





The Last 20 Years of Psychodrama in Turkish and International Academic Papers: A Document Analysis Study

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to examine its distribution according to problem areas of the publications in which the effectiveness of psychodrama is examined between 2001 and 2021 in Turkish academic papers and international academic papers.

Method: In this study, document analysis, which is a qualitative data collection method, was used. A total of 48 publications were reached within the scope of this research. Content analysis was performed.

Results and Conclusions: It is noted that studies examining the effectiveness of psychodrama on psychological health in Turkish academic papers and international academic papers are at the forefront and that there is limited research on career development. It has been found that articles and thesis studies in Turkish academic papers mostly focus on the effect of psychodrama on psychological health, social skills, and interpersonal relations; while studies in international academic papers focus on its effect on psychopathology and psychological health. It is seen that the publications examining the effectiveness of psychodrama in Turkish academic papers and international academic papers are most frequently related to young adults, and least frequently related to children and middle-aged adults. When compared to its use as a method, it has been concluded that psychodrama is mostly used as a technique in publications in Turkish academic papers and international academic papers.

Moreno (1963), the founder of psychodrama and group psychotherapies, defined psychodrama as a science that explores reality with a dramatic method and offers the individual an opportunity to have a new, wider experience that goes above and beyond reality. Today, the definition of psychodrama has expanded even further. There are now many definitions of psychodrama, such as a method of psychotherapy in which problems are examined not only by talking, but also staging and encouraging clients to continue and finalize their actions (solving their problems) through dramatization and role-playing (Kellermann, 2013a); a body of well-executed, flexible techniques that can be used in any psychotherapy approach (Naar, 2007); a type of group psychotherapies that approximate real life (Özbek & Leutz, 2011); and a way of living without being punished for our mistakes (Karp, 2013). The diversity in these definitions reflects the potential for diverse application of psychodrama.

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There are many studies in which psychodrama is used both as a method and a technique in individual, group, and family therapies; psycho-education; personal development and interaction groups; and Bibliodrama (a form of role-playing or improvisational theater using Bible stories). Studies have tested its effectiveness on various populations and subject/problem areas, from vocational training to the teaching of course subjects in schools, from children to the elderly, from students to teachers, from nurses to counselors, and from undiagnosed/healthy individuals to diagnosed/disadvantaged individuals (Avest, 2017; Dorothea, 2016; Wieser, 2013; Okur Berberoğlu, 2017; Abu Al Rub, 2018; Maya, Jiménez, Lorence, del Moral and Hidalgo, 2020; Farmer and Geller, 2005; Prima, Putri and Sudargo, 2017; Çoşkun and Çakmak, 2005; Altınkılıç, Ateşçi and Uğurlu, 2020; Karadağ, Kalkan Oğuzhanoğlu, Özdel, Ergin and Kaçar, 2010; Akbıyık, Soygür and Karabulut, 2012; Varma, Karadağ, Kalkan Oğuzhanoğlu and Özdel, 2017; Çiçek, 2019; Konopik and Cheung, 2012; Kılıç, 2019; Parkan, 2015; Gürkan, 2020; Kalkan Oğuzhanoğlu and Özdel, 2005; Aktaş, 2014; Gökçaya and Özdel, 2016; Göveç Taşpınar, 2014; Çınar, 2011; Karataş, 2008; Karataş, 2011; Karataş and Gökçakan, 2009; Orkibi, 2011; Dorothea, 2016; Bakalım, Yörük and Şensoy, 2018; Durmuş, 2019; Şener, 2018; Aytan Erdoğan, 2010; Hamamcı, 2002; Gürkan, 2006; Karataş, 2014; Ulupınar, 2014; Bal and Şener, 2015; Katmer, Demir, Çekiç and Hamamcı, 2020; Chae and Kim, 2017; Işiker and Fırıncı, 2008; Doğan, 2012; Orkibi, 2011; Ulusoy and Güçray, 2019; Ortakale, 2008; Gürkan, 2020; Atlı Özbaş, 2014; Gezgin, 2019; Terzioğlu, 2019; Tavakoly, Namdari and Esmaili, 2014; Agten, 2019).

