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The Effect of Reality Therapy-Based Career Counseling Psychoeducation Program on High School Students

ABSTRACT

Career, which refers to the sum of an individual's experiences, particularly in the process of acquiring a profession, is not limited to the choice of a particular occupation, but is shaped by the skills and achievements acquired by an individual throughout his or her life. In this study, the effectiveness of the Reality Therapy-Based Career Counseling Psychoeducation Program (RTCCP) developed for high school students, which is one of the important processes in career development, on individuals' career engagement, depression, anxiety and stress levels was examined. In the study, a quasi-experimental design with pre-test, post-test, follow-up, control group was used. The research group consisted of 20 11th grade students. 10 individuals were assigned to the experimental group and 10 to the control group. In the experimental group, the researcher administered five sessions, one session per week, of the RTCCP, which was applied as a group. The Career Engagement Scale (CAS) and Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) were used as data collection tools. Mann Whitney U Test and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test were used to determine the effect of the RTCCP applied to the experimental group. As a result of the study, it was found that RTCCP was effective in increasing secondary school students' career engagement and decreasing their depression, anxiety and stress levels. The findings were discussed within the framework of the related literature and recommendations were presented.

Keywords: Adolescence, anxiety, career engagement, depression, reality therapy, stress.

Introduction

Career refers to the sum of the processes that individuals go through in their professional life and is generally associated with progression, development and experience in a profession or field of work. A career is not limited to the choice of a particular profession but is shaped by the experiences, skills and achievements of the individual throughout his/her life (Savickas, 2002). Although the concept of a career is traditionally associated with a profession or a job, today it has a broader perspective. New career models allow individuals to manage their careers in a more flexible and dynamic way. In this context, the definition of a career may vary according to individuals' goals, values and life circumstances (Çelenk, 2022). However, it is generally accepted that a career is an important element that affects an individual's social identity, social status and quality of life. Therefore, career planning and management play a critical role in both the professional and personal development of individuals (Creed & Hood, 2009).

One of the important roles of a career is to provide financial security and independence (Bea & Yi, 2019). Earning a regular income helps to meet one's own needs and achieve financial freedom. In addition, individuals find the opportunity to realise themselves through their careers. Achieving success by discovering and developing personal talents provides great satisfaction to the individual (Farrugia, 2021). Another important role of career is to expand one's social environment and increase the number of people with whom one interacts (Jiang, 2017). Especially the relationships established with colleagues and professional staff contribute to the social life of the individual. In addition, people find the opportunity to provide useful services to society through their careers. Specializing in their field of work and responding to the needs of society gives meaning and purpose to the individual (Savickas, 2008). This meaning and purpose are sometimes internalized and become part of a person's identity. Through their profession, people define themselves and determine their status in society (Meijers & Lengelle, 2012). These considerations show that a career

has important roles in people's lives in many aspects such as financial security, personal development, social relations, contribution to society and gaining identity.

When the studies on careers are examined, it is noteworthy that these studies are especially related to adolescents. One reason for this may be that adolescence is a critical period in terms of career development as it marks an important transition from childhood to adulthood. During this time, young people begin to explore their interests, values and talents, as well as considering potential career paths (Eriksson et al., 2018). The decisions they make and the experiences they have during adolescence can significantly shape their future career trajectories. Adolescence is a period of identity formation, and career exploration is an integral part of this process (Batoöl & Ghayas, 2020). As young people begin to understand their unique strengths, weaknesses and preferences, they can begin to envision the types of jobs that match their sense of self. It is also a period of rapid skill development in both academic and extracurricular areas (Munadi et al., 2021).

In addition, during adolescence, young people set goals for their future, both in terms of educational and career expectations. This goal-setting process can provide a sense of direction and motivation that can be particularly useful during the challenging teenage years (Araújo et al., 2007). In particular, young people who participate in career development activities can gain a better understanding of the education and training required for different careers. This knowledge can help them make informed decisions about their future education and career paths. Moreover, career development activities such as personality assessments and interest inventories can help adolescents better understand their unique characteristics and preferences. This self-awareness can lead to more satisfying career choices and a greater sense of purpose (Özek & Ferraris, 2018). Based on these ideas, it can be said that career development during adolescence is important to help young people find their way into adulthood and make informed decisions about their future careers. It can also be stated that by participating in career exploration activities, developing relevant skills and setting goals, adolescents can increase their opportunities to build satisfying and successful careers.

