star Track Project was carried out to solve the problem. Based on the analysis of data from the implementation of actions, has shown a positive change in students' interest in sports activities. And analysis of behavioral monitoring instruments showed SNS in the Star Trek Project had successfully improved their interpersonal skills. Hopefully, the "Star Track" Project can help further increase SNS involvement in sports activities as well as improve other skills.

Keywords: fitness test, interpersonal skills, Special Need Students

1. Introduction

Sports activities in schools have become part of the education system in Malaysia. Sports activities in schools are implemented through the subjects of Physical Education and Co - curricular Activities. Sports activities are good for the student's fitness. The purpose of sports activities held in schools is to give experience to students to achieve the perfect life in line with the philosophy of national education which is to produce a balanced human capital in spiritual, physical and intellectual aspects.

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education has introduced the 1 Pupil 1 Sport Policy. The One Pupil One Sport (1M 1S) policy requires every student to participate at least a sports activity at school. This policy emphasizes engagement all students in various activities and

levels of sports. It is formed on the rationality of everything sports activities are part of the educational transformation undertaken by Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE). This policy also contributes to the promotion of healthy competition, the spirit of goodwill, understanding, tolerance and enhancing moral and physical values that provide a foundation correct in integrating various ethnic groups into one united nation cohesive and cultivate the spirit of love for the country. In addition, the 1M 1S Policy can provide a comprehensive opportunity for all students to get involved in sports in a more managed and planned manner as well as balancing focus or emphasis in producing human capital holistically towards building a Malaysian society highly competitive. In line with the 1 Pupil 1 Sport policy, the field of sports is very important in optimizing the physical abilities of pupils. Most children with disabilities experience personal disorders and disharmony more often than normal children because they are unable to establish healthy communication. Through sports, it can support children to solve this problem. In the context of students with learning difficulties, sports play an important role in creating social interaction and bringing students with disabilities closer to society, producing healthy, active and productive human capital as well as shaping personality, identity, discipline and values and forming a sports culture among students. Therefore, through this study will see whether the action planning carried out can help the students studied to meet the needs of interpersonal skills as described above.

In foreign countries, there are also sports development programs that can be used as an example to involve children in sports activities such as IAAF Kids's Athletics Program. The Kids's Athletics program is led by the IAAF which operates by engaging children through engaging and creative athletic training methods. "IAAF KIDS' ATHLETICS" is intended to bring excitement into playing Athletics. New events and innovative organisation will enable children to discover basic activities: sprinting, endurance running, jumping, throwing/putting in just about any place (stadium, playground, gymnasium, any available sport area, etc.). The athletics games will provide children with the opportunity to make the most of the beneficial practice of Athletics, in terms of Health, Education, and Self-fulfilment. Taking the idea from the concept of "IAAF KIDS ATHLETICS ", this Star Track Project is to attract more interest in sports activities among special needs students (SNS). Sports activities will give students the opportunity to take full advantage of the training gained in terms of Health, Education, and self -satisfaction. This project can also uncover new talents involving special needs students who have no sports background, do not show their sensitivity to sports activities but in terms of physical readiness they have hidden sports skills that can be polished.

In addition, this study will also look at the extent to which sports activities can change the shape of interpersonal skills of SNS. Interpersonal intelligence helps us socialize with others (Garder, 1993). Verbal communication can occur when two people talk face to face (Sulaiman, 2002). Interpersonal skills are divided into six namely the ability to receive feelings, accept ideas, ask questions, convey information, convey leads and communication skills (Idris et.al, 2008). Interpersonal communication is very important for every individual, especially special needs students. SNSs often lose their social activities due to lack of self -confidence. Participation in sports activities can overcome these shortcomings, giving them the ability to engage in social interactions, develop friendships and initiate social skills. In this regard, this study would like to see, whether the activities carried out in the "Star Track" Project is able to improve the interpersonal skills among SNS.

2. Problem Statement and Objective

Sports are the best platform to produce active and intelligent students. Sports will be able to shape a student to be intelligent, obedient to instructions and indirectly will form an athlete who is highly prudent, responsible, disciplined and has a strong identity and leadership.