The results of meta-analyses and systematic literature reviews on studies examining the effectiveness of psychodrama (Kipper and Ritchie, 2003; Wang, Ding, Chen, Zhang, Shen, et al., 2020; Wieser, 2013; Cruz, Sales, Alves, & Moita, 2018; Orkibi and Feniger-Schaal, 2019) support that the evaluations of participants in psychodrama are positive, with no reports of negative side effects (Kellermann, 2013a). Although the history of psychodrama, which has wide use in both clinical and educational settings, dates back to the early 1900s (Imholz, 2008; Ersever, 1994), there is a limited number of studies examining the effectiveness of psychodrama studies conducted before the 21st century (Carroll and Howieson, 1978; Ragsdale, Robert, Cox, Finn, and Eisler, 1996; Carbonell and Partelero Barehmi, 1999; Lambie, Robson, and Simmonds, 1997; Doğaner, 1996; Gökler, 1998; Gündüz, 1996). In other words, interest in psychodrama has increased in the last two decades. Although there are existing psychodrama-related meta-analyses (Kipper & Ritchie, 2003; Wang, Ding, Chen, Zhang, Shen, et al., 2020); reviews (Chung, 2013; Liberali & Grosseman, 2015) and systematic literature reviews on the subject (Wieser, 2013; Cruz, Sales, Alves, & Moita, 2018; Orkibi & Feniger-Schaal, 2019), no study has compared the effectiveness of psychodrama in domestic and foreign studies conducted after the 20th century, that is, in the last 20 years (eg according to criteria such as sample group, problem area, etc.).

As Wieser (2013) stated, it cannot be said that psychodrama has yet been fully accepted by the scientific community. It is thought that systematically examining the domestic and international studies examining the effectiveness of psychodrama will reveal whether psychodrama is effective with evidence-based studies. In addition, it is thought that this study will give an idea about which problem areas psychodramatis will focus on and who needs psychodrama. Moreover, considering that psychodrama is less preferred for mental health professionals who can become psychodramatists after completing a long education period in Turkey; Evidence-based findings on the effectiveness of psychodrama may change the minds of mental health professionals who stay away from psychodrama education. For this reason, it can be said that there is a need to examine the effectiveness of psychodrama with document analysis in the last two decades, both at home and abroad.

Comparing domestic and international studies on the effectiveness of psychodrama is important in terms of both revealing a general pattern regarding effectiveness and revealing the problem areas and age groups within which effectiveness has not been sufficiently examined in certain countries. To close this gap, there is a need for document analysis of studies conducted in the last two decades on the effectiveness of psychodrama. The general purpose of this research is to determine which problem areas and age groups have been the focus of studies published in Turkish and international English-language academic papers in the last two decades and to identify the different ways in which the method/technique of psychodrama was used in these studies. In this context, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the distribution of studies conducted in the last two decades on the effectiveness of psychodrama, both in Turkish and international academic papers, by problem areas?
- 2) What is the distribution of studies conducted in the last two decades on the effectiveness of psychodrama, both in Turkish and international academic papers, by sample population (age groups)?
- 3) What is the distribution of studies conducted in the last two decades on the effectiveness of psychodrama, both in Turkish and international academic papers, by the use of psychodrama as a method or technique?

Method

Research Model

This is a descriptive study, as it aims to reveal which problem areas and age groups have been the focus of studies on the effectiveness of psychodrama in Turkish and international academic papers, as well as to understand the application of psychodrama in these studies as a method or technique. The study applied a document analysis method, which refers to the systematic interpretation and analysis of printed or web-based data (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis is a frequently used data collection method in qualitative research (Merriam, 2013). Documents can be used to collect data about the context in which research was conducted, to analyze the content of the cases observed and the questions asked in research, to provide additional data to existing research, to follow the change and development in a field of inquiry, and to verify the findings obtained from other data sources (Bowen, 2009). In this research, documents were used to collect data on the context and background of the examined studies.

