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The Use of Music Elements in the Lessons by Teachers of Students with Mental Disabilities and Their Music-Based Competencies

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Abstract

The field of special education for people with mental disabilities is a discipline that is constantly evolving and changing as well as being inclusive. Teachers working in this field are guiding the way as long as they improve their professional qualifications. Even if special education processes are under state guarantee, it is always a lifelong process that brings a financial obligation for families. Therefore, the field teachers should be a complementary element for the student in many areas such as development, change, education and rehabilitation. Music elements also find a prominent place among these complementary elements. However, the field teacher can only support this process on the basis of music to the extent that he/she realizes his/her own music-based competence professionally. In this direction, it was aimed to determine the music-based competencies of field teachers and their utilization of music elements in their lessons and the data were collected for this purpose. Because music is present in all areas of special education. However, it is not possible to employ a music professional for every special education institution. Therefore, the field teacher is expected to handle the process within the framework of inclusiveness. Within the framework of this idea, the study was conducted with 10 volunteer teachers who were reached during the 2021-2022 academic year. In order to obtain the data, 26 three-point Likert-type instructions were prepared and online interviews were conducted with each participant teacher. This study is a case study. The data were described on the axis of interpretive paradigm and categorized in the findings section. The validity and reliability of the instructions were ensured in line with the opinions of special education experts. As a result, it was found that the field teachers who participated in the study have music-based competence and consciously utilize music elements in their lessons. However, it was also seen that field teachers need music-based professional development. Therefore, it is an evident that they need professional development trainings on how to use music elements more effectively for non-musical purposes. It is essential to conduct this study with a group of more participants. Nevertheless, it is believed that the findings obtained have a quality that will pave the way for new researchers.

Keywords: Special Education Teacher, Special Education and Music, Music-Based Competence

Introduction

The education of individuals who are in need of special education is prepared and developed in line with the individual's competencies (MoNE, 2018). Given this definition, it can be said that teachers of individuals with intellectual disabilities who work with individuals in need of special education should always follow the latest developments in the field. Because an individual who needs special education will need the support of an expert who can develop an approach according to his/her own potential outside of formal and non-formal education models almost for life. Therefore, it is assumed that the more the field teacher is fed from different channels, the more he/she will strengthen the education and training processes. While the education process carried out in environments suitable for the characteristics of the individual's disability is referred to as special education, specially trained individuals who can prepare education

programs with different approaches and methods for groups of individuals in need of special education are defined as special education personnel (MoNE, 2018). As can be understood from the definition, teachers of the mentally disabled should provide an individual-oriented education process by taking into account the development and individual competencies of individuals in need of special education. The main point to be expressed here is how much it is possible for more than one educator to be involved in the process of the education and rehabilitation of the individual. One may think that this will not be possible in the field of special education for the mentally disabled in terms of time and financial expenses. For this reason, in the departments that train special education teachers in the field of mental disabilities, an inclusive education is given based on the idea that the educator can take a more effective role in the education process of the person under his/her responsibility by mastering more than one field. What is expected from the teachers of the mentally disabled who graduated from these departments in their professional lives is to continuously improve themselves professionally in order to apply approaches that support the quality of life of the students in their class (Çay, 2020; Eren & Ergün, 2019; Sağırkaya, 2016, 2020, 2021; Yıkılmış et al. 2017). Motivation is seen as the main factor in this. Because while educational processes are constantly changing with new models and approaches, one cannot expect a teacher not to have the motivation to follow these aspects that shape education (Taşkaya, 2012). At this point, music-based practices and the use of music elements as a complementary model in the educational processes of individuals in need of special education by teachers in the field are seen to be necessary due to the nature of special education. Therefore, it is important that the music-based professional competencies of teachers working in this field can be improved at any time (Varış & Hekim, 2017).

There are studies in the literature on the positive effects of music on movement, language, behavior and emotional development in the education and rehabilitation of individuals with special needs (Eskioglu, 2003; Juliette & Warwick, 1992; Nordoff & Robbins, 1983, 2004). As a matter of fact, the

concept of music in special education should be understood as supporting education and rehabilitation processes through music, unlike academic music education (Artan, 2001; Eren, 2012). Because the aim is not to provide academic music education, but to support individuals physiologically, psychologically and sociologically on the basis of music (Sağırkaya, 2021). Utilizing music in educational processes increases social interaction and strengthens communication processes (Perry, 1995; Stephenson, 2006; Yılmaz et al, 2014).