Various career development theories emphasize the importance of adolescence in shaping career choices and aspirations. For example, Super's Life Course, Life Span Theory suggests that career development is a lifelong process and that adolescence is a crucial stage for self-concept development and career exploration (Hartung, 2013). Similarly, Ginzberg's Developmental Theory states that development at this stage, when adolescents begin to

explore various career options and evaluate their interests and abilities, is necessary for making informed career choices in adulthood (Ginzberg, 1972). Holland's Career Choice Theory argues that during adolescence, individuals begin to identify personality traits and interests that can guide their career exploration and decision-making processes (Nauta, 2013). Social Cognitive Career Theory emphasizes that adolescents shape their career aspirations and paths by being influenced by their social contexts, especially family and peer support (Kantamneni et al., 2018). As can be understood from these theories, it can be said that adolescence is a critical period for career development and choice, when individuals begin to explore their identities, interests and potential career paths.

There are various factors that can negatively affect career development during adolescence, which involves a process of choice and development; in particular, adolescents' inability to recognize their own characteristics such as interests, abilities, values and personality traits is one of the main factors (Kalafat, 2014). Adolescents often have difficulty in accurately defining their interests and abilities. This inability may result from limited exposure to various career options and lack of information (Dönmezoğulları, 2020). Without a clear understanding of their strengths and preferences, they may find it difficult to explore career paths that align with their true selves. Moreover, when adolescents lack insight into their own characteristics, they may feel overwhelmed by the multitude of career options available (Douglas & Shepherd, 2002). This confusion can lead to indecision or reliance on external influences such as peers or societal expectations rather than making choices that align with their personal values and aspirations.

Adolescents may find it difficult to take responsibility for their career choices, especially if they are unsure of their identity. This avoidance may result in a passive approach to career development. As a result, adolescents may be drawn to careers based on external pressures rather than actively pursuing paths that reflect their true interests (Anderson et al., 2019). Moreover, external factors such as family expectations, peer pressure, and educational environments can further complicate an adolescent's ability to make career decisions (Akkoç, 2009). For example, if family members prioritize certain careers or peers influence choices based on trends, adolescents may feel obliged to conform, which can lead to dissatisfaction and dissonance with their true selves. Adolescents may experience anxiety or fear about their career decisions, especially if they perceive high risk in their choices (Aşık & Akgül, 2022). This psychological pressure may hinder their ability to explore options freely and lead to avoidance behaviors, further complicating their career development.

As a result, adolescents' inability to recognize their own characteristics and external pressures, combined with psychological factors, can create significant challenges in career decision-making. Encouraging self-discovery and providing environments that support mental health can help adolescents develop a clearer understanding of their identity and make more informed career choices.

An important thing to know about adolescents' mental health is that depression, stress and anxiety during adolescence have a significant negative impact on career development (Walker & Peterson, 2012). These mental health issues can create barriers that affect decision-making, self-perception, and overall well-being (Bishop & Gagne, 2018) and ultimately affect career trajectories. Adolescents experiencing depression, stress or anxiety often struggle with self-awareness. They may have difficulty recognizing their own interests, abilities, values and personality traits (Cho, 2023). This lack of self-recognition can lead to career choices that are not aligned with their true selves. Mental health problems can also impair cognitive functions such as concentration, memory and critical thinking. This impairment makes it difficult for adolescents to effectively evaluate career options and make informed decisions (Messersmith et al., 2008).

Adolescents struggling with these issues may avoid taking responsibility for their career choices. They may leave decision-making to their parents, peers or societal expectations. This can lead to a lack of ownership in their career path. Research shows that high levels of stress and anxiety are associated with lower academic performance, which can limit career opportunities (Ahmed & Julius, 2015; Hegenauer, 2018). This suggests that adolescents' inability to recognize their own characteristics, coupled with the challenges posed by depression, stress and anxiety, can significantly hinder their career development (Gao & Eccles, 2020). Adolescence is characterized by the discovery of identity and the beginning of decision-making processes that shape future career paths (Germeijs & Verschueren, 2009; Pellerone et al., 2015). The choices they make help them understand their interests, values and abilities. When adolescents actively participate in decision-making, they gain insight into their preferences, which later supports more informed career choices (Ahmed & Ahmed, 2017; Messersmith et al., 2008). Taking responsibility for career-related choices fosters a sense of agency and autonomy in adolescents. This empowerment can increase their motivation and confidence to pursue their goals (Araújo et al., 2007). When adolescents feel that they have control over their decisions, they are more likely to stick to their chosen paths and make efforts to achieve their career goals (Ahmed & Ahmed, 2017).