Sports activities are also an appropriate step to achieve the goal of implementing the 1 Pupil 1 Sport Policy which requires every healthy student to participate in at least one sports activity in school. Sport is also a medium of unification in strengthening harmony, exchanging ideas to formulate strategies to compete with the opposing team, physical, emotional, intellectual and team improvement. In the training sessions and competitions, SNS are motivated by enthusiasm, the level of self-confidence also increased, and further increased their self-confidence and social skills. Therefore, this study will identify the problems faced by students with special needs who refuse to engage in sports activities and ways to overcome them. Interpersonal intelligence allows a person to understand the feelings, motivations, habits and desires of others. Next, they are able to interact easily and can collaborate with others practically to produce something worthwhile. Those with outstanding interpersonal intelligence usually have good interactions with others. In addition, they are also able to feel sensitive and understand the emotions, feelings, thoughts, behaviors and expectations of others. At a simple level, this intelligence includes a student's ability to recognize and be sensitive to the feelings of the adults around him. Pupils with this intelligence will learn effectively through learning, collaborate with peers and easily engage with an association. Therefore, this study will identify the problems which are a factor in interpersonal skills cannot be mastered by SNS and how sports activities can overcome the problem.

2.1 Objectives

This study is conducted:

- 2.1.1 To investigate factor related to Special Needs Students in SMK Kampong Soeharto not being interested engaging in sports activities.
- 2.1.2 To investigate the changes interpersonal skills among the Special Needs Student in SMK Kampong Soeharto.

2.2 Research Question

The questions to be answered through this study are:

- 2.2.1 Whether this Star Track Project able to refute the factors that cause Special Needs Student not to be interested engaging in sports activities.
- 2.2.2 Whether sports activities can change the interpersonal skills of special needs students.

2.3 Significance of Research

This research is conducted has its own importance, so that appropriate action can be taken. This study is expected to be beneficial to:

Special Needs Student (SNS): Through this study, SNS can find out the sports talents they have. In addition, SNS can also cultivate a healthy lifestyle as well as utilize personal fitness to participate in the competitions organized. Then this study can also

improve the mastery of interpersonal skills through social interactions that occur during training, discussion and participation in tournaments and competitions.

Schools & Special Education Programs: This study is important to ensure that schools and special education programs can identify the potential and talented SNSs in certain sports to be given continuous training in preparation for any upcoming tournament. Good interpersonal skills will also produce SNSs that have the potential to be absorbed into inclusive education programs as SNSs are able to create social interactions with peers and the school community.

Parents: Aware of the factors that influence SNS's involvement in sports activities and the ability to master interpersonal skills, therefor will open the eyes of parents to provide support and encouragement as well as change parents' perceptions of the importance their child sports activities. Parents can work together with school to help polish talents and improve their child interpersonal skills through effective communication.

2.4 Research Participants

This study involved 5 special needs students in SMK Kampong Soeharto, 2 boys and 3 girls with special needs in the category of learning difficulties. They have been identified through preliminary observations during physical education class. When a teachers ask to do sports activities, give often give excuses and prefer to observe friends doing activities. In addition, they also like to be alone in class, and rarely do social interaction when in a group of students. There also less sociable as well as having very weak interpersonal skills.

3. Literature Review

A literature review is a critical and systematic reference to selected information contained in the content regarding the topic or focus of a research study. A literature review should parse, summarize, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and explain the selected content. In this action research, a literature review was conducted to find methods, ideas and information related to the title's research.

3.1 Somekh' Action Research Model (1989)

Somekh's action research model involves eight phases, namely identifying the problem or focus of the study of interest, collecting data, analyzing data and constructing hypotheses, planning action plans, implementing action plans, collecting data to detect changes, analyzing and evaluating and identifying research new folios. The systematic aspect is the strength of this model, where each step is explained in more detail, ranging from simple and formal steps to more detailed steps. However this model seems rather complicated to follow as it requires the teacher to follow each step described in detail.

3.2 Learning Disabilities

Learning Disabilities are defined as learning difficulties or learning problems. Learning problem as a developmental delay in one or more of the processes of speaking, reading, writing, arithmetic or other school subjects. It is not the result of mental retardation, sensory barriers (blind or deaf) or cultural and environmental factors.