Although music in special education is effective in developing non-verbal communication skills, it is wrong to see it only as a tool for communication and socialization (Stephenson, 2006). Music in special education should be considered as a more holistic tool that helps in more complex processes such as emotional response and expression development (Youngshin, 2004). Therefore, it is a fact that the field teacher's basic knowledge about the effects of music will be extremely helpful in the process of education, development and change of the students in question.

There are studies in the literature suggesting that special education teachers perform supportive practices by singing, dancing, and keeping rhythm in their lessons (Çay, 2020; Eren, 2013; Yıkılmış et al. 2017). However, these studies seem to reveal the use of music as an auxiliary in academic skill development and music-based perspectives on the field rather than music-based professional competencies of special education teachers. The lack of studies on the utilization of music elements and music-based competence of special education teachers of intellectual disabilities in the literature also draws attention.

Special education is an individualized process. However, today's conditions do not make it possible for each individual specializing in this field to work in a special education institution, and the responsibility for the realization of appropriate educational processes often falls on the teachers in the field of mental disabilities. An educator working with a child with special needs does not need academic music knowledge to achieve results on the basis of music. The process can be achieved through simple rhythm games, sound reflections, song accompaniments and

the use of rhythmic instruments. The important thing is for the teacher to realize whether the child has a music-based potential and to determine in which way music will benefit the individual.

Improving the quality of education and advances in technology strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the teacher, but no equipment or method can replace the teacher (Thompson, 1999). Today's conditions do not make it possible to employ music teachers for every special education class. Therefore, it is observed that the effective use of music elements in special education classes is carried out by special education teachers (Dayı & Öztürk, 2019). However, a teacher who performs applications involving musical elements encounters problems in time and space utilization, approach development, material use, and implementation. Overcoming these problems and realizing a successful process is under the teacher's own control (MoNE, 2010; Sağırkaya, 2020; Yıkılmış, 2017). The literature also shows that the student's desire to be involved in education significantly affects the educational process, but the competencies to develop and implement an individual-based approach are associated with the teacher's own practice and motivation (Dayı & Öztürk, 2019; Öner & Sarı, 2020). In this context, a teacher who will use musical elements in their lessons may face the following questions:

- To what extent do I know the student?
- To what extent is my student's perception of music?
- To what extent is my student's ability to give feedback to music elements?
- What kind of music-based practice plan should I develop for my student?
- What will be my goals and achievements for my student within this plan?
- What kind of materials should I use according to my student's developmental areas?
- What kind of instruments can I use considering my student's motor skills?
- Which music genres should I use?
- Which area of development and change will the music-based practice I develop for my student address?
- Is my student ready for a music interactive group work?

- What kind of inclusion phase should be involved before conducting the music interactive group work I developed for my student?
- How willing am I to use music elements in my lessons?
- What are my knowledge and experience?
- Do I know the analytical planes to evaluate the process?
- At the end of the work, was I able to establish an atmosphere of trust on the basis of music?
- Was I able to observe the student's gains from the music-based process?
- Do I have the motivation to review the process and reorganize and reorganize it if necessary (Gürdağ, 2019; MoNE, 2010; Ozan Leylum et al, 2017; Sağırkaya, 2020).

In addition to the above-mentioned questions, one should also be aware of the existence of professional collaboration, working environment, teacher-student, teacher-administration, teacher-parent factors. At this point, a special education teacher should really know and understand the importance of music for the quality of the child's life and should improve himself/herself by being aware of his/her professional competencies within this framework. The results of recent studies show how important it is for teachers to develop themselves in terms of lifelong education and practice in addition to increasing standards in education and training processes (Eren, 2018; Eren & Engür, 2019; Taşkaya, 2012).

In this direction, it is believed that revealing the utilization of music elements by teachers of the field of mental disabilities is important for the inclusive principles of special education processes to reach each individual with mental disabilities in need thereof.

