

The Effect of Conflict Theory Based Decision-Making Skill Training Psycho-Educational Group Experience on Decision Making Styles of Adolescents*

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Abstract

In this study, the effect of conflict theory based decision making skill training group applications on decision making styles of adolescents was investigated. A total of 36 students, including 18 students in experimental group and 18 students in control group, participated in the research. When assigning students to experimental group or control group, Decision Making Scale for Adolescents, Socio-Economic Status Scale, Problem Solving Inventory, Self-Esteem Scale, Locus of Control Scale, and Parental Style Inventory were used. While the experimental group participated in a psycho-educational based group application that was based upon Conflict Theory, the control group did not participate in any kind of application. The findings of the research indicated that decision making skill training group applications increased the self-esteem level of adolescents and the application of adaptive coping style, whereas there was a decline in the application of maladaptive coping style and this effect seemed to be long term.

Key Words

Adolescents, Decision Making, Decision Making Styles, Decision Making Skill Training.

In this increasingly developing and changing world, people face more frequently the kind of situations that demand decision-making processes. Developing technology in particular has introduced a variety of options for people. An individual in a routine daily life can take very simple decisions but also social, economical, educational, political and professional decisions too that have the potential to change the course of their lives. If the individual

is capable of making effective decisions, this ability accelerates the satisfaction taken from life and sense of wellness; if the reverse situation is true then the individual feels entrapped in life (Çolakkadioğlu & Güçray, 2007). Decisions indeed shape and direct our lives in a certain sense.

Researchers focusing on decision-making process have generally described decision-making as the process of selecting one specific option amongst a list of potential alternatives (Beyt-Marom, Fischhoff, Jacobs-Quadrel, & Furby, 1991; Furby & Beyt-Marom, 1992; Miller & Byrnes, 2001; Nelson, 1984; Von Winterfeldt, & Edwards, 1986; Zunker, 1998) and they have noted that decision-making process is under the influence of intuition, attachment, family, peer pressure, memory, prejudice, information coding, feeling, motivation, stress, psychoactive substances, personality traits and problem-solving (Byrnes, 1998; Klaczynski, Byrnes, & Jacobs, 2001; Sinangil, 1993). Initially, decision-making had been described as an unteachable skill and considered to develop- just like language development, mental maturation and social communication- parallel to

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lings. In the explanatory factor analysis conducted via varimax rotation method ADMQ's Cronbach's alpha coefficient was alternately detected as .79, .78, .77, .65 and .73 for self-esteem, vigilance, panic, cop-out and complacency sub scales; test-retest consistency figures were respectively set as .80, .81, .82, .80 and .86. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted for five-factor model and it was determined that consistency indicator data explained the model effectively (Çolakkadioğlu & Güçray, 2007).

Group-Related Measures Survey Form (GRMSF):

Group-related Measures Survey Form (GRMSF) had been developed by DeLucia-Waack (2006) and was adapted into Turkish by the researcher. The form was filled out by the group leader in measuring the behaviors of members in psycho-educational groups. In the first stage, the expressions available in the form were translated from English into Turkish by the researcher. In order to detect the reliability of form, kappa values were examined. First measurement inter-evaluator kappa values ranged between .70 and .82, final measurement kappa values from .52 to .86, for the first evaluator kappa values ranged between .52 and .91, for the second evaluator kappa values changed between .50 and .94. Consistency levels of the items were found to be sufficient (Şencan, 2005).

Evaluation at the End of Group by Members

(EEGM): Evaluation at the End of Group by Members Form (EEGM) had been developed by DeLucia-Waack (2006) and was adapted into Turkish by researcher. It was used to evaluate the acquisitions of members from psycho-educational groups and their feedbacks related to group process. In the first stage, the expressions available in the form were translated from English into Turkish by the researcher. In order to prevent the potential problems relevant of translation the expressions were analyzed elaborately by linguists closely familiar with both languages then reevaluated by Psychological Counseling and Guidance experts well-experienced in both languages. The necessary changes were conducted subsequent to evaluating the problems determined by these experts. Following the changes, it was implemented on a group of 5 students and it was understood that the expressions were well-understood. Furthermore, it was conducted in the last session of 2nd pilot study and was detected that members had no difficulty in understanding the questions.

Additionally, in the first stage of research, Problem-Solving Inventory developed by Heppner and Petersen (1982) and adapted into Turkish by Taylan

(1990) and Şahin, Şahin, and Heppner (1993); Self-Esteem Scale developed by Bogenç (1995), Locus of Control Scale developed by Nowicki-Strickland (1973) and adapted into Turkish by Öngen (2003); Parenting Style Inventory developed by Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, and Dornbusch (1991) and adapted into Turkish by Yılmaz (2000) have been employed. By means of these scales, it was detected whether there was a differentiation between average scores of the experimental and the control groups.

The Context and Preparation of Decision-Making Skill Training Developed on the Basis of Conflict Theory Based Group Applications

The context of decision making skill training group applications conducted in current research was prepared on the basis of Conflict Theory developed by Janis and Mann (1977). Additionally, GOFER curriculum prepared by Mann, Harmoni and Power (1988) in order to develop decision-making skills was used as the main resource. In addition to main resources, the contexts of programs prepared to serve similar goals were employed (Baron, Laskey, & Brown, 1989; Brown, Campbell, & Laskey, 1990 as cited in Baron & Brown, 1991; Ersever, 1996; Fischhoff, Crowell, & Kipke, 1999; Graumlich & Baron, 1991; Schinke & Gilchrist, 1984; Shanteau, Grier, Johnson, & Berner, 1991; Şeyhun, 2000). In the selection, planning, and application stages of the experimental exercises practiced in sessions, support was received from literature. Subsequent to acquiring the relevant information on the objective, timing, place and manner of each single exercise, a planning was scheduled related to the practice of exercises appropriate to the context of each session (DeLucia-Waack, 2006; Güçray, Çolakkadioğlu, & Çekici, 2009).

Decision-making skill training group applications based on conflict theory was designed as collectively 10 sessions and two pilot studies were conducted. The overall objective of program was to attract attention on the decision-making skills of the adolescents between ages 13-15 related to the decisions that might be effective over life-changing resolutions; by assisting them in gaining attitudes and skills to employ positive decision-making styles, to somehow prevent the negative effects of the lack of relevant skill on academic success, educational guidance and social relations. The program also aims to emphasize the importance of decision-making stages, the significance of widening one's own perspective and selection alternatives as a decision-maker, samples illustrating weak decisions of adolescents

on (Mann, Harmoni, & Power, 1988; Ross, 1981). Consequently, in the group applications decision-making conflict theory was analyzed in five basic steps and in each step the participants were told the procedures to follow. It was determined that towards the last sessions, participants could be able to express decision making steps as a whole and successfully implemented in decision-relevant sample situations. Josephs, Larrick, Steele, & Nisbett (1992) argued that in a decision making situation if the individual was aware of the things to do and acts accordingly this might be a pushing force in the rise of self-esteem. As relevant literature is analyzed, it is detected that in decision making, there is a positive meaningful relationship between self-esteem and general self-esteem (Çolakkadioğlu & Güçray, 2007; Güçray, 1998; Josephs et al. 1992; Thunholm, 2004). In that case the rise in self-esteem is positively effective over self-esteem in decision making (Çolakkadioğlu & Güçray; Güçray).

During adolescence period self-judgment exhibits an increase. An adolescent entering the process of identity acquisition starts to question himself/herself and his/her life. Such questioning may adversely affect self-esteem of adolescents focusing on negative traits. Particularly in situations when they fail to fulfill their responsibilities this situation affects the development of self-esteem negatively (Simmons, 1987; Harter, 1993). Hence rendering support to adolescents in fulfilling their responsibilities, building warm and collaborative relations are positively effective over the development of self-esteem. Harter reports that during adolescence period an adolescent's interactions with people who means a lot for him/her have affirmative effect over his/her self-esteem. Friends are amongst the leading people who mean a lot for an adolescent. Positive feedbacks received from friends can also affect their self-esteem affirmatively (Whitehead & Corbin, 1997). Adolescents in particular need peer-support during this period to achieve a positive self-esteem development (Koon, 1997). In this regard, during decision making skill training group applications too, support was rendered to the participants to identify their decision relevant problems and deal the problems according to the steps; in order to assist them in solving decision problems successfully they were encouraged by leaders and participants and positive feedbacks were provided. Educational value of peer group was taken into consideration. This situation might also have a positive effect on self-esteem levels of participants in decision making.

Vigilance in Decision-Making

Vigilance is defined as the attitude an individual bears while analyzing elaborately positive and negative aspects of a set of alternatives when faced with a decision-making situation. A person acting vigilantly in a decision making situation is the one who possesses knowledge regarding which way to follow that might also be positively effective over self-esteem level as well (Josephs et al. 1992). It was considered that the rise witnessed in experimental group students' scores related to positive coping in decision making was connected to the context of decision making skill training group applications. In decision making skill training group applications, decision making steps were, in each single session, analyzed individually and practiced with participants. Additionally, subsequent to practicing each step, the samples illustrating the application of these steps in decision making situations were examined and by rendering the participants self-instruction training they were given help in solving decision related problems and at the end of process, each participant was able to solve a decision related problem in line with decision making steps. As relevant literature is analyzed, in studies where the effect of decision making skills development programs is tested it has been determined that adolescents have started to employ positive decision making styles (Baron & Brown, 1991; Byrnes, 1998; Byrnes et al. 1999; Fletcher & Wooddell, 1981; Fuligni & Eccles, 1993; Klaczynski et al. 2001; Lewis, 1983; Mann, Harmoni et al. 1989; Simon, 1980; Schvaneveldt & Adam, 1983; Strauss & Clark, 1992; Taal & De Carvalho, 1997). In the current research, too, decision making skill training group applications was effective in rising the scores of positive coping style.

Cop-Out, Panic, Complacency

Cop-out, panic and complacency styles in decision making are classified as negative coping styles and analyzed as a unity. Mann, Harmoni, and Power (1988) state that when individuals are taught vigilant decision making steps in decision making, their self-esteem in decision making shall rise whereas the use of negative coping styles shall go down. During decision-making skill training group applications, sample cases were provided to students to exemplify how to apply decision making steps into decision situations and in the aftermath of this process students were able to solve decision problems in line with decision-making steps. In the end, it was observed that the scores of participants in ado-

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