Being involved in the decision-making process enables adolescents to develop critical skills such as problem solving, planning and evaluating options (Jonassen, 2012). These skills are necessary to overcome the complexity of career choices and adapt to changing circumstances in the future. The ability to make informed decisions also prepares them for the responsibilities they will face in adulthood (Solberg et al., 2002). Moreover, although making choices is important, external pressures from family, peers and society can complicate this process. Adolescents may feel obliged to conform to the expectations of others instead of pursuing their true interests. This may lead to dissatisfaction, disconnection and lack of authentic decision-making in their careers (Bland & Roberts-Pittman, 2014). These views show that the ability to make choices and take responsibility during adolescence is very important in career development. From this perspective, it can be said that the career development process in adolescence can be examined with Reality Therapy.

Reality Therapy is an approach developed by William Glasser that focuses on helping individuals take responsibility for their own behavior and make better choices to improve their lives (Wubbolding, 2015). Emphasizing that individuals are responsible for their own behavior and choices, Reality Therapy encourages people to realize that they have control over their behavior and can make positive changes in their lives. It also states that all behaviors are chosen when individuals are trying to meet their basic needs. Therefore, it aims for individuals to evaluate their current behaviors and make better choices to improve their lives (Glasser, 2014).

This approach can have a significant impact on career development in several ways. Reality therapy encourages clients to recognize their interests, values and abilities, which is important for making informed career choices (Mason & Duba, 2009). It also emphasizes personal responsibility, empowering individuals to take control of their career decisions and commit to their chosen paths (Hashemi et al., 2019). It helps individuals develop critical skills such as problem solving, planning and evaluating options. In addition, focusing on making better choices in the present, which Reality Therapy emphasizes, can help individuals approach career development in a more positive and proactive manner (Razavi & Sedrpoushan, 2023).

Reality Therapy emphasises personal responsibility, self-determination and the ability to make choices to meet one's basic needs (Glasser, 2014). Adolescents often find it difficult to take responsibility for their career choices due to external pressures (e.g. societal expectations, peer influence) or internal barriers (e.g. indecision, anxiety)

(Punch, 2005). In this context, Reality Therapy has been used to help adolescents recognise their capacity to make informed career choices, to empower them to take ownership of their career paths rather than relying on external influences, and to promote a sense of agency, which is critical for motivation and long-term commitment to career goals.

In addition, Reality Therapy emphasises evaluating one's current behaviour and making better choices to achieve life goals (Lojk & Lojk, 2020). This directly supports career development, including self-assessment, goal setting and decision making. Therefore, in line with the individual's career exploration process, Reality Therapy was used to identify their interests, values, abilities and aspirations, to assess and change behaviours that may hinder career progression (e.g. procrastination, avoidance), to make realistic and achievable plans for educational and career goals, and to align with their sense of self. This attitude can be supported by the findings in the literature.

A study investigating the potential impact of implementing Reality Therapy in schools focused on the impact of the therapy on students' academic achievement, personal/social development and career decision-making skills (Mason & Duba, 2009). In the study conducted by Hong and Park (2018), a career counseling program that includes the principles of Reality Therapy was developed and the positive effects of this program on individuals' career development were revealed. Bedford et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of creativity and self-expression in the career decision-making process and determined the contributions of programs that include these skills to people's careers. Similar findings were found in a mixed-method study. In this study, the role of social-contextual factors in shaping individuals' career interests and aspirations was emphasized (Messersmith et al., 2008). These findings suggest that intervention programs based on Reality Therapy support career development by increasing self-awareness, promoting responsibility, improving decision-making skills, and developing a positive mindset. Although career-related intervention programs using Reality Therapy are limited, the principles of this approach can be effectively applied to support individuals in their career development journey.

Purpose of the Study

As a result of the review of the relevant literature, no career development intervention program based on Reality Therapy has been encountered in Turkey. In this context, in this study, an intervention program content was prepared based on the choice and responsibility consciousness of Reality Therapy, which will enable the

individual to realize his/her educational and personal characteristics, create career goals, and options in line with these goals, and make plans in line with these target options. As a result, the problem of the study is to test the effectiveness of the Reality Therapy-Based Career Counseling Psychoeducation Program (RTCCP) prepared to support the career development process of adolescents.

In line with this general objective, the research questions:

- There is a significant difference between the rank means of CAS pre-test and post-test scores, as well as the difference between the rank means post-test and follow-up test scores of individuals who participated in the RTCCP. There is no significant difference between the rank means CAS pre-test and post-test scores of individuals who did not participate in the RTCCP.
- There is a significant difference between the rank means pre-test and post-test scores of the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) and also a difference between the rank means post-test and follow-up test scores of the individuals who participated in the RTCCP. There is no significant difference between the rank means pre-test and post-test scores of the individuals who did not participate in the RTCCP.