In the light of the above-mentioned information, the question "To what extent do teachers of mentally disabled students benefit from music elements in their lessons?" constitutes the aim of the study. Towards this aim, it was tried to find answers to the following questions;

- What are the opinions of teachers of mentally disabled students about their own music-based competencies?
- What is the extent to which teachers of mentally disabled students utilize music elements in their

lessons?

It is believed that the data obtained in this study are important in terms of revealing the situation of teachers of the mentally disabled in terms of utilizing music elements in their classrooms.

It was presumed that the responses given to the data collection tools prepared and used within the scope of this study were sincere and revealed the real opinions, and it is assumed that the special education teachers of the mentally disabled children branch who participated in the study could represent other field teachers as well.

Method

Model of the Study

The factors that shape education in educational processes are becoming more and more complex. The principle of immutability of knowledge no longer leads the researcher to a definite conclusion. There is more and more need to determine the situation with different approaches and models. The literature shows that researches in which individual differences are put forward instead of general judgments come to the forefront. Based on this idea, this research is a process-oriented descriptive, interpretation-based case study in terms of its purpose and the method followed in accordance with this purpose and the quality of the data collected (Yıldırım, 1999). The data/information obtained in the research were described by the researcher based on the case study.

Studies based on case studies do not include

standard observation norms, and their validity and reliability may be limited by the description and interpretation of the researcher (Ozan-Leylum, et al., 2017). This is because instead of a single general judgment, in case studies, it is possible to obtain different data/information revealing that knowledge can change as a result of different factors (Aytaçlı, 2012; Güven, 2001).

Accordingly, the observations were made on the teachers’ utilization of music elements in their lessons in line with their own music-based competencies.

Study Group

The participants of the study consisted of special education teachers of the mentally disabled children branch. Participants were identified with the letter abbreviation “P”. The letter abbreviation “MoNE “ stands for Ministry of National Education. The letter abbreviation “SES” stands for Special Education School. Accordingly, two teachers from Afyonkarahisar, one from Kocaeli, three from Izmir, one each from Antalya and Eskişehir, and two from Bursa volunteered to take part in the study and participate online. During the data collection process, ethical principles were paid attention to and within the framework of these principles, personal information was kept confidential based on the volunteerism of the participants and the data were used only in this scientific research with their consent.

Table 1 Characteristics of the Study Group

Participant	Age/ Gender	Graduation	Working Time in the Field and institution	Number and Profile of Students in the Classroom
P:1	28/Male	Special education teacher of the mentally disabled	4 Years MoNE SES	Working in a class of 4 students with mild to moderate learning disabilities.
P:2	30/Female	Special education teacher of the mentally disabled	6 Years MoNE SES	Working in a class of 4 students with mild to moderate learning disabilities.
P:3	31/Female	Special education teacher of the mentally disabled	7 Years MoNE SES	Working in a class of 4 students diagnosed with Down Syndrome.

P:4	33/Female	Special education teacher of the mentally disabled	9 Years MoNE SES	Working in a class of 2 students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) with moderate learning difficulties and pervasive developmental disorder (PDD).
P:5	33/Male	Special education teacher of the mentally disabled and specialist in D.S.	9 Years MoNE SES	Working in a class of 4 students diagnosed with Down Syndrome.
P:6	35/Male	Special education teacher of the mentally disabled	11 Years MoNE SES	Working in a class of 2 students with students diagnosed with severe learning disabilities.
P:7	39/Male	Special education teacher of the mentally disabled	14 Years MoNE SES	Working in a class of 2 students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) with moderate learning difficulties and pervasive developmental disorder (PDD).
P:8	40/Male	Special education teacher of the mentally disabled	16 Years MoNE SES	Working in a class of 4 students with students diagnosed with mental retardation and severe learning difficulties.
P:9	42/Male	Special education teacher of the mentally disabled	16 Years MoNE SES	Working in a class of 2 students with students diagnosed with severe learning disabilities.
P:10	45/Male	Primary school teacher received in-service training in the field of education for the mentally handicapped.	20 Years MoNE SES	Working in a class of 4 students with mild to moderate learning disabilities.

