IMPACT OF PSYCHODRAMA ON EMOTIONAL AWARENESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Psikodramanın Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Duygusal Farkındalık ile Psikolojik İyi Oluş Düzeyine Etkisi

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ABSTRACT	ÖZ

Objective: The aim of this study is to determine the effect of psychodrama on emotional awareness and psychological well-being of university students.

Material and Methods: The study was a pretest, posttest intervention study with a control group. The study group included a total of 38 university students, 18 experimental students and 20 control group students. The researchers performed an eleven-session psychodrama group activity on the experimental group. However, they did not intervene in the control group. The researchers collected the data by distributing data collection tools (Information Form, the Emotional Self-Awareness Scale and the Psychological Well Being Scale) to the students before and after the psychodrama study.

Results: The study found that the psychodrama group activity had a great impact on the psychological well being and emotional self-awareness level of the experimental group students (p<0.001). The interaction effect was significant for the total scores of the scales (p<0.05). In the experimental group, it was observed that there was an increase in the scores against time in both scales. The effect size of this change is large ($\eta 2=0.267$, $\eta 2=0.528$).

Conclusion: After the psychodrama group, it was observed that there was an increase in the psychological well-being and emotional awareness skills of the participants.

Keywords: *Psychodrama, emotional awareness, psychological well-being*

Amaç: Bu araştırmada psikodramanın üniversite öğrencilerinin duygusal farkındalık ile psikolojik iyi oluş düzeyine etkisini belirlemek amaçlandı.

Gereç ve Yöntemler: Araştırma, kontrol gruplu bir ön test, son test müdahale çalışması olarak planlandı. Çalışma grubunu, 18 deney ve 20 kontrol grubu olmak üzere toplam 38 üniversite öğrencisi oluşturdu. Deney grubuna 11 oturumluk psikodrama grup etkinliği uyguladı. Kontrol grubuna ise herhangi bir müdahalede bulunmadı. Araştırmacılar, psikodrama çalışması öncesi ve sonrasında öğrencilere veri toplama araçlarını (Bilgi Formu, Duygusal Öz Farkındalık Ölçeği ve Psikolojik İyi Olma Ölçeği) dağıtarak verileri topladı.

Bulgular: Psikodrama grup etkinliğinin deney grubu öğrencilerinin psikolojik iyi oluşları ve duygusal öz-farkındalık düzeyleri üzerinde büyük bir etkiye sahip olduğunu bulundu (p<0.001). Etkileşim etkisi, ölçeklerin toplam puanları için anlamlıydı (p<0.05). Deney grubunda her iki ölçekte de zamana karşı alınan puanlarda artış olduğu görülmüştür. Bu değişikliğin etki büyüklüğü büyüktür ($\eta 2=0.267$, $\eta 2=0.528$).

Sonuç: Psikodrama grubundan sonra katılımcıların psikolojik iyi oluş ve duygusal farkındalık becerilerinde artış olduğu gözlendi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Psikodrama, duygusal farkındalık, psikolojik iyi oluş*

INTRODUCTION

Emotions play a key role in reinforcing psychological health or solving psychological issues. In addition, the success of individuals in relationships requires them to be aware of emotions (1). Emotional awareness denotes identification of one's own and other people's emotions and awareness regarding emotional experiences (2). Emotional awareness includes realizing the importance of one's own and other people's emotions, and determining, discerning and evaluating the premises of emotions. This is a prerequisite for emotional regulation (3). It increases the opportunity for a person to express his/her desires and emotions (4). The person with a higher level of emotional awareness will have a higher level of understanding of his/her environment (5) and coping with problems (6). Individuals with a higher level of emotional awareness will experience more positive emotions, have a higher level of self-respect, be more extrovert, be less socially anxious, have more life satisfaction and determine the positive or negative impacts of experiences than those with a lower level of emotional awareness (1,7). A meta analysis study found that anxious young people had difficulty in understanding emotions, were less aware of their emotions and accepted them less, had a harder time expressing their emotions and thus, reported less self-efficacy (8). Emotional awareness and expression of emotions are related to mental health and psychological well-being of young people, as well as health, search for help, family and peer relations. Lower emotional awareness is a risk factor for the health and social relations of young people (9).