Method

Research Model

An experimental design was used in this study. In this context, it was tried to reveal the change in career engagement, depression, anxiety and stress levels of the study group before and after the Reality Therapy-Based Career Counseling Psychoeducation Program (RTCCP) developed by the researcher. The dependent variable of the study was students' career engagement, depression, anxiety and stress levels, and the independent variable was the RTCCP. In this study, a quasi-experimental study was conducted with experimental and control groups using a 2x3 design with pre-test, post-test and follow-up measurements (Büyüköztürk, 2009).

Study Group

The participants were a total of 20 high school students, 10 female and 10 male, who met the inclusion criteria. These were; (1) 11th grade students; (2) students signed the informed consent form; (3) parents signed the informed consent form. In addition, students who received any psychological help and had any psychiatric diagnosis at the time of the study were excluded from the study. Assignments to the experimental and control groups were made by grouping the participants' pretest scores from the Career Engagement, Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scales. These scores were first divided into men and women

according to gender. Then, they were grouped as high, medium and low between men and women. After the groupings were completed, participants from each group were randomly selected and assigned to one experimental and one control group. As a result, five of the participants assigned to both the experimental and control groups were randomly assigned as five women and five men.

Data sources of the research

Reality Therapy Based Career Counseling Psychoeducation Program (RTCCP)

The Reality Therapy-Based Career Counseling Psychoeducation Program (RTCCP) was designed in two stages in line with the stages established by Nazlı (2016):

Phase 1: Preparation of Program Infrastructure

The infrastructure, philosophical and theoretical foundations of RTCCP were prepared by taking into account the career planning programs prepared in the literature. RTCCP was designed on the basis of humanistic philosophy and Reality Therapy. While preparing the substructure of RTCCP, components including self-knowledge, career studies conducted with adolescents (Kracke, 2002; Patton & Porfeli, 2007), self-knowledge, career recognition, making choices, taking responsibility and developing social relations skills were added. Considering the fact that the focus on short-term counseling processes is more effective in seeking relevant solutions (Corey, 2012) and the low rate of participation in long-term help services (Bloom et al., 1982), the RTCCP was planned as a total of five sessions, one session per week. In addition to the fact that semi-structured programs provide a certain level of standardization and flexibility, they are more suitable for social science research thanks to the flexibility they provide (Türnüklü, 2000), the outlines of the sessions are maintained with a pre-structured protocol, and they provide more systematic and comparable information (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

Phase 2: Identifying the Four Elements of the Program

The RTCCP design has four main elements. These are acquisition, content, process and assessment. The learning outcome component was prepared in line with Wellman and Moore's taxonomy. In this context, the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be gained are determined by learning outcomes (Nazlı, 2016). The learning outcomes of the RTCCP were written at the level of "perception" and "comprehension" for the educational and personal characteristics, future expectations, preferences and decisions of adolescents. The RTCCP consists of a total of five sessions, each lasting an average of 60 minutes, one day a week. In the first session of the RTCCP, in addition to introductions and structuring, educational background, educational strengths, areas of difficulty, advantages and

challenges were discussed. The second session covered personal characteristics such as interests, abilities, needs and personality traits, the third session covered future expectations, the fourth session covered preferences, and the fifth session covered closure and decisions. In addition, homework assignments were given at the end of each session, enabling students to experience the gains of the session in their daily lives.

Data Collection Tool

Career Engagement Scale (CAS)

The Career Engagement Scale developed by Hirschi et al. (2014) consists of a single dimension including 9 items ("Taking initiative to achieve my career goals", "Being interested in my career development"). The scale items are in 5-point Likert type ranging from 1 (Almost Never) to 5 (Very Often). An individual's high score on the scale means that he/she performs career management behaviors proactively. In the Career Engagement Scale (CAS) adapted into Turkish by Korkmaz et al. (2020), the participants are asked to indicate the behaviors that show the extent to which they are engaged in career development tasks that they have observed in the last six months. The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the Turkish version of the scale was .88 and the correlation obtained as a result of the test-retest method was found to be moderate and significant ($r = .67, p < .001$). In addition, item-total correlations ranged between .49 and .80. Furthermore, it was reported that the scale demonstrated positive and moderate correlations with career exploration, career planning and career decision self-efficacy scales. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha value of the scale was found to be 0.88.

Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21)

The Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) measures negative states observed in depression, anxiety and stress. The scale consists of three subscales: depression, anxiety and stress. There are a total of 21 items with 7 items in each subscale. The DASS-21 was adapted into Turkish by Yıldırım et al. (2018). The high score obtained from each subscale indicates the excess of complaints related to the relevant subscale. Cronbach alphas of the scale vary between .87 and .90. Unweighted least squares (ULS), generalised least squares (GLS), partial least squares (PLS) and diagonal weighted least squares (DWLS) were used together. The scale values show that the loadings of all statements are statistically significant and have an acceptable level of loading on the relevant construct. Therefore, construct validity is established according to these 3 methods. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the DASS-21 were .89 for depression, .89 for anxiety and .91 for stress.