3.3 Physical Fitness

Physical fitness is the ability of an individual to function effectively to meet challenges in daily physical work and use leisure time more effectively while having excess energy for emergency purposes (Mohammed Abou Elmagd, 2016). Physical fitness involves the movement function of the limbs and organs of the body and is also associated with an individual's ability to work more effectively and enjoy leisure time, rest, resist hypokinetic diseases and cope with anxiety. Optimal physical fitness is not possible without constant exercise. Physical fitness in sports is very important to achieve the maximum level of performance. Improving health -based fitness components and motor behavior can help individuals to adapt in the sport they are engaged in. Health -based physical fitness refers to muscle strength, cardiovascular endurance, body composition, flexibility, and muscular endurance. Whereas motor behavior -based fitness refers to speed, agility, muscle power, balance, coordination, and reaction time. Optimal fitness can help students in performing daily activities efficiently and effectively without feeling tired. Physical fitness is often associated with an individual's ability to use their leisure time, how they resist hypokinetic diseases and how they cope with such fitness. Improvements to a set of fitness activities are planned and implemented to help students obtain optimal fitness results in accordance with established procedures and norms.

3.4 Kinesthetic Intelligence

Body or kinesthetic intelligence is one of the 8 types of intelligence proposed by Gardner. It involves abilities in controlling the body, as well as in the handling and manipulation of objects. Kinesthetic intelligence is formed based on the ability to control the movement of a body part and control objects with skill. It involves the sense of coordination and accuracy of overall body movements as well as the use of both hands in manipulative skills. The characteristics of kinesthetic intelligence are as follows, Skills in controlling body movements (strength, flexibility, speed, coordination), Skills in manipulating objects (using hands to create something or make repairs).

3.5 Interpersonal Intelligence

Gardner (1983) summarizes interpersonal intelligence as the ability to understand others, what their goals are, how they work, and how they work cooperatively. This intelligence is an individual's ability to discriminate between various interpersonal cues and the ability to communicate effectively pragmatically against those cues. Interpersonal intelligence allows a person to understand the feelings, motivations, habits and desires of others. Next, they are can interact easily and can collaborate with others practically to produce something worthwhile. Those with outstanding interpersonal intelligence usually have good interactions with others. In addition, they are also able to feel sensitive and understand the emotions, feelings, thoughts, behaviors and expectations of others. At a simple level, this intelligence includes a child's ability to recognize and be sensitive to the feelings of the adults around him. Pupils with this intelligence will learn effectively through learning, collaborate with peers and easily engage with an association.

3.6 IAAF Athletics Kids

Kids' Athletics is one of the largest grassroots development programs in the world of sports. Beginning in 2005, IAAF Children's Athletics has been implemented in 134 Member Federations and has reached a cumulative total audience of over 13 million children. The Kids's Athletics program is led by the IAAF which operates by engaging children through engaging and creative athletic training methods. The objective of the kids's athletics program which applied in this Star Track Project is coordination skills according to ability and age differences, and another objective is to create a large number of active children, children can master the variety of movements in sports, not focusing on stronger or faster children. The content of IAAF Kids Athletics that is focused in this project is social interaction content, because IAAF Kids Athletics is a factor in the integration in the children's social background. Team events will involve the contributions of all participants. This will give children the opportunity to meet, interact and get to know each other's differences. In addition, it involves the motivating element of children's motivation through the character content of adventure. Children compete with each other to win events, and from there comes a sense of effort, critical thinking in determining strategies to win.

4. Methodology

The method used to identify the problems was initial observation, questionnaires and interviews to collect data than followed by action planning.

4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was conducted on 5 special education students in SMK Kg Soeharto who were not interested in participating in sports activities at school and had a low level of interpersonal skills. According to Lexy (2007), a qualitative approach is a procedure that produces observable picture data. In addition a small number of samples is more suitable to use this method. (Aini Hassan, 2007). Therefore a questionnaire was conducted to find out why they were not interested in participating in sports activities. Questionnaires were also given to the parents of these 5 students to obtain their child's consent to be involved in the study, and to collect data related to their child's health history and to find out their support for their child's involvement in sports activities.

Figure 1: Based on questionnaire analysis.