Emotional awareness is correlated with mental health and psychological well-being. Psychological well-being is one of the core concepts of positive psychology and it comprises the goals of a person in life, his/her awareness of his/her potential and quality of his/her relations with other people (10). Individuals can develop a positive sense of self, arrange his/her needs, desires and environment, establish secure and positive relationships with other people, understand life, act autonomously and independently and realize and develop his/her present

capacity through psychological well-being (11). Individuals with a higher level of psychological well-being will trust themselves and other people and be more responsible. As they have a positive functionality, they will be able to develop and reinforce their own potential, have life goals and establish positive relationships with other people (12).

Developed by J.L. Moreno, psychodrama is a psychotherapy method based on dramatizing incidents, emotions and thoughts and roleplaying (13). In psychodrama, learning occurs by experiencing cognitive, affective and behavioral goals. Therefore, psychodrama sessions aim to create catharsis, acquire insight, have emotional awareness, develop logical thoughts, enable learning and create a behavioral change (14-16). In psychodrama sessions, group members spontaneously dramatize incidents in their lives, as well as their present emotions and thoughts. This aims to generate a solution to existing problems of individuals and raise their awareness (17). A study conducted by Albal et al. evaluated the impact of psychodrama on emotional awareness and communication skills and they conclude that psychodrama could be used in raising emotional awareness (18). We aimed to evaluate the impact of group activity performed by using experiential psychodrama technics on emotional awareness and psychological well-being in university students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Ethical approval was obtained from the Health Sciences Scientific Research Ethics Committee of Necmettin Erbakan University (Date:07.07.2021; number 12/67). The study was an interventional study with a pretest-posttest control group. The study had two hypotheses. The first hypothesis was that psychodrama would increase emotional awareness in students. The second hypothesis was that psychodrama would increase psychological well-being in students. The researchers conducted the study between August and September 2021.

Study Sample

The researchers conducted the study with university students aged 18 to 25 years. In order to determine the study group, the researchers announced the study to the university students via social media. The researchers informed the students that the psychodrama sessions were to take place online due to the pandemic restrictions. They also informed the students of the goals, hours and time of the psychodrama group and how the group sessions would be carried out. Following the psychodrama sessions, the researchers were to record the process for each session in written form. The students who agreed to take part in the psychodrama group activity, volunteered to share their experiences and were older than 18 years formed the experimental group, while the students who only agreed to take part in the survey study formed the control group. In addition, the study excluded the students who had been diagnosed with a mental disorder and were taking any psychotropic medicine. In psychodrama applications, the number of groups is planned to be 15-20 for the application to be effective (14). The researchers specified the number of people to take part in the psychodrama sessions to be 20 each, by the nature of the application. However, two students from the experimental group left the application. The research was conducted with 18 experimental and 20 control groups. The power of the study was 80%.

Data Collection Tools

The researchers conducted the psychodrama applications in an online medium and collected the data via an internet-based survey (Google Forms) before and after the application.

Information Form: A form of five questions questioning the age, grade, gender, accommodation and department of students.

The Emotional Self-Awareness Scale (ESAS-10): The researchers measured the emotional self-awareness level using the ESAS-10, developed by Cooper & Sawaf (1997) (19). Tatar et al. adapted the scale into Turkish and examined its psychometric properties (2). According to the data acquired, the ESAS-10 was found to be valid and reliable. The five point scale (strongly inappropriate, slightly appropriate, a little appropriate, mostly appropriate, fully appropriate) had ten items. Reverse items in the scale were items 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10. The scale was created for individuals aged 18 to 66 years. The Cronbach's Alpha of the scale was 0.87 (2). The present study found the Cronbach's Alpha to be 0.81.

The Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS): Diener et al created the scale and Telef adapted it into Turkish (20,21). The seven point Likert scale had eight items and a single factor. The lowest and highest possible scores to be obtained from the scale were 8 and 56, respectively. A high score obtained from the scale indicated that the person had many psychological resources and power. The Cronbach's Alpha of the scale was 0.80 (21). The present study found the Cronbach's Alpha to be 0.70.