The ethical process in the study was as follows:

- Ethics committee approval was obtained from Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University Educational Sciences Ethics Committee (Date: 26.04.2024, Number: E-88012460-050.04-353423)
- Informed consent has been obtained from the participants.

Data Analysis

In the analysis of the quantitative data of the study, nonparametric analysis methods were used because the data were not normally distributed and the number of participants was not sufficient for parametric tests (Büyüköztürk, 2009). In this context, the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of the groups, and the Mann Whitney-U test was used to analyze the differentiation between the pre-test and post-test scores of the groups. When the difference between the scores was found to be significant, the formula $r = z/\sqrt{N}$ was used to calculate the effect size. For the “r” value levels calculated as a result of the formula, .1 was interpreted as “small”, .3 as “medium” and .5 as “large” effect size (Coolican, 2014).

Procedure

In order to conduct the study, approval was first obtained from Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University Ethics Committee. Then, a literature study was conducted to develop the RTCCP. In order to ensure the expert validity of the resulting program, two academicians who are experts in the field were consulted. In line with the opinions received, the program was updated and finalized. The finalized program was applied to five secondary school students and a pilot study was conducted. After the pilot study, permission was obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education for the implementation of the finalized program. The research announcement was made by the researcher by visiting the classes and reaching the students and parents with the help of the brochures prepared. The 28 individuals who applied to the study were evaluated according to the inclusion criteria, 20 individuals who met the criteria were identified and the pre-test (T1) application was carried out. From the groups formed after T1, random assignments were made to the experimental and control groups, respectively. The researcher administered a post-test (T2) to the students in the experimental group after the application of the RTCCP and a follow-up test (FT) three months after this application. After the implementation process, T2 was applied to the students in the control group. The data obtained as a result of these studies were interpreted using quantitative analysis methods. There was

no loss of subjects in the study. The implementation part of the research was carried out in the activity room of the school with the permission of the secondary education institution. After the application with the experimental group, the RTCCP was also applied to volunteer individuals from the control group.

Results

The mean and standard deviation values of the participants' scores from T1, T2 and FT are presented in Table 1. When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that the mean T1 scores of the individuals in the experimental and control groups are close to each other, while the mean career engagement T2 scores of the experimental group increased and the mean depression, anxiety and stress scores decreased. This situation is also the case in the mean scores of FT. In the control group, the increase in the mean career engagement T2 score was less, the mean depression T2 score decreased slightly, and the mean anxiety and stress T2 scores did not increase slightly.

When it was examined whether the T1 scores of the participants differed according to the groups, no significant difference was found between all T1 scores of the experimental and control groups ($U_{CAS} = 42.50, p > .05$; $U_{Depression} = 42.00, p > .05$; $U_{Anxiety} = 41.00, p > .05$; $U_{Stress} = 47.00, p > .05$; Table 2).

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation Values for the CAS and DASS-21

Variable	Group	T1		T2		FT	
		$\bar{x}$	sd	$\bar{x}$	sd	$\bar{x}$	sd
CAS	Experiment	17.20	4.02	32.60	3.56	30.50	5.95
	Control	17.90	3.81	18.10	4.53	-	-
	Total	17.55	3.83	25.35	8.43	30.50	5.95
DASS-21 Depression	Experiment	16.10	3.38	7.00	2.98	5.30	2.41
	Control	15.10	3.45	14.00	3.05	-	-
	Total	15.60	3.36	10.50	4.64	5.30	2.41
DASS-21 Anxiety	Experiment	11.60	3.67	5.90	3.94	4.00	1.94
	Control	12.30	2.91	14.60	1.51	-	-
	Total	11.95	3.25	10.25	5.22	4.00	1.94
DASÖ-21 Stress	Experiment	15.20	3.01	6.10	3.28	4.10	2.33
	Control	15.00	2.71	15.30	1.49	-	-
	Total	15.10	2.79	10.70	5.33	4.10	2.33

Note: n= 20 (Experimental group = 10, Control group = 10); CAS: Career Engagement Scale; DASS-21: Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale

This shows that the experimental and control groups were similar to each other in terms of career engagement, depression, anxiety and stress levels before the experimental procedure.