The sample

The sample of the study comprises articles and theses on the effectiveness of psychodrama published between 2001 and 2021 that are scanned and available in the Dergipark, Yök Tez, ERIC, and/or Proquest databases. Forty-eight experimental studies were ultimately included in the sample.

Data collection and analysis

The first step in document analysis is to find appropriate documents. The documents should be necessary and useful (Merriam, 2013), reliable, original, and accurate (Bowen, 2009). As this study aims to review experimental studies on psychodrama published between 2001 and 2021 in Turkish and international English-language academic papers, the researcher utilized the keywords "psychodrama/psychodrama" in search engines. The goal was to collect documents available via widely used and distinguished databases. Bowen (2009) argued that researchers must decide whether the documents they include in the research process are equivalents (with similar content/details) and whether they are suitable for the conceptual framework of the research. For this reason, this research included the articles and theses indexed in the specified databases with experimental design content and similar details that were accessible and published between 2001 and 2021.

The Thesis Search Center (tez.yok.gov.tr) and Dergipark (dergipark.org.tr) databases were used to collect publications and theses in Turkey. The ERIC (eric.ed.gov) database and Proquest database (<https://www.proquest.com/index>) were used to collect theses and publications produced abroad. A total of 63 articles and 45 theses were identified.

A search of the keyword "psikodrama" in the Dergipark database produced 24 domestic articles. A total of 16 articles were published in 2001 or after. Among these articles, 12 addressed the effectiveness of psychodrama. However, some of these articles did not directly examine effectiveness. Five studies were excluded for this reason. One presented a psychodrama case taken from another study, one discussed psychodrama as an educational intervention, one conducted a literature review, one was a book review, and one summarized a thesis (the thesis is included instead of this article). The remaining seven articles were examined. When the word "psikodrama" was searched in all thesis summaries in Yök Thesis Center, the result was a total of 31 domestic theses. Twenty-seven of these theses were published in the period 2001-2021, and 20 of those examined the effectiveness of psychodrama and were included in this research. Seven theses were excluded from the scope of this research as they had content related to drama-based intervention, music and theater education, and analysis of movies and theater plays.

The ERIC database was used to collect international articles published in English. As a result of this search, 31 publications were highlighted. However, only 20 were available, of which 14 articles examined the effectiveness of psychodrama and were therefore included in this research. Four articles — including one describing a game used in psychodrama, one focusing on the process analysis in psychodrama, one focusing on reconceptualizing psychodrama terms, and one discussing the place of role-playing in games and the virtual world — were excluded from the scope of this research. The Proquest database was used to collect theses written abroad. A search produced a total of 21 theses with the word "psychodrama" in the title published in the period 2001-2021. Of the 21, 18 theses examined the effectiveness of psychodrama and were included in this research. A total of four theses — including two analyzing psychodrama concepts, one examining the effectiveness of psychodrama education (for psychodramatists), and one containing a discussion of concepts through cases — were excluded from the scope of this research.

Document analysis involves superficial review, comprehensive review, and interpretation. This iterative process integrates elements of content and thematic analysis. Content analysis is the process of categorizing the document data in regards to the research questions. Thematic analysis is the process of coding data, creating categories, and creating themes about a phenomenon (Bowen, 1999). In quantitative research, content analysis is used when examining documents (Merriam, 2013). In this research, the data obtained from the documents were coded according to the research questions and divided into categories. The triangulation technique is one of the most frequently used methods to ensure internal validity, which is the strongest determinant of significant qualitative research (Merriam, 2013). In this research, the analyst triangulation technique was used: the data were analyzed together by the researchers and the final decisions regarding the categories were reached through the code.

Findings

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics regarding the problem areas (Research Question 1) of the studies included in this research.