Data Collection Tools; Validity and Reliability

The music-based competencies of the teachers participating in the study and their utilization of music elements in their classrooms were determined with two separate structured schedules. The first schedule consists of 14 three-point Likert-type instructions for the determination of music-based competencies of teachers of students with mental disabilities. The second schedule consists of 12 three-point Likert-type instructions on the determination of the situation of mentally disabled branch teachers' utilization of music practices in their classes. The instruction inventory directed to the participants was prepared by the researcher according to the question development stages of Büyüköztürk et al. (2014, p.

124-172).

The validity and reliability of the instructions were conducted by paying attention to Büyüköztürk et al.'s (2014, p. 106) stages of determining the purpose of the research, reviewing the literature and creating a question pool. Accordingly, a literature review was conducted in accordance with the purpose of the study and a pool of instructions was created. This pool was presented to two academicians, one from Ankara Music and Fine Art University and one from Anadolu University, who have studies in the field of special education music, and the inventory was finalized.

Findings
Music-Based Competencies of Teachers of Mental Disabilities Branch

individual definitions of their music-based competencies.

Accordingly, the table below shows teachers’

Table 2 Participants’ Music-Based Competencies

f = P	I Agree (f)	Partially (f)	Never (f)
I can distinguish the sounds I hear.	8	2	
I can recognize a piece of music I hear the second time I listen to it.	8	2	
I can distinguish the sounds of instruments in the music I listen to.	4	4	2
I can distinguish music genres (classical, pop, folk, art, wordless, etc.).	8	2	
I can sing a song.	10		
I can remember the lyrics of the song I sang for the first time later.	2	8	
I can remember the lyrics of the song I sang for the first time after a few repetitions.	10		
I can repeat a music or song I hear melodically.	6	4	
I can make a rhythm.	10		
I can repeat a rhythm I hear.	6	4	
I can accompany a song I listen to by humming/singing along.	10		
I can accompany the song I sing with movement (dance-movement).	10		
I can make rhythmic accompaniment with my hands to a song I sing/ listen to.	10		
I can play a rhythmic instrument both while singing and listening.	8	2	

The data in Table 2 revealed that teachers were generally able to distinguish between the sounds of objects and living things, use music for a conscious purpose, were functional in psycho-motor and cognitive comprehension in the process of listening to music, were competent in focusing and rhythmic actions, and had music-oriented mood processes within the scope of music-based competence. In addition, teachers were found to have rhythmic

memory according to their statements. The teachers were also found to be proficient in verbal memory and melodic memory at the desired level.

Ability of Mental Disabilities Field Teachers to Benefit from Music Practices in Their Classrooms

Accordingly, the table below shows the teachers’ individual definitions of their ability to benefit from music practices in their classrooms.

Table 3 Ability of the Participants to Benefit from Music Practices in their Classes

f = P	I Agree (f)	Partially (f)	Never (f)
I received a training on music implementations in special education.	3	2	5
I make my students listen to music in my classes.	10		
I practice rhythm in my lessons.	2	2	6
I try to distinguish sounds and timbres.	6	2	2
I do movement and dance exercises in my lessons.	2	6	2
I make them sing in my lessons.	10		
I teach music lessons in the classroom according to the special education program.	2	6	1
I use the music program prepared for special education in my lessons.	2		8
I created a repertoire of educational and instructive songs.	8	2	

I use rhythmic instruments in my lessons (drums, maracas, etc.)	2	6	2
I use different types of music in my lessons (pop, classical, folk, etc.)	10		
I make them sing songs according to the curriculum in my lessons.	6	2	2

The data in Table 3 revealed that teachers generally played music in their lessons, practiced sound and timbre discrimination, created a repertoire of educational and instructive songs, used different types of music in their lessons according to the student's taste, and practiced singing, but did not use the music and play book in special education prepared by the Ministry of National Education. In addition, there is a perception that teachers are not willing to use rhythm and movement-based practices in their lessons, that they cannot use basic rhythm instruments, and that they do not benefit from the relevant curriculum sufficiently.

Describing Participant Feedback

The following are descriptions of the music-based competence and utilization of music practices in the lessons of the teachers of mentally disabled students who participated in the study within the scope of their online feedback in Table 2 and Table 3, as well as their verbal statements. Based on the findings, four general profiles were identified. Accordingly, the first profile consists of individuals who fully perform music practices and have music-based competence, the second profile consists of individuals who have music-based competence but partially perform music practices, the third profile consists of individuals who have music-based competence but do not perform music practices, and the fourth profile consists of individuals who partially have music-based competence and partially perform music practices.