Table 2

Mann-Whitney U Test Results Regarding CAS and DASS-21 T1 Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

	Group	n	Rank Mean	Rank Total	U	p
CAS	Experiment	10	9.75	97.50	42.50	.567
	Control	10	11.25	112.50		
DASS-21 Depression	Experiment	10	11.30	113.00	42.00	.540
	Control	10	9.70	97.00		
DASS-21 Anxiet	Experiment	10	9.60	96.00	41.00	.491
	Control	10	11.40	114.00		
DASS-21 Stress	Experiment	10	10.80	108.00	47.00	.819
	Control	10	10.20	102.00		

Note: CAS: Career Engagement Scale, DASS-21: Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale

The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test for the T1 and T2, T2 and FT scores of the experimental and control groups from the CAS and DASS-21 scales are presented in Table 3. When Table 3 is analyzed, the following findings were obtained.

Career engagement. Participants in the experimental group had a significantly higher CAS score at T2 with a statistically large effect size compared to T1 ($z = -2.51, p < .05$). In addition, there is no statistically significant difference between the FT scores of the experimental group and T2 scores ($z = -1.25, p > .05$). On the other hand, there was no statistically significant difference between the T2 and T1

($z = -.18, p > .05$) scores of the participants in the control group. In this context, it can be stated that RTCCP was effective in increasing the participants' career engagement scores and maintaining this difference.

Depression, anxiety and stress. The scores of the individuals in the experimental group on the DASS-21 T1 were significantly higher than their scores on T2 and the difference had a large effect size ($Z_{\text{depression}} = -2.81, p < .05$; $Z_{\text{anxiety}} = -2.81, p < .05$; $Z_{\text{stress}} = -2.67, p < .05$).

Similarly, there is a significant difference between T2 and FT ($Z_{\text{depression}} = -2.33, p < .05$; $Z_{\text{anxiety}} = -1.98, p < .05$; $Z_{\text{stress}} = -2.53, p < .05$) with a large effect size. This shows that the RTCCP was not only functional in reducing the depression, anxiety and stress scores of the participants, but also effective in the permanence of this change.

In the control group, there was no significant difference between the depression, anxiety and stress T1 and T2 total scores of DASS-21 ($Z_{\text{depression}} = -.42, p > .05$; $Z_{\text{anxiety}} = -2.12, p > .05$; $Z_{\text{stress}} = -.49, p > .05$). This shows that the depression, anxiety and stress levels of the control group did not change.

Table 3

Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test Results of the Experimental and Control Groups' CAS and DASS-21 T1 and T2, T2 and FT Scores

			T2 – T1					FT – T2				
			<i>n</i>	Rank Mean	Rank Total	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>n</i>	Rank Mean	Rank Total	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
CAS	Experimental Group	Negative	0	.00	.00	-2.81	.005*	6	5.50	33.00	-1.25	.212
		Positive	10	5.50	55.00			3	4.00	12.00		
		Equal	0	.00	.00			1				
	Control Group	Negative	5	4.20	21.00	-.18	.857					
		Positive	4	6.00	24.00							
		Equal	1									
DASS-21 Depresyon	Experimental Group	Negative	10	5.50	55.00	-2.81	.005*	9	5.56	50.00	-2.33	.020*
		Positive	0	.00	.00			1	5.00	5.00		
		Equal	0					0				
	Control Group	Negative	5	5.20	26.00	-.42	.676					
		Positive	4	4.75	19.00							
		Equal	1									
DASS-21 Anksiyet	Experimental Group	Negative	10	5.50	55.00	-2.81	.005*	6	5.33	9.00	-1.98	.048*
		Positive	0	.00	.00			2	2.00	27.00		
		Equal	0					2				
	Control Group	Negative	1	1.50	1.50	-2.12	.054					
		Positive	6	4.42	26,50							
		Equal	3									
DASS-21 Stres	Experimental Group	Negative	9	5.00	45.00	-2.67	.008*	9	5.78	52.00	-2.53	.011*
		Positive	0	.00	.00			1	3.00	3.00		
		Equal	1					0				
	Control Group	Negative	4	4.63	18.50	-.49	.625					
		Positive	5	5.30	26.50							
		Equal	1									

Note: CAS: Career Engagement Scale; DASS-21: Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale; * = $p < .05$; ° = Large impact size

Discussion

According to this study, when compared to the control group, the career engagement of the students who underwent RTCCP increased significantly, while their depression, anxiety and stress levels decreased significantly. These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that assistance programs offered to students regarding career development during adolescence positively affect career development (Konuk, 2020; Mahmud et al., 2022; Pambudi et al., 2019).