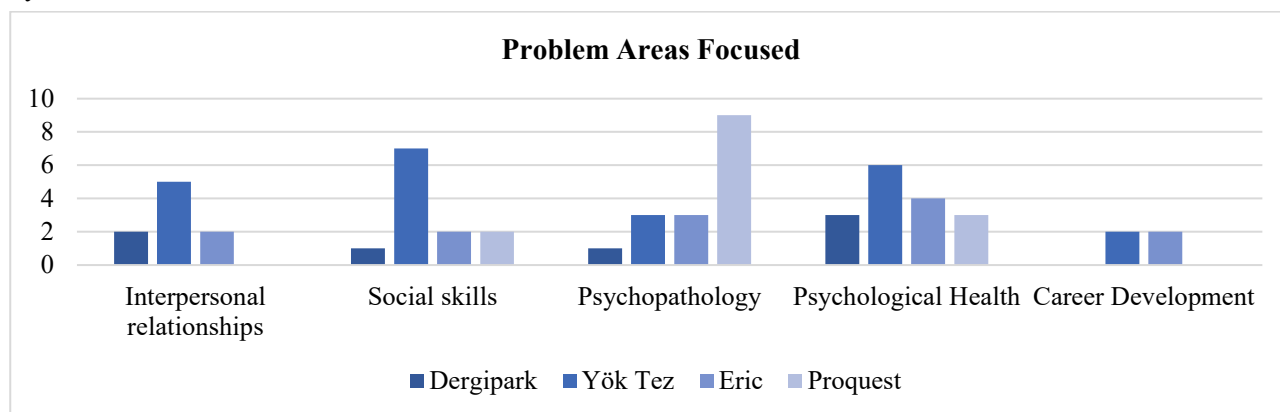
As Table 1 reflects, the problem areas were divided into five categories: psychopathology, psychological health, social skills, interpersonal relations, and career development. While the dominant problem area category among domestic articles was psychological health, domestic theses also often concentrated on the problem area categories of social skills, psychological health, and interpersonal relations. In general, the psychological health category is at the forefront in domestic publications on the effectiveness of psychodrama.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of problem area categories among publications examining the effectiveness of psychodrama, by database

Databases	Problem categories	Codes	f	Number of Publications
Dergipark	Psychopathology	Psychiatric symptoms	1	1
		Self-acceptance	1	
	Psychological health	Life satisfaction	1	3
		Well-being	1	
	Social skill	Empathy	1	1
Interpersonal relations	Building healthy relationships	2	2	
Yök Tez	Psychopathology	Psychiatric symptoms (all sub-dimensions of SCL-90-R)	2	3
		Suicidal tendency	1	
		Autism	1	
		Resilience/psychological empowerment	2	
		Psychological well-being	1	
		Despair	1	
	Psychological health	Life satisfaction	1	6
		Self-respect	1	
		Mood	1	
		Burnout	1	
		Perceived social support	1	
		Anger management	2	
	Social skill	Coping with stress/difficult life events	2	7
		Mediation	1	
		Expressing feelings	1	
		Exam anxiety	1	
	Interpersonal relations	Developing rational beliefs/functional attitudes	3	5
		Building healthy relationships	2	
		Making professional decisions	1	
	Career development	Professional maturity	1	2
Risk management		1		
Eric	Psychopathology	Anxiety	1	3
		Aggression	1	
		Asperger's syndrome	1	
		Self-awareness	2	
	Psychological health	Self-value	1	4
		Subjective well-being	1	
		Adjusting to divorce	1	
		Resilience	1	
	Social skill	Expressing feelings	1	2
		Conflict resolution	1	
	Interpersonal relations	Origin family relationships	1	2
		Building healthy relationships (attachment styles)	1	
	Career development	In-service education	1	2
		Vocational education/teacher training	1	
Proquest	Psychological health	Locus of control	1	3
		Well-being	1	
		Self-sufficiency	1	
		Self-respect	1	
		Discovery of the self	1	
		Trauma	3	
		Suicide risk	1	
	Psychopathology	Anxiety	1	9
		Stress	1	
		Obesity	1	
	Social skill	Neurosis	1	2
		Eating disorders	1	
		Cyberbullying	1	
Conflict resolution		1		

Among the articles published abroad, the problem area most frequently studied was the psychological health category, while these published abroad mostly focused on the category of psychopathology. Figure 1 presents a distribution chart of the problem areas of the examined studies, by database.

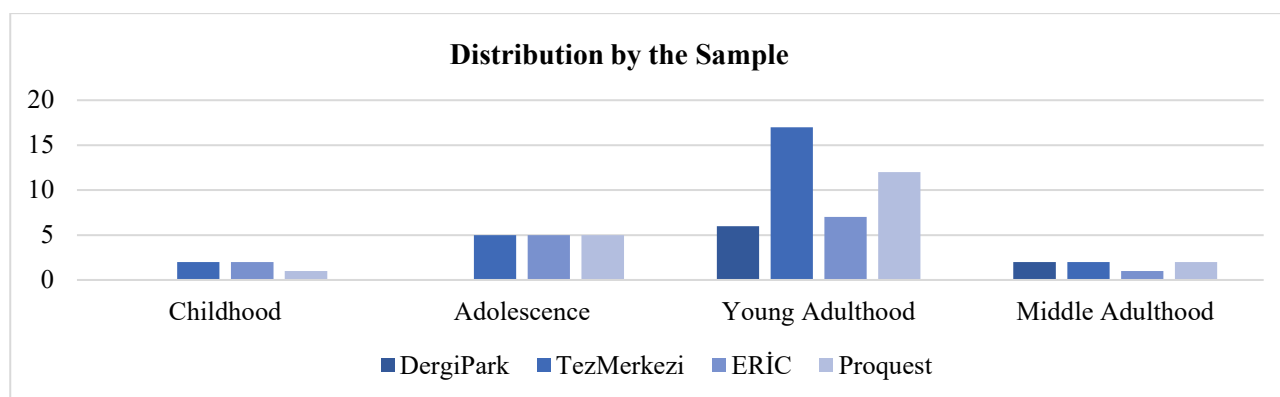
Figure 1. Distribution of problem area categories among publications on the effectiveness of psychodrama, by database



As illustrated in Figure 1, the most commonly addressed problem area in the examined studies on psychodrama is psychopathology; the least commonly addressed problem area is career development. All four databases published studies in almost all categories, with the exception of interpersonal relations and career development. Only the publications available via the Yök Tez and ERIC databases fell into the career development category, and no publications fell into the category of interpersonal relations in the Proquest database.

Figure 2 provides a distribution chart of the sample population (age groups) of the examined studies in Turkish and international academic papers, organized by database.

Figure 2. Distribution of sample populations among publications on the effectiveness of psychodrama, by database