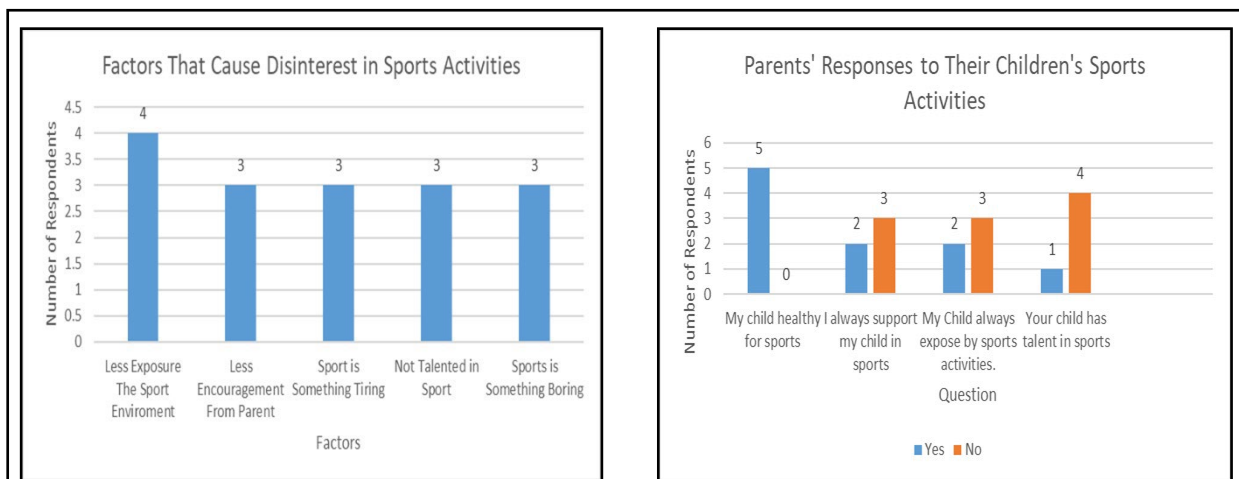


Figure 1 shows analysis of a students and parents questionnaire. The main reason students are not interested to engaging in sports activities is the lack of exposure to the sports environment. Student are not exposed with the importance and fun of sporting activities. Their parents do not encourage them to engage in sports activities. In addition, these students refused to do sports activities because they felt that sports were tiring. Special needs student also consider that they are not talented in sports and in their opinion sports is a boring activity. The results of the analysis showed that all students studied were in a healthy condition to carry out sports activities. Only 2 parents support their child's sports activities. 3 parents did not expose their children to the sports environment and almost all parents were unaware of their child's talents in sports. It can be concluded that, the lack of exposure to the sports environment by parents is the main factor the lack of interest in sports. Although the students themselves and parents know that their children are likely to have talent in sports, but the lack of support and encouragement to engage in sports activities has been the cause of SNS not being interested in sports activities.

4.2 Interview

Interview method was conducted on 5 special needs student who were studied to see the level of interpersonal skills of these students whether they have the six interpersonal skills as stated.

Table 1 : Findings through interviews during the Physical Education Class

Question	SNS 1	SNS 2	SNS 3	SNS 4	SNS 5
Q1 Why don't you play sports with your friends?	"I don't know what sport to play"	bowed his head and scratched the floor.	"I do not feel well"	Responded with a smile.	"I don't want"
Q2 What sport do you like?	"football"	No answer	badminton but I don't know how to play	shakes head	shakes head
Q3 "Everyone must play one sports game today"	"I don't want to, the weather outside is hot"	No answer but his body respond with teacher oder.	"no one plays badminton"	response by nodding his head.	shakes head

Table 1 is the findings through interviews with MBKs studied. Based on the response given, it was found that 3 SNS, SNS-2, SNS-4 and SNS-5 had very weak communication skills. They only respond through body language and facial expressions. SNS-5 only briefly answers teachers's questions. SNS-1 and SNS-3 can interact by answering teacher questions, however in Q3 both SNS were still with the stance of pushing and giving excuses for not carrying out sports activities. From the responses received through interviews, it was found that SNS have relatively weak interpersonal skills and do not complete the six interpersonal skills that need to be mastered like the ability to receive feelings, receive ideas, ask questions, convey information, convey instructions and communication skills.

4.3 Action Planning

Based on the data collected, Star track project was chosen as a method of action to refute the factors that have been identified that cause Special Needs Students are not interested to engaging in sports activities and also a method to change the better interpersonal skills for the students studied. This Project's activity was carried out using the fitness test method. It involves activities such as Fitness Fun Games, Morning Jogs and Walks, and Endurance Race. According to Falls (1980), physical fitness is divided into two, namely physical fitness for health and physical fitness for performance. In this research, both physical fitness tests were used to measure the level of health of the students involved and to measure their ability to compete in sports activities. Star Track Project is more of a fun game. In this project, it also involves the participation of other students as helpers and we call them "Interaction Agents". This Interaction Agent assigned to create social interaction with students studied. Individual and teammate approaches were used in the implementation of this project to motivate students and teammates to perform activities. In addition, positive rewards are also given to appreciate their efforts. At the same time, observations on interpersonal skills were also done by teachers using observation instruments.