First Profile: Describing the Feedbacks given by P1-P3-P9 who have Music-based Competence and Perform Music Practices in their Lessons

It is observed that the participants were able to focus while listening to music, develop a music-based appreciation, and listen to music by knowing its genre, were able to recognize the end of a song or piece of music and the beginning of a new piece under different conditions, to recognize a piece they heard the second time they heard it, to repeat a rhythm they heard, to repeat a song they heard,

and to recognize instruments by their sounds in the piece they listened to, distinguish between types of music, distinguish a song with its lyrics and sing along, perform rhythmic accompaniment with their hands, dance and move to the rhythm of the music, can make rhythmic accompaniment with any object or instrument during both listening and singing, and can consciously use the act of listening to music for purposes such as relaxation, sadness, and entertainment. It was also noted that P1-P3-P9 recognized basic rhythmic school instruments, had knowledge about music in special education, and participated in service training on music in special education, examined the special education music program and curriculum prepared by the Ministry of National Education, taught music lessons in the classroom, and practiced timbre and sound discrimination and spelling with their students, made their students listen to songs and music for different purposes, practiced rhythm in their lessons and used rhythmic instruments and perform dance-based activities for movement and motion, they are aware of the school songs for the purpose of achieving MoNE learning outcomes, and they have a repertoire of songs for educational and instructional purposes. Accordingly, it was concluded that P1-P3-P9 had musical functionality, their musical awareness was developed, they had basic musical awareness and rhythmic skills, and they performed the music-based activities expected to be performed by the teacher according to the MoNE curriculum in the special education classroom.

Describing the Feedbacks given by P2-P5 who have Music-based Competence but Partially Perform Music Practices

It was observed that the participants were able to perform the act of focusing and speaking while listening to music, and that they were able to perform the act of attention while listening to music, developed a musical taste/preference and listened to music knowing the genre of the music they were going to listen to, and were able to recognize when a

song or piece of music ended and a new piece began under different conditions, can recognize a piece they have heard the second time they hear it, can repeat a rhythm they have heard, can partially recognize the instruments by their sounds in the piece they listen to, can distinguish music genres, can accompany a song they listen to with lyrics, can perform rhythmic accompaniment with their hands, and do not show dance and movement according to the rhythm of the music, they could make rhythmic accompaniment with any object or instrument during both listening and singing, and that they could use the act of listening to music for purposes such as relaxation, sadness, and entertainment. Furthermore, it was noted that P2 and P5 knew basic rhythmic school instruments, had knowledge about music in special education, partially participated in a training on music in special education according to their own statements, but partially examined the special education music program and curriculum prepared by the Ministry of National Education and did not conduct music lessons in the classroom. In addition, it was observed that they did not do timbre and sound discrimination and spelling exercises with their students, they made their students listen to songs and music partially for different purposes, they did not do rhythm exercises in their lessons, but they partially did dance activities for movement and motion, they recognized school songs for the achievement of MoNE learning outcomes, but they did not have a repertoire of songs for educational purposes. Accordingly, it was concluded that P2 and P5 had musical functionality and musical awareness, that they had basic musical skills but preferred music-based practice only to a certain extent, and that they did not perform the basic musical activities expected to be performed by the teacher in the special education classroom according to the MoNE curriculum to an acceptable extent.

Third Profile: Describing the Feedbacks given by P6-P7-P10 who have Music-based Competence but do not Perform Music Practices

It was observed that the participants have an appreciation of music, which means they can perform focusing and attention actions while listening to music, and they listen to music knowing the genre of the music they are going to listen to, and when

necessary, they can recognize the end of a song or music and the beginning of a new piece under different conditions, can recognize a piece they heard for the first time when they hear it for the second time, can repeat a rhythm they heard, can partially identify instruments by their sounds in the piece they listen to, can partially distinguish musical genres, can distinguish a song they listen to by its lyrics and sing along, perform rhythmic accompaniment with their hands, dance and move to the rhythm of the music, can make rhythmic accompaniment with any object or instrument during both listening and singing, can use the act of listening to music for purposes such as relaxation, sadness and entertainment. However, it was noted that P6-P7 and P10 had partial or no knowledge of basic rhythmic school instruments and partial knowledge about music in special education, they did not know the special education music program and curriculum prepared by the Ministry of National Education, did not teach music lessons in the classroom, and almost never practiced timbre and sound discrimination with their students, they did not make their students listen to songs and music for different purposes, they almost never practiced rhythm in their lessons and did not use rhythmic instruments, they rarely practice dance activities for movement and motion, that they recognize school songs that are purpose-oriented and aimed at the acquisition of MoNE learning outcomes, but that they do not have a repertoire of songs for educational and instructional purposes. Accordingly, it was found that P6-P7-P10 had a musical functionality but their musical awareness could be developed, that although they had basic musical skills, they did not prefer to perform music-based practices due to the severely mentally disabled and physically disabled students in their class, and that they almost never performed the basic musical activities expected to be performed by the teacher according to the MoNE curriculum in the special education classroom.

Fourth Profile: Describing the Feedbacks given by P4-P8, who Partially had Music-based Competence and Partially Performed Music Practices

It was observed that the participants were able to focus and pay attention while listening to music, had

a musical taste, and listened to music knowing its genre, but could not actively discriminate the sounds they heard when listening to songs or instrumental music, can partially recognize a piece they have listened to the second time, are partially successful in repeating a rhythm they have heard, cannot distinguish the instruments in the piece they have listened to, can distinguish between musical genres, but they can only partially distinguish between a song when they hear its lyrics and when they hear the same song melodically, can accompany the song they listen to by singing the lyrics, can partially perform rhythmic accompaniment with their hands, can dance and move according to the rhythm of the music, but can partially perform rhythmic accompaniment with any object or instrument during both listening and singing and can use the act of listening to music for purposes such as relaxation, sadness, and entertainment. However, it was noted that P4 and P8 partially recognized basic rhythmic school instruments, did not have information about music in special education, and did not receive any training on music in special education, they partially examined the special education music program and curriculum prepared by the Ministry of National Education and could not teach music lessons in the classroom, they did not practice timbre and sound discrimination with their students, they made their students listen to songs and music for different purposes, but they did not practice rhythm in their lessons and did not use rhythmic instruments, they seldom practiced dance activities related to movement and motion and could only partially repeat a rhythm they heard after two or three repetitions and they are partially familiar with school songs for the MoNE learning outcome and do not have a repertoire of songs for educational purposes Accordingly, it was found that P4 and P8 had an appreciation of music but their music-based competencies could be improved, they partially lacked basic music and rhythm skills, they performed limited music-based practices in their lessons, and although they partially had sufficient equipment to perform the basic music practices expected to be performed by the teacher according to the MoNE curriculum in the special education classroom, they partially performed music practices thanks to their professional motivation.

Accordingly, it was noted that teachers are aware of the effect of music on mood and have developed an appreciation of music accordingly, they have a common appreciation for Turkish pop, folk music, art music, classical music and instrumental music genres, as well as having professional motivation and willing to make sacrifices by giving students extra tasks, they are open to new approaches applied to special education, and want to improve themselves in music-based professional field, they are aware of the importance of supporting students in the areas of awareness, behavioral, cognitive, cognitive, motor skills, communication and socialization through music and want to cooperate in this regard. In addition, it is believed that teachers generally have music-based competence at different levels to perform rhythmic applications in their lessons, to use school songs, to perform music-based practices with basic rhythm instruments, to perform play and movement-based music applications, and to perform basic music activities expected to be performed by the teacher according to the MoNE special education music applications curriculum.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study was conducted with teachers of students with mental disabilities. In the literature, the number of studies investigating the music competencies of special education teachers with intellectual disabilities and their ability to perform music-based practices in their classrooms is limited. It is believed that this study will contribute to the literature and guide similar studies to be conducted in the future. At the same time, it is thought that the findings obtained in this study will be helpful for academicians and researchers who are interested in the field. In this context, the study will contribute to raising awareness on teachers' professional competence in the field and the development of music-based individualized education plans. With the above findings obtained from the participant feedbacks sample, it was determined the special education field teachers' use of music elements in their classes in the light of their music-based competencies in the field of special education for the mentally disabled. The results obtained according to the findings are as follows:

It is believed that the number of people reached in this study will constitute the general population. However, there is also a need to conduct a similar case study with a different study group. In this context, Yıkılmış et al. (2007), reached a more limited number of participants for a similar study. While determining the level of special education teachers' use of games and songs in their lessons, it was found that they used games and songs in teaching academic and non-academic skills. However, it was observed that each of the participant teachers took courses on games and music at the universities they graduated from. This rate is lower among the teachers who participated in this study. Therefore, it is seen that the results of Yıkılmış et al. do not fully overlap with the results of this study. Although the two studies revealed the ability of special education teachers to utilize music elements in their professional processes, the results of this study indicate that teachers generally do not conduct music-based studies in their lessons. Nevertheless, it can be said that both studies are important in terms of determining the use of music elements for non-musical purposes. In addition, it can be concluded that the music-based professional development courses taken during the undergraduate period have a reflection in professional life.

The results showed that teachers of special education for the mentally disabled have music-based competencies, have basic movement and play skills, basic rhythmic skills, and basic singing skills that help them perform music-based practices in their lessons. Another similar result is seen in the study conducted by Eren and Engür (2019), which determines the competence levels of prospective special education teachers towards music teaching. Both research data show that teachers' sense of self-efficacy and professional motivation levels are directly proportional to their ability to utilize music elements in their lessons.

It was concluded that teachers of special education students with mental disabilities are aware of the relational structure of music regarding mood processes and at this point, they can make music preferences for the needs of the student and have the competence to benefit from music elements for non-musical change, development, education and rehabilitation purposes of students. There is

no research in the literature that reveals special education teachers' awareness of music-based mood processes. However, the research conducted by Eren (2018), on the music-based metaphorical perceptions of prospective special education teachers, which can be evaluated in this category, is remarkable. Because this study on the concepts and feelings aroused by the music phenomenon in the listener also emphasizes the researcher's relational structure of music on mood processes.

It was noted that special education teachers of students with mental disabilities reported that they believe that music elements are necessary for the education of students with special needs and that they contribute to their skill-behavior development training and rehabilitation processes. However, it was concluded that they do not make sufficient use of music elements in their classes and do not follow the developments in the field, and even if they have enough basic music knowledge needed in special education, they cannot fully characterize this knowledge process and experience certain difficulties in transferring it to students. As a matter of fact, Çay (2020), revealed in his study that special education teachers believe in the necessity of music in the educational processes of special education students. In this respect, the results of Çay's study are similar to the participants' views in this study. However, Çay's study differs from this study because it did not determine the teachers' music-based practice competencies and their realization status.

Finally, It was reached the conclusion from the research findings that special education teachers of the mentally disabled need professional development in terms of utilizing music elements in their lessons.

Suggestions

Based on the results of the research, it is possible to list the following recommendations.

- It is possible that this study will contribute to raising awareness on teacher professional competence and the development of music-based individualized education plans. Because it is believed that the existence of studies on music-based interaction in special education, music-based applications in special education, the effects of music on development/change and educational processes in special education will contribute to the field.

- It is believed that teachers of the mentally disabled need professional development in terms of utilizing music elements in their lessons.
- It is thought that it is a requirement for the field to carry out the professional development training process on the use of music elements in areas that support communication and socialization devices for students, minimize impulsive and anxiety-oriented behaviors, and improve attention.
- It is thought that there is a need for studies on music-based interaction in special education, music-based practices in special education, the effects of music on development/change and educational processes in special education.
- It is believed that the findings and researcher determinations in this study are thought to prepare a ground for further research in the field.
- The findings obtained in this study may be helpful for academics and researchers interested in the field.
- However, the number of people reached in the study is limited. There is a need to conduct a similar case study with a larger study group.
- It is a necessity for the field that the professional development trainings are conducted on the use of music elements in areas that support communication and socialization devices for students, minimize impulsive and anxiety-oriented behaviors, and develop attention. However, when the literature is examined, the number of studies investigating the music competencies of special education teachers of children with intellectual disabilities and their ability to perform music-based practices in their classrooms is limited. This study will contribute to the literature and will be a guide for similar studies to be conducted in the future.

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