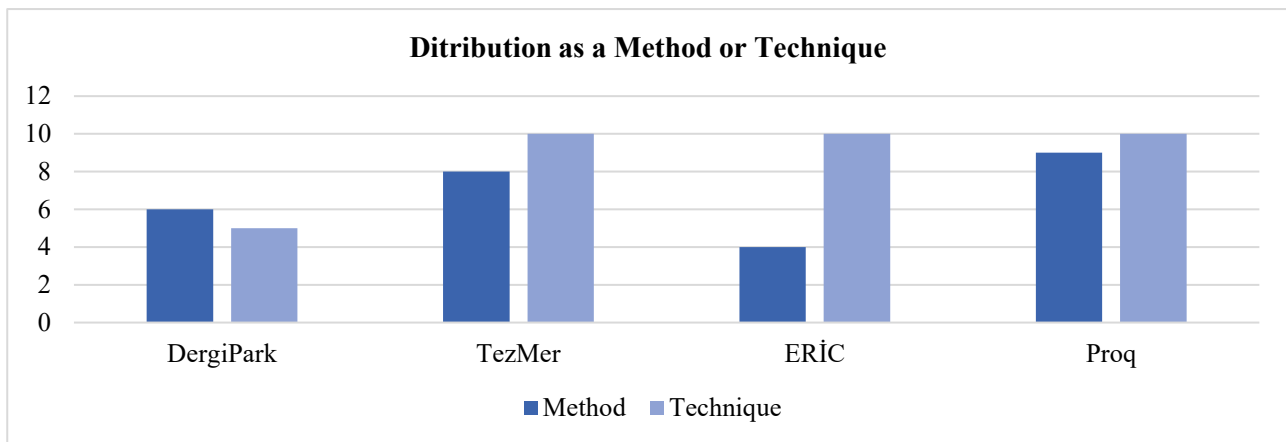


As seen in Figure 2, studies examining the effectiveness of psychodrama were divided into four different sample populations: children, adolescents, young adults, and middle-aged adults. All databases had available publications on the effectiveness of psychodrama for adults. However, the search revealed no Turkish publications on the effectiveness of psychodrama for children and adolescents. Thus, the publications mostly focused on young adults and focused on children and middle-aged adults the least.

Figure 3 provides a distribution chart of the use of psychodrama as a method or technique among the examined studies, organized by database. As the figure illustrates, the publications in all four databases primarily

examined psychodrama as a technique. Psychodrama was least frequently used as a technique in the articles in Turkish academic papers, and least frequently used as a method in international academic papers.

Figure 3. Distribution of applications of psychodrama among publications, by database



Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated articles and theses on the effectiveness of psychodrama published between 2001 and 2021 in Turkish and international English-language academic papers and available in any of four different databases. The study identified the distribution of studies by the problem areas of focus, the sample populations studied, and the use of psychodrama as a method or technique. The studies included in this research were categorized into five problem areas: psychopathology, psychological health, social skills, interpersonal relations, and career development. The results reveal that the articles and theses in Turkish academic papers mostly focused on the effectiveness of psychodrama on psychological health, social skills, and interpersonal relationships. In contrast, the articles and theses in international papers mostly focused on the effectiveness of psychodrama on psychopathology and psychological health. There was limited research on career development. The studies in both Turkish and international academic papers on the effectiveness of psychodrama on psychopathology represent the forefront of research in the field.

Since the action method on which psychodrama is based aims to strengthen communication, increase physical and mental well-being, develop skills, and clarify problems (Blatner, 2002; Konopik and Cheun, 2013), it is logical that studies would examine the effectiveness of psychodrama on psychological health, social skills, and interpersonal relations. The availability of studies on the effectiveness of psychodrama on psychopathology confirms that psychodrama is an approach that can be used on many mental problems (Vieira and Risques, 2013). However, while the studies on the effectiveness of psychodrama both in Turkish and in international academic papers focused primarily on psychological health, the minimal focus on career development can be explained by the developmental needs of those participating in psychodrama. For example, being valued, successful, and loving/loved are at the top of the list for university students who participate in psychodrama (Girgin Büyükbayraktar, Bozgeyikli, & Kesici, 2018), and educational and career development needs are critical for secondary and high school students (Çetinkaya Yıldız, Derin and Boran, 2018). As the majority of participants in psychodrama are young adults according to the studies in this research, it is unsurprising that the primary focus in these studies is on psychological health. In addition, limited or insufficient documentation on a subject may mean that little attention has been paid to the subject under investigation. However, it may also be true that additional resources need to be reviewed (Bowen, 1999). In the literature on interventions in the field of career development, counseling and psycho-education practices are frequently encountered (Turan, 2017; Şeker, 2020; Konuk, 2020; Dahlan, S., Idris, E. and Susanto, 2020; Grant, Springer, Tuttle and Reno, 2021). Based on these findings, it is evident that career development is a problem area to which psychodramatists devote little attention.

According to the theses and studies published in Turkish and international academic papers, the participants in psychodrama are generally young adults. Children are the least common group in psychodrama studies.

Although psychodrama does not have a particular target audience, the majority of participants in the examined studies were between the ages of 20 and 50 (Kellermann, 2013a). Psychodrama is an approach shaped by role-playing that requires basic skills such as mobility, role-playing skills, and giving creative responses (Holmes, Karp and Watson, 2013). It is therefore understandable that the majority of studies were carried out with young adult participants, as individuals in this age group possess most of these skills. Although psychodrama is a very suitable approach for children with limited verbal skills (Blatner, 1993), the fact that psychodrama studies are rarely conducted with children may be due to the fact that psychodramatists have little experience/knowledge/skills in working with children. All kinds of psychotherapy performed with children are different from those performed with adults; to work with children, therapists may need to have the skills to include different methods, such as artistic activities and play dough, in addition to their verbal skills (Gelgard, Gelgard and Yin Foo, 2019). For example, the play therapy approach (Axline, 2020), which is thought to be very close to psychodrama and is frequently used when working with children, requires therapists to have sufficient knowledge about child development and the nature of play (Ray, 2019). Therefore, psychodramatists may prefer not to work with children because working with children requires additional knowledge and skills.

According to the theses and articles examined in this work, psychodrama is used more often as a technique than a method. That psychodrama offers a flexible approach that can be integrated with many other types of therapy (Blatner, 2002) has an impact on the use of psychodrama as a technique in research. In addition, psychodrama training takes many years, and further training is required to apply it as a method (Blatner, 2002). Being a psychodramatist means knowing and applying multiple skills, such as individual psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, group psychotherapy, behavioral therapy, and theater acting (Kellermann, 2013b). These requirements may lead practitioners to use psychodrama as a technique rather than a method. Given that the technical use of psychodrama is less effective in solving problems (Creekmore and Madan, 1981), however, practitioners/researchers need to be encouraged to use psychodrama as a method based on these research findings.

This research performed a document analysis of articles and theses on the effectiveness of psychodrama published between 2001 and 2021 in Turkey and internationally. The included studies were divided into five different problem areas of focus: psychopathology, psychological health, social skills, interpersonal relations, and career development. The findings indicate that studies examining the effectiveness of psychodrama on psychological health both in Turkish and international academic papers are at the forefront of the field, while studies examining its effectiveness on career development are limited. In general, there is a limited number of studies examining the effectiveness of psychodrama on young adults and on children in Turkish and international academic papers. In addition, the results indicate that psychodrama is used more commonly as a technique than a method.

As document analysis is not sufficient to provide all of the details for answering a research question (Bowen, 1999), researchers should plan future studies to understand the problem areas/sample groups that psychodramatists focus on and their views on choosing psychodrama as a method/technique. As only articles and theses published between 2001 and 2021 were taken into consideration in this study, the results do not address which problem areas/sample groups were the focus of psychodrama studies prior to 2001 nor the use of psychodrama as a method/technique prior to this date. For this reason, researchers should plan studies that examine the effectiveness of psychodrama through theses and articles published before 2001. Furthermore, considering only experimental studies that resulted from a keyword search of psychodrama/psikodrama is a limitation of this research. In future studies, researchers should expand their research to include different applications of psychodrama, such as sociodrama and monodrama.

Finally, in order to graduate as a psychodramatist from Abdulkadir Özbek Institute, which provides psychodrama training in Turkey and is a member of FEBTO (Federation of European Psychodrama Training Organizations), it is necessary to pass a psychodrama training that lasts for at least four years and consists of 880 hours in total (<http://www.akadirozbe.com/akadirozbe-mkd/egitim/5475/fepto-egitim-criteria>). These

criteria intimidate mental health professionals in Turkey, so many of them prefer to stay away from psychodrama training. Since this study reveals that psychodrama is used at every developmental level and on many problem areas, from children to the elderly; It is recommended that mental health professionals who stay away from psychodrama in Turkey reconsider their distance regarding psychodrama education, even if it is long-term.

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Data Availability: Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate: Since this is a descriptive study that document analysis is used, ethics committee approval is not required. In this study, there is no explanation about the personal information of the participants. As it is a document analysis study, the information of the participants was handled anonymously.

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