Some previous studies in Turkey have also found that assistance services that support career development during adolescence increase adaptation by reducing negative situations in career development (Atasever & Yeşilyaprak, 2022; Eryilmaz & Kara, 2020; Konuk, 2020; Seker & Çapri, 2022). However, it is seen that previous studies in Turkey were prepared on the basis of hope-oriented and lifelong development. This study, which prioritizes making choices, planning one's own future and taking responsibility on the basis of Reality Therapy, differs from previous studies in Turkey. In addition, it was determined that the studies on career development in Turkey were mostly conducted with university students. This study, which was conducted with secondary school students, differs from other studies in this respect. This situation shows that there is a need for more research on programs supporting career development at different levels in Turkey.

The positive change in the individuals in the experimental group as a result of RTCCP can be explained in several ways. First, the fact that the participants shared about themselves in the first sessions of the RTCCP and felt unconditionally accepted during these sharing sessions may have helped them realize their own roles and responsibilities in their career development by making them aware of their feelings, thoughts and behaviors related to their career development. The effect of being aware of the roles and responsibilities in a situation on the negative attitude towards that situation is known (Jamalabadi et al., 2022). The related sessions of the RTCCP may have increased the self-awareness of the participants in the experimental group and enabled them to perceive their choices and responsibilities in the process.

Second, the participants' realization of their educational backgrounds, advantages and disadvantages, and working on these situations in the RTCCP sessions may have supported their choices that are effective in career development. Considering that individuals experience significant problems while making choices during adolescence (Albert & Steinberg, 2011), it can be thought

that increasing effective choice-making skills contributes to positive changes in individuals' engagement to career choices, depression, anxiety and stress. In particular, the difficulties and indecisions that individuals experience in the face of choices can be a trigger for mental problems such as depression, anxiety and stress (Lauderdale et al., 2019).

One explanation for the positive change in individuals as a result of the RTCCP may be the change in their problem solving skills. Especially in the third and fourth sessions of the RTCCP, sharing about self-knowledge, knowing the profession and making a choice by thinking about their responsibilities may have supported individuals to struggle more actively, more rationally and more concretely with the problems they faced in their career choices. The struggle with the problems encountered in this direction may have increased the adaptation and engagement to the career process by reducing the uncomfortable situations and decreased the depression, anxiety and stress reactions that occur in problem situations. This idea can be supported by previous research findings. For example, the study conducted by Dowrick et al. (2004) revealed the effectiveness of individuals' problem solving skills on career development. In addition, there are many studies emphasizing that problem solving behaviors are related to depression, anxiety and stress (Ahmadi, 2013; Michelson et al., 2022). These findings reveal that helping services that support problem-solving skills such as RTCCP support positive change in an individual's career engagement, depression, anxiety and stress levels.

Another explanation for the change in the experimental group may be related to the individuals' knowledge about career goals. The activities related to collecting information about career goals, which were included in the last sessions of the RTCCP, may have supported individuals who did not have sufficient information about these goals before the implementation and who generally acted with the information they obtained from their environment to make choices in the light of the information they acquired. It can be expected that individuals with an increased level of knowledge in this direction will increase their level of career engagement and decrease their level of depression, anxiety and stress by making more informed choices. Kamoche et al. (2011) supported this view and reported that having knowledge supports positive changes in career development.

In addition, having knowledge about career was emphasized by Watts et al. (2019) and revealed that individuals with knowledge and awareness about their career experience a more positive career development process. In addition, it has been determined that having

career-related knowledge is negatively related to depression, anxiety and stress (Karaoğlu & Şeker, 2010). Based on these findings, it can be said that having knowledge about career goals increases career engagement levels of the participants by reducing depression, anxiety and stress. Finally, the short-, medium- and long-term goals created to achieve the career goals set in the RTCCP may have motivated the participants by concretizing their choices and responsibilities and demonstrating that the goal was achievable. This motivation may be another explanation for the observed positive change. The desire and effort to achieve career goals is considered an important psychological tool for career development and mental health (Araújo et al., 2007).

In this context, the motivation that emerged through the possible impact of the RTCCP sessions may have had an impact on the participants' mental health. The indirect effect of the RTCCP on individuals' motivation may have led to more dedication to their career and realizing their responsibilities in this way. Because motivation is related to determining one's choices and acting in line with these choices (Bayrakçeken et al., 2021). Finally, the professional counseling environment based on unconditional acceptance may have supported the participants' positive views about themselves by making them feel understood (Baitar et al., 2012). Therefore, participants whose self-perception was supported may have increased their level of career engagement by realizing their roles and responsibilities in the career development process during adolescence, while decreasing their levels of depression, anxiety and stress.

Another striking finding of the study is that there was no significant change in the scores of the participants in the control group. This finding shows that individuals who do not receive any help services during the career development process in adolescence continue to have complaints about their mental health. This situation reveals the importance of career development assistance services offered to students who are close to making a career decision.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this study reveal that professional help services received during adolescence increase individuals' career engagement and decrease their complaints such as depression, anxiety and stress. In this context, it is important to develop programs that will structure such professional help services in future studies.

This study shows that it is important for experts working on the career development process with adolescents to construct realistic and rational process structures, examine

the individual's educational experiences, recognize personal characteristics, identify career alternatives, set goals among these alternatives, determine short, medium and long term actions to achieve these goals, and most importantly, recognize the individual's roles, choices and responsibilities in this process. This study was conducted in the form of group sessions and the participants actively participated in these sessions. It is considered useful for field experts to include group sessions in their practices, to support the active participation of individuals in the process in these sessions and to allow them to express themselves. While individual sessions are organized especially with individuals with high-level problems, group sessions with individuals with medium and low-level problems can be useful. For this reason, it is important that programs aiming to support career development in adolescence should be staged according to the level of need and risk, and the effectiveness of such staged programs should be tested and disseminated.

The RTCCP, which lasted a total of five sessions, shows that effective results can be obtained in a short time. Finally, the fact that there was no loss of subjects during the RTCCP process with ten participants shows the need for professional help in this process. In this context, it can be said that it is important to encourage and persuade individuals who are in the process of career development during adolescence to seek professional help. All these situations show that it is important for field experts to include group sessions in their studies on the subject, to create these sessions for both genders, to keep the number of sessions low, and to include gains such as restructuring, analysis of educational background, realization of personal characteristics, setting goals, making plans for the goals set, and making the individual realize his/her choices and responsibilities in this process. Future research can be conducted by paying attention to these situations. In addition, the effectiveness of two different applications can be tested by including individual sessions as well as group sessions. In addition, in future studies, the effectiveness of this situation can be examined by including sessions in which students will participate together with their parents.

This study has some limitations. One of the limitations of this study is that it does not meet the assumptions of parametric statistics. In future studies, studies that meet the assumptions of parametric statistics can be studied. Another limitation of this study is that the data examining whether the effect of RTCCP continued after the implementation could not be collected from the control group. In future studies, longer follow-up studies of the individuals in the experimental group as well as the control group can contribute to the findings on the effectiveness of help interventions in this area. Third, in the selection of the

study group, individuals who did not receive a clinical diagnosis and whether they had problems in career development or not were taken into consideration. Future studies can be conducted with individuals who expressed that they had problems with career development during adolescence and who were clinically diagnosed with depression, anxiety or stress, and the findings can be compared. Finally, one of the characteristics of evidence-based intervention programs is that different researchers determine the effectiveness of the intervention program (Chambles & Hollon, 1998). Therefore, different practitioners can evaluate the effectiveness of the RTCCP. An important strength of this study is that it provides the Turkish literature with an intervention tool for putting the awareness of choice and responsibility emphasized by Reality Therapy to work in the career development process. In this respect, RTCCP is a semi-structured and short-term group program with tested effectiveness that can be used especially by experts in the fields of guidance and psychological counseling, career counseling and educational counseling.

Implication

The findings of this study provide valuable information for educational practitioners, counsellors, and policy makers interested in supporting young people's career development. Firstly, the findings suggest that integrating Reality Therapy principles, such as promoting responsibility, self-awareness and informed decision-making, into programmes such as RTCCP may be a practical approach to career counselling. Guidance and career counsellors may wish to consider incorporating similar frameworks into their own career development programmes.

Furthermore, the reduction in depression, anxiety and stress levels among participants highlights the importance of addressing mental health in career counselling. As mental health problems can interfere with decision-making and goal-setting processes, career development interventions can include components that support young people's mental well-being. In addition, the group format of the RTCCP has proven effective in creating a supportive environment where participants can share their experiences and reflect on their choices. Schools and counselling services can benefit from group-based interventions as a cost-effective and scalable solution for addressing career concerns among adolescents. The study also highlights the importance of career interventions during adolescence, a critical period for identity formation and career exploration. Schools can implement structured career development programmes as part of their curricula from early secondary education to equip students with the

knowledge and skills needed to make informed career decisions.

Limitation

A total of 20 participants took part in this study, 10 in the experimental group and 10 in the control group. A larger sample size may increase the generalisability of the findings and the statistical power of the results. The study was conducted with 11th-grade students in a specific educational setting. Therefore, the results may not be generalisable to other age groups, educational levels or cultural contexts. The use of non-parametric statistical methods due to the small sample size and non-normal data distribution limits the robustness of the results. Future studies could aim to meet parametