

Investigating the Effects of Group Practice Performed Using Psychodrama Techniques on Adolescents' Conflict Resolution Skills

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the effects of group practice which is performed using psychodrama techniques on adolescents' conflict resolution skills. The subjects, for this study, were selected among the high school students who have high aggression levels and low problem solving levels attending Hacı Zekiye Arslan High School, in Niğde. They were divided into three groups, the experimental, placebo and control groups. Each group consisted of 12 high school students, 6 boys and 6 girls. The Scale for Identification of Conflict Resolution Behavior, developed by Koruklu, was used to collect data. Psychodrama group practices one of which lasted for 90-120 minutes were applied to the experimental group once a week for 10 weeks. Inventory was administered to experimental and control groups before and after treatment and 12 weeks after the treatment, it was administered to the experimental group once again. Data were analyzed with Kruskal Wallis, Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon tests. The findings show that aggression levels of the students who were in the experimental group were dropped significantly and problem solving levels were increased compared to the placebo and control groups. The effect could also be seen 12 weeks later after the treatment. The results have shown that group practices which are performed using psychodrama techniques have favorable effects on adolescents' conflict resolution skills.

Key Words

Conflict Resolution, Problem Solving, Aggression, Psychodrama, Adolescent.

Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and mental human development generally occurring between puberty and adulthood (Kulaksızoğlu, 2004). While parents of adolescents are feeling mixed emotions about independence of adolescent, an adolescent wishes to gain independence (Gander & Gardiner, 2001). In the attempt to gain the identity of adolescents in the face of the changing environment and new conditions may experience some difficulties and challenges. Emotional accumulations can cause conflict (Kulaksızoğlu, 2004).

Conflict is a situation which occurs when two or more motives affect an individual at the same time.

A person who have difficulties while deciding and who start to feel anxious is possibly in conflict (Cüceloğlu, 1994). On the other hand conflict occurs in undesirable situations and conflict can occur with strain (Gürüz & Temel-Eğinli, 2008). The process of conflict takes place in four stages. These stages are: being aware of the conflict, developing emotional reaction towards conflict, having the intention of performing various behaviors considering the developed emotions and reactions and the transformation of the intentions into real behaviors (Demiray, 2008). Conflict can affect our lives both in negative and positive ways. According to Beckmone (2002 cited in Demiray, 2008), the conflicts which results from different wishes and needs and which are indispensable for people's life force an individual to learn and develop him.

Psychodrama is a research technique which helps the participants to reanimate the events in their lives instead of just talking about the psychological

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and social problems of them (Blatner, 2002). Providing catharsis, gaining insight, testing the facts, developing rational thoughts, learning and behavior changes in psychodrama are aimed to take place in the psychodrama sessions in which this technique is utilized (Dökmen, 2005).

Given the research findings conducted in Turkey and abroad on conflict and violence, it is seen that the adolescents have difficulties in coping with their anger and aggressive behaviors, preventing the violence, expressing their emotions in a right way, and even being aware of the structure of their feelings and thoughts. Besides it is established they are inadequate in solving problems. Furthermore, the benefits of having the experience of group or participating in various psycho-educational groups in order to cope with these situations and experimental operations are found out to be effective (Akdeniz, 2007; Aytek, 1999; Bundy, 2001, 2003; Cenkseven, 2003; Duran & Eldeleklioğlu, 2005; Fong, 2006; Hermann & McWhirter, 2003; Kipper, 2002; Mundy, 1997; Racelyte, 2006; Sipsas, 2000; Tekinsav-Sütçü, 2006; Uçak-Şimşek, 2003; Uysal, 2006). On the other hand, when the research findings conducted on conflict resolution using psychodrama technique are considered, it is seen that the experimental process is effective and the group members' abilities to express themselves, to solve problems, and the ability for conflict resolution have increased (Amatruda, 2006).

The Aim of the Research

The aim of the research is to analyze the short and long terms effects of the group sessions conducted using psychodrama on the adolescents' abilities for conflict resolution.

Hypothesis

In this research, the accuracy of the following hypotheses are examined.

1. There will be statistically significant differences in the scores of conflict resolution of the students participating in the group sessions in which psychodrama techniques are used compared to the students in control and placebo groups.
2. There won't be statistically significant difference between the posttest and follow-up scores measured 12 weeks after the end of the psychodrama therapy in term of conflict resolution of the students participating in the group sessions in which psychodrama techniques are used.

Moreover, the participants evaluated the psychodrama therapy and themselves after the therapy. These findings are presented in result section.

Method

Investigation Design

This study is a semi-experimental research concerning the effects of group sessions in which psychodrama techniques are used on adolescents' ability of conflict resolution. In the research, pre and posttest design with control group is used. This design is a complicated one which is commonly used (Büyüköztürk, 2007). In this design, the scale of determining the conflict resolution behavior before the experimental process is applied to the students in experimental and control group as pretest. After that, group practices consisting of 10 sessions in which psychodrama techniques are utilized are implemented to the experimental group. In this term, there are no trainings for the control group. In the placebo group, ten weeks interaction group which doesn't include conflict resolution is organized. One week after the end of the ten sessions with experimental group, the scale of determining the conflict resolution behavior are implemented to all the groups as posttest and the scale of determining the conflict resolution behavior is applied to the students participating in experimental group one time for follow-up measurement.

The Participants

The experiment subjects are chosen from Hacı Zekiye Arslan High School in the city center of Niğde in the 2008-2009 education terms. The scale of determining conflict resolution behavior is implemented to all the students studying in 9th, 10th and 11th grade students (60 boys and 90 girls) in the suitable lessons in order to compose the experimental and control group of the research. Taking one point above and below the standard deviation of the arithmetic mean of the applied scale of determining conflict resolution behavior, there are 41 students who get 36 and more than 36 points which is one point above the standard deviation for aggression score and 36 students who get 30 and less than 30 points which is one point below standard deviation. So, totally there are 77 students. 12 of 77 students, 6 girls and 6 boys are assigned to experimental group randomly, 12 students to the control group and 12 students for the placebo group. Furthermore, a student whose aggression score is

low, whose problem solving ability is high, who is mentioned by the school administration and staff as a student who behaves rationally, who is at the same age and same grade with the students in the experimental group is assigned into the experimental group as a model for his positive behaviors. The score of this student is not included into the evaluation process.

The assignation of the experiment subjects into the groups are carried out with random sampling technique. While assigning 12 people into each group, Jacobs Mason and Harvill's view (2002) "there can be 10-12 adolescents in group work" and Voltan-Acar's point of view (2005) "there can be a study with 8-13 volunteers" are taken into consideration.

Instrument

The Scale of Determining Conflict Resolution Behavior: In the study, the scale of determining conflict resolution behavior developed by Koruklu (1998) is used. The scale assesses conflict resolution behaviors under two sub-scales which are Aggression and Problem Solving. The highest point that can be taken from each sub-scale is 60 and the lowest point that can be taken from each sub-scale is 12. High point means that the behavior is frequently seen. In other words, having a high point from Aggression sub-scale means a negative situation in terms of conflict resolution while having a high point from Problem Solving sub-scale means a positive situation in terms of conflict resolution.

Data Collection

The scale was applied to 150 students (60 boys and 90 girls) studying in 9th, 10th and 11th grades in the school where the practices were conducted in 2008-2009 education term. The experimental, control, and placebo groups were composed of 18 boys and 18 girls randomly chosen from 77 students whose points of conflict solution aggression subscale were high and whose points of problem solving was low. Also, the data of the student whose aggression score was low and whose problem solving ability was high were not included in the evaluation process.

Experimental Process

The studies started in March in 2009. In the study, experimental process consisting of 10 sessions is conducted with the students participating in exper-

imental group. Each session lasts for 90-120 minutes and each one is held one time in a week. While there are no study for control group, in placebo group, ten weeks interaction group which doesn't include conflict resolution is executed.

Psychodrama sessions usually consist of 3 stages. These stages are warm-up, performance and sharing. In warm-up stage, the group members are prepared for that day's session and various warming games helps this process. Game phase is a group member-based or protagonist-centered stage. This phase can also be called performance stage. Sharing stage is divided into two sections. These sections are role feedbacks and identification feedbacks. It is not possible to construct the psychodrama sessions because the nature of psycho drama is spontaneous. Everything takes place naturally. If the members don't have anything to contribute to the group, the group leader can suggest various warming-up games. In experimental process, in the first session, group rules and construction is established and in the following sessions the warm-up games called "conform in dreams, the best expression of feeling, the meeting of the angers, relaxation exercise, anger machine, black box, contrasts, incomplete works, anxieties, obstacles game, our positive characteristics and our emotions" (Altınay, 2003) are respectively played. After each warm-up game, role feedbacks and identification feedbacks concerning the roles they take part in are asked from the members. Besides, the members are asked to write tales, drama and plays including anger, aggression, conflict resolution and problem solving; they are also asked to draw the picture of the group and the group tree. After these warming-up games, working with the members who are protagonists, the members are enabled to gain insight and to see their awareness levels as it is stated in the aims of psychodrama. In protagonist-based games, role feedbacks and identification feedbacks are obtained at the end of the game. All the members in experimental group participate in all the sessions. After 10 sessions are completed, the members are given the evaluation form of the group works which consists of 4 questions. The summary of the members' evaluations about the sessions and themselves are presented in the findings part.

Statistical Analysis

In order to choose the right test for the analysis of the data, whether the range of the scores obtained from determining conflict resolution behavior scale of the experimental, control, and placebo

groups correspond to the basic assumptions of parametric tests are tried to be tested. Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality analysis is executed in order to determine the analysis technique in the study and given the fact that the data do not have a normal distribution and that the number of the members in each group is below 30, non-parametric test is decided to be used. The data is analyzed with the help of SPSS WINDOWS 15.0 Statistics packet. After forming experimental and control groups, whether there is a difference among the pre-test scores of conflict resolution is tested with the help of Kruskal-Wallis Test and it is established that there isn't any difference within the groups. (Chi-square for the pre-test of aggression= 4.13, $p>.05$; Chi-square for the pre-test of problem solving= 3.62, $p>.05$).