Psychodrama Interventions

The researchers conducted psychodrama sessions for the students to acquire role flexibility, identify their own and other members' emotions via catharsis and develop their psychological well-being. They conducted the sessions online two hours a week under the guidance of a psychodrama therapist and an assistant for eleven weeks. After each session, the researchers recorded the sessions in written form without specifying any names by using the nicknames picked by the students themselves during the first week. However, the researchers made no intervention in the control group. As the psychodrama was based on spontaneity and action, the admin performed warmup games aimed at self-identification and identification of emotions and psychological well-being, as well as protagonist-centered studies which developed during the group activities. The researchers made the psychodrama interventions according to the warmup, action and sharing phases. The warmup phase had warmup games (22). The researchers arranged the studies in accordance with the online medium.

Psychodrama Process

In the present study which was grounded on emotional awareness and psychological well-being, the researchers shaped the sessions according to the overall purpose of the study and the needs of the group members.

Session 1: The researchers gave theoretical information to the group members about psychodrama. Then the researchers specified the group process and group rules and all group members shared their expectations from this process with the group in turn. The researchers obtained informed consent form from the participants via an online form. In this session, the group members played an empathic introduction game by telling the meaning and story of their names in order to know each other and create a group cohesion. They also played a warmup game (social atom activity for the members to realize their social bonds) which included the separation of the participants and other family elders into regions according to their places of birth in order to observe the common grounds related to the sociometric structure.

Session 2: This session started by sharing the summary of the previous session and experiences and emotions of the group members in the past week. The students played a warmup game called "A letter to the past". The researchers performed a protagonist activity aimed at a specific student's letter.

Session 3: This session asked the participants to dream about a fairy tale they liked or were influenced by and then draw his/her favorite part of the fairy tale. During the study, the researchers performed a protagonist activity aimed at a specific student's favorite part of the fairy tale. Following the protagonist activity of the participant, the group members shared their own processes besides the fairy tale activity.

Session 4: The participants shared their birth stories from a psychodramatic aspect. They shared their stories by associating the senses of courage, spontaneity and affinity in life and the state of feeling good with the moment of birth. One of the participants stated that he/she was too affected by his/her gender and being a twin and wanted to talk about it.

Session 5: The researchers performed a social role atom activity for the participants. The activity stressed the social role the participants had to play in life the most by centering the role, as well as other roles they were influenced by.

Session 6: The participants played a warmup game for their neglected emotions. They expressed when they experienced that neglected feeling for the first time and why they stopped feeling it. All participants talked to the people who they thought had caused that neglected feeling by changing roles via the empty chair technic.

Session 7: In this session, a voluntary member stated that he/she had been touched by the neglected feelings activity that had been performed during the previous week. He/she indicated that he/she always thought about a certain incident in his/her childhood and wanted to share this with the group. He/she stated that he/she still felt regret and anger about his/her childhood and wanted to share it with other people. He/she reanimated the incident via role play. The protagonist was encouraged to express the emotions he/she could not express via group experience. In the sharing phase, the group members shared similar experiences and emotions and gave feedback to the protagonist. In the session, the members realized that even if we ignored our emotions, they continued to affect us. The members shared things related to this.

Session 8: The researchers asked the participants to think about a positive quality they had. Then the researchers asked the participants to share that quality with the group based on a memory without mentioning the name of the quality. The group members tried to guess this positive quality. The researchers performed a protagonist activity with a member who stated that he/she was negatively affected by a quality that he/she thought was positive.

Session 9: The researchers asked the participants to close their eyes and specify a photo frame from their life. The members were randomly separated into groups of two in an online medium. The researchers asked the members to share that photo frame from their life with their partner in the groups. Following the activity, the

members shared with each other within the group. The researchers performed a protagonist activity with a member who shared a memory from when he/she was five years old. In this session, the group members shared similar memories from their childhood after the protagonist's activity. In addition, they realized how these memories affected their present life.