Star Track Project is carried out the three following activities per week during a physical education subject. First is Fitness Fun Games training, it was modified from circuit training. During this activity, students carry out activities with a group of student. Second is Mornings jogs and walks. This exercise is more of a leisurely running activity while enjoying nature with a distance of 3 to 5 kilometers slow running or fast walking by a group. In each group will be placed an interaction agent who is tasked with guiding the study sample to communicate. They are assigned to invite the student to chat, ask questions and do any activities that can help improve communication skills, express feelings, convey and receive ideas throughout the activity. Third is Endurance race. It is Adaptive activity from 1000m endurance race in IAAF Kids Athelatic Modul. The implementation of the activities is shown in table figure below.

Figure 2 : Activity Schedule

"STAR TRACK PROJECT" Activity Schedule					
WEEK	TYPE OF TRAINING	OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	IMPLEMENTATION'S METHOD	ASSESSMENT'S METHOD
1	Fitness Fun Games	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase cardiovascular endurance. Increase muscle strength and endurance. Improve coordination, agility and flexibility of the body. Increase the motivation and self-discipline of athletes. Able to assess individual fitness levels. To see the development of interpersonal skills 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> push-ups, bench stretching, back-and-forth running, burpee backstroke squad jump. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2 set Rest 3 – 5 minutes (each set) Execution Time – 30 second per-station 	Time Record Behavior Observation
2	Mornings jogs and walks.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase cardiovascular endurance. Lowers resting pulse rate. Lowers the percentage of fat in the body. Increase leg muscle endurance. Improving individual fitness levels on the cardio-respiration component. To see the development of interpersonal skills 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Slow running Fast walking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Slow running or fast walking by a group. 3 or 5 km 	Behavior Observation
3	Endurance Race	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase cardiovascular endurance. Build and increase speed. Increase the power of speed To see the development of interpersonal skills 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5x50 meter relay. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5 times running in each group. 50 meter running for each groups member. 	Time Record Behavior Observation

During the implementation of the three phases of the activity, observations were conducted to identify whether there were changes in the interpersonal skills of the students studied. Observations are made while the student is in the activity. That is, when listening to instructions, during group activities such as discussion, problem solving and when a teacher or friend asks questions to the students studied. Changes in interpersonal skills are assessed based on interpersonal responses whether directly or indirectly. 12 skills in interpersonal intelligence were selected. These skills will be assessed to identify whether the approach used during the star track project can make a difference to their interpersonal development or not. Any action, response or reaction that shows it as a behavior or interpersonal skill that has been listed will be marked in the checklist. The scope of the assessment of interpersonal skills change is shown in the instrument form figure below:

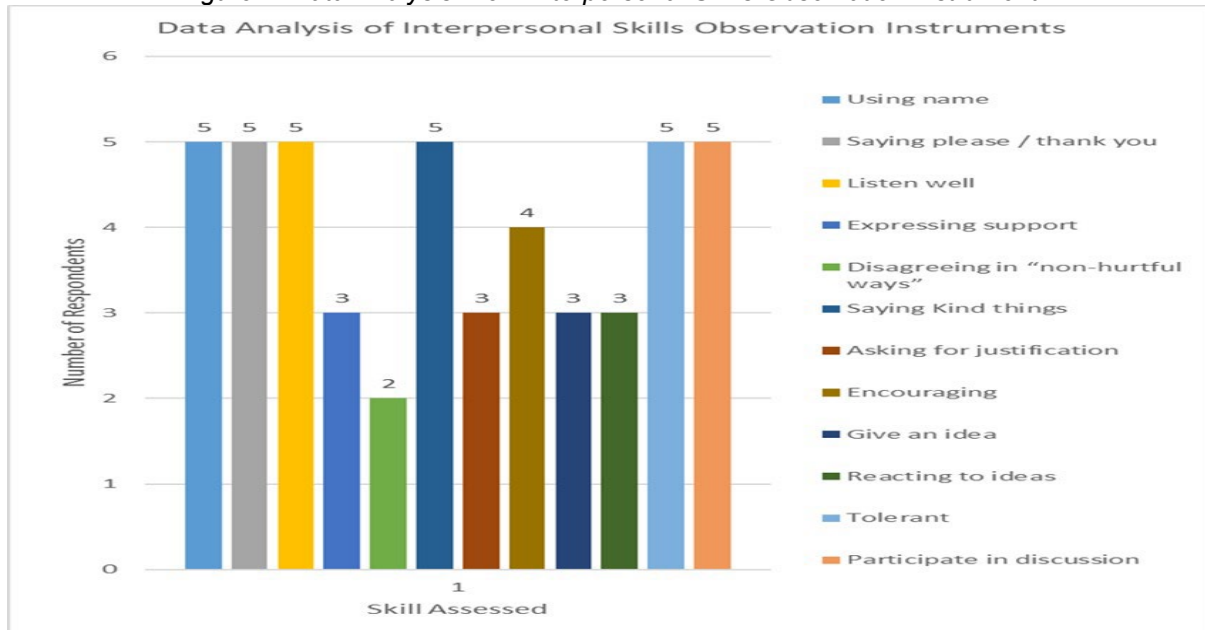
Figure 3: Observation Instrument Form

PROGRAM PENDIDIKAN KHAS SMK KAMPONG SOEHARTO				
STAR TRACK PROJECT				
<i>interpersonal skills checklist</i>				
Student Name :				
Activity :				
Date :				
BIL	SKILLS ASSESSED	YES	NO	Notes
1	Using name			
2	Asking for help			
3	Saying please / thank you			
4	Listen well			
5	Expressing support			
6	Disagreeing in "non-hurtful ways"			
7	Saying Kind things			
8	Encouraging			
9	Give an idea			
10	Reacting to ideas			
11	Tolerant			
12	Participate in discussion			

5. Data Analysis and Finding

Based on observations on the interpersonal skills of the students studied, all 5 of them managed to show changes in the development of their interpersonal skills. The results of the observations were analyzed and shown in figure 4.

Figure 4: Data Analysis From Interpersonal Skills Observation Instrument



Based on the data analysis of the interpersonal skills observation instrument during the implementation of the activities, it was found that there has been a process of interpersonal skills development among the students studied. It was also found that the students' existing interpersonal skills improved and the approach in the star track project activities had added value to the other interpersonal skills on them. Based on the information on the chart, all students surveyed had mastered 6 of the 12 skills assessed. They managed to master important aspects of interpersonal skills such as using names, saying thank you, listening well, saying kinds things, being tolerant and participating in discussions. Although there are students who do not fully master the other 6 skills but the number is very small, compared to the large number of other students who managed to master. It shows an excellent improvement in interpersonal skills.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

In conclusion, through this study, we can see the factors that cause the lack of interest of students with special needs in sports activities. Investigations through questionnaires of pupils and parents showed the factors were both highly correlated. Lack of exposure to sports from parents causes a sense of interest in sports does not arise in students. Through the sports activities carried out, it can be concluded that the inclination and interest in the activity must be nurtured from the beginning. Parental support of students with special needs for sports activities is very important in the process of building self-confidence and interpersonal skills of students with special needs. The approaches used in Star Track activities also show a change in students' perceptions of sports activities. The sports environment plays an important role. Students do not necessarily have the perfect sports equipment, or need to frequent the sports arena, it can be exposed through spectacle, leisure activities, conversation and so on. Continuous training is not something that is tiring but it increases fitness. From the aspect of sports talent, it can actually be polished and not necessarily it is naturally present in everyone. Based on the data collected and analyzed

shows that this Star Track Project has answered the research questions. The students studied have shown positive changes in their interest in sports activities. Their interpersonal skills have improved through the approach implemented in the activities that have been carried out in this project. It shows that the implementation of the action taken has succeeded in achieving its objective.

However, all the factors mentioned in the findings of the study are not something that can be concluded. This is because the development of special need student are different varies. Each student has a different ability and level of ability. Therefore, proposals to add value to activities in the Star Track Project need to be made by looking at relevant aspects, such as adapting activities according to ability level, involving more interesting creative movement activities and activities that can enhance various intelligences. Having successfully increased students' interest in sports activities and improved their interpersonal skills through sports activities, I realize that students with special needs need to master various other intelligence skills because they are a guide for teachers to identify the potential of students. Therefore, I suggest that a study be done to examine the importance of sports activities on various other intelligences.

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