Kruskal-Wallis test is used in order to determine the efficacy of the experiment; Mann-Whitney U test is utilized when there are meaningful differences and when the post-test and permanency test of the experimental group are compared, Wilcoxon Paired Two Sample Test is used. In statistical analysis, the level of significance is accepted as .05

Results

The Findings Regarding the First Hypotheses

It is found out that the conflict resolution scores of the experimental group participating in the psychodrama sessions and those of the control and placebo groups not taking part in the sessions differentiated in terms of aggression and problem solving sub-scales (Aggression; for experimental-control groups: $U=17.00$, $p<.05$; for Experimental-placebo groups: $U=28.00$, $p<.05$; Problem Solving; for experimental-control groups: $U=2.50$, $p<.05$; for experimental-placebo groups: $U=.000$, $p<.05$). It is observed that the problem solving scores increase and aggressions scores decrease in the experimental group participating in the psychodrama sessions compared to the control and placebo groups when the range mean is taken into consideration. This finding shows that psychodrama is effective in conflict resolution.

The Findings Regarding the Second Hypotheses

When the conflict resolution post-test scores and the follow-up scores obtained after the end of 12 week-sessions of the students in experimental group who take part in the psychodrama practices are compared, there was not a significantly differ-

ence between the aggression post-test scores and follow-up test scores and it is observed that the effect of the experiment lasts for 12 weeks. Furthermore, it is found out that there is a significantly difference between problem solving post-test and follow-up test scores and it is established that the effect of the experiment doesn't last for 12 weeks. This shows that psychodrama practices have a long-term effect on aggression and it doesn't have a long-term effect on problem solving.

Discussion

It is clear from the findings of this research that the practices conducted with the students in the experimental group utilizing psychodrama techniques have an effect on the conflict resolution scores. When the post-test scores and the follow-up scores obtained 12-week after post-test measurement from the experimental group are compared, there couldn't be found difference in terms of aggression sub-dimension and it is seen that the effect lasts for a long time. On the other hand, significantly differences are found between pre and post-tests in terms of problem solving sub-dimension and it is established that the effect doesn't last for a long time.

The first hypothesis was constructed depending on the expectations that awareness level of the students participating in the psychodrama sessions conducted with psychodrama techniques concerning the reasons and results of the emergence of the conflict would increase; they would be relaxed after sharing; they wouldn't show aggression by keeping their angers under control and they would perform problem solving behaviors. At the end of 10 sessions, the students stated that their aggression decrease, which enabled them to keep their angers under control while they were expressing their opinions concerning sessions and themselves. They also point out that their problem solving skills developed compared to the previous terms. In the analysis, it is indicated that this expectation is confirmed. When experimental studies related with aggression and conflict resolution are looked through, Hecker (1978), Karataş and Gökçakan (2009), Milosevic (2000), put forward that experimental process is effective in aggression. Amatruda (2006) assert that psychodrama based conflict resolution practices help the students to decrease negative behaviors and to behave in a more positive way in the classroom. Hamamcı and Esen-Çoban (2009) find that 10-week psychodrama practices help the problem solving perceptions to increase.

The findings of that research have similarity with our research results. The fact that group practices conducted using psychodrama techniques in this study is effective in conflict resolution can be clarified with the facts that the experiment subjects express themselves better when they feel themselves in a comfortable and free environment and that they discover something related with them in the roles they take place or in the games with protagonist. Also, the facts that the students in experimental group participate in the study enthusiastically, that each session is conducted with participation of all the members, that the members take part in warming-up games and in the roles with protagonist willingly can be important factors that affect the efficacy of the experimental process.

The analysis shows that there is no difference between the post test measurements and the follow-up test measurements made 12 weeks later in terms of aggression but there is difference in problem solving scores. This situation points that experimental process still has an effect on the aggression till the follow-up tests measurements. This result shows that the adolescents can keep their aggressions under control if right interventions can be put into practice on the adolescents' aggressiveness. When the literature is looked into, Hamamcı (2002), Karataş and Gökçakan (2009), Reis, Quayle, Brett and Meux (2008), establish that the experimental process has a permanent effect after psychodrama practices in terms of the follow-up tests results. As it is seen in all the other studies, this study also has some limitations. This research is limited to the scale of determining conflict resolution behavior and to the students studying in the 9th, 10th and 11th grade in 2008-2009 education terms in Hacı Zekiye Arslan High School in Niğde.

Consequently, it is seen that group practices using psychodrama techniques are effective in the adolescents' conflict resolution scores. Furthermore, as a result of the follow-up test measurement, it is found out that experimental effect on the aggression scores continues until the follow-up test measurements conducted 12 weeks after posttest measurements.

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