Session 10: In this session, the participants played a game called "You have got a package in the mailbox". The researchers asked the participants to dream of a package that would make them feel good and roleplay it.

Session 11: The researchers stressed the experiences of the group members in the psychodrama via a closing spectrogram and received feedback. The group members evaluated the session processes. They expressed what the psychodrama activities had so far added to them in terms of sensuality and state of feeling good. They shared the changes and awareness occurring in themselves.

Statistical Analysis

In order to reveal the similarities between the categorical sociodemographic characteristics of the experimental and control groups, the chi-square test and continuous variables were tested. In the relevant literature, results regarding kurtosis and skewness values of variables between +2.0 and -2.0 are considered normal distribution (23). It was determined that the research variables showed normal distribution. The evaluation of the data, the researchers used the dependent and independent samples t-test to analyze the PWBS and ESAS-10 scores of the students and the repeated measures variance analysis to evaluate the influence quantity of the program. The researchers calculated the influence quantity values via Cohen (1988) which provided comparisons for identifying small ($\eta2=0.01$), medium ($\eta2=0.06$) and big ($\eta2=0.14$) influences (24,25). The researchers tested the results at $p<0.05$ significance level.

RESULTS

The sociodemographic characteristics of the participants in the experimental and control groups are given in Table 1. The mean of the participant's age in the experimental group was 20.33±0.91, and for the participants in the control group, it was 21.75±13.23. It was found that there was no significant difference between the groups in terms of the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants in the experimental and control groups, such as age, gender, grade level, and education department (p>0.05) (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison of similarity between groups before the research.

Characteristic	Experimental	Control	Test value and significance	
	N (%)	N (%)	X²	p
Gender				
Female	17 (94.4)	16 (80.0)	1.310	0.198
Male	1 (5.6)	4 (20.0)		
Department				
Nursing	16 (89.9)	18 (90.0)	0,108	0.914
Other	2 (11.1)	2 (10.0)		
Class				
2	11 (61.1)	14 (70.0)	1.053	0.299
3	6 (33.3)	5 (25.0)		
4	1 (5.6)	1 (5.0)		
Age			t	p
	M (SD)	M (SD)	1.798	0.81
	20.33 (0.91)	21.75 (3.23)		

X² =Chi-squared test, t= Independent t test, SD: Standard deviation

In the experimental group, the mean PWBS score was 45.72±2.24 before the psychodrama group activity and 50.44±53.20 after the activity. There was a statistically significant difference between the mean PWBS scores

of the experimental group students at a high level (p<0.001). In the experimental group, the mean ESAS-10 score was 37.40±5.90 before the psychodrama group activity and 46.60.44±2.37 after the activity. There was a statistically significant difference between the mean ESAS-10 scores of the experimental group students at a high level (p<0.001). In the control group, the mean PWBS score was 45.80±6.10 before the psychodrama group activity and 44.05±7.00 after the activity. There was no statistically significant difference between the

mean PWBS scores of the control group students (p=0.532). In the control group, the mean ESAS-10 score was 39.20±5.36 before the psychodrama group activity and 36.95±7.59 after the activity. There was no statistically significant difference between the mean ESAS-10 scores of the control group students (p=0.095). There was a significant difference between the PWBS and ESAS-10 first and last measurement scores of the experimental and control group students (p=0.004; p<0.001) (Table 2).

Table 2: Intragroup and intergroup comparison of the mean PWBS and ESAS-10 scores of the experimental and control group members before and after the psychodrama.

Scales	Group	Pretest			Posttest			Test value and significance
		Min.	Max.	M(SD)	Min.	Max.	M(SD)	
PWBS	Experimental	41	52	45.72(2.24)	43	55	50.44(53.20)	t=-5.228, p<0.001
	Control	30	54	45.80(6.10)	29	56	44.05(7.00)	t=0.636, p=0.532
		t=-0.051, p=0.960			t=3.107, p=0.004			
ESAS-10	Experimental	27	50	37.40(5.90)	41	50	46.60.44(2.37)	t=--7.246, p<0.001
	Control	30	50	39.20(5.36)	24	50	36.95(7.59)	t=2.1756, p=0.095
	Experimental	t=-0.992, p=0.328			t=5.436, p<0.001			

t=Independent t test; t=Paired samples t test;*p<0.05 is statistically significant, Min:Minimum, Max: Maximum, M: Mean, SD: Standard deviation, PWBS: The psychological well being scale, ESAS: The emotional self-awareness scale

The researchers evaluated the time*group interaction of the measurements obtained in the study via the repeated measures two-way variance analysis. They found the impact of the PWBS and ESAS-10 according to time and group to be significant (p<0.05). In addition, the psychodrama group activity had a great impact (Table 3).

Table 3: Change in the ESAS-10 and PWBS in time.

Scales		Groups	Time	Groupsx Time
PWBS	F-value	4.497	6.923	13.138
	p	0.041*	0.012*	0.001*
	η^2	0.108	0.161	0.267
ESAS-10	F-value	6.078	14.968	40.274
	p	0.018*	<0.001*	<0.001*
	η^2	0.141	0.294	0.528

F=The repeated measures variance analysis; *p<0.05 is statistically significant; 95% confidence interval of partial η^2
PWBS: The psychological well being scale, ESAS: The emotional self-awareness scale

DISCUSSION

It is noteworthy to be aware of emotions in order to arrange life and relationships. As emotional awareness includes having information about a specific emotion, it adds a value to the individual in coping with stress and making sense of incidents. It does not seem to be possible for an individual without emotional awareness to realize his/her inner world, evaluate his/her desires and needs and display appropriate behaviors for his/her emotions. The present study found that the psychodrama application was an effective method for raising emotional awareness. A study stated that psychodrama helped nursing students understand and recognize themselves, express their emotions, show empathy towards other people and develop their creativity (15). Another study found that psychodrama helped university students solve their emotional problems and interpersonal conflicts (26). Dogan et al. concluded that psychodrama helped students develop self-awareness

and empathy (27). Kaya et al. evaluated the impact of the psychodrama group application on subjective well-being of nursing students and they found that psychodrama had a significant impact on students to recognize themselves and their emotions and create a life purpose (28). Studies conducted with other groups also found similar results. Şener et al. found that psychodrama helped university students with alexithymia recognize and express their emotions (29). Boroomandian et al. stated that the interaction and psychodrama oriented group therapy helped adolescents for development of emotional awareness (30). Pairing, role changing and mirroring techniques used in psychodrama may help all group members understand themselves and other people better (27). In the sharing phase of the psychodrama session, individuals share what emotions are evoked by their stage roles and what these roles remind in their lives. This will help all group members feel, examine and arrange their own emotions. By this way, psychodrama may raise emotional awareness in all group members (29).

Psychological well-being enables an individual to think that life has a meaning and make his/her own decisions. In addition, it is a noteworthy concept for the individual to complete his/her personal development and acquire autonomy. One of the significant findings in the present study was that psychodrama had an impact on psychological well-being. Albayrak et al. examined the impact of psychodrama on well-being of university students and found that the psychodrama program increased psychological well-being levels (31). These results were in agreement with the current study. Mosavi H et al. determined the effectiveness of psychodrama on social anxiety, self-respect and psychological well-being of students diagnosed with social anxiety disorder found that psychodrama decreased social anxiety and increased self-respect and psychological well-being (32). Kaya and Deniz's study stated that the psychodrama group therapy was a practicable method for developing the psychological well- being level of university students (33). A study conducted by Kaya et al. examined the impact of the psychodrama group

application on the psychological well-being and self-acceptance level of nursing students and they found that the application increased the mean psychological well-being scores of the nursing students (34). The literature had findings which were not in agreement with the our study result. A psychodrama group application performed by Atintaş and Şimşek with university students concluded that the application had no significant impact on the psychological well-being of students (35). A systematic review stated that there was a need for more research in order to understand the potential advantages of psychosocial well-being (36).

In conclusion, the present study found that psychodrama was an effective method for emotional awareness and psychological well-being of university students. In line with these results, it is recommended to use psychodrama in preventive mental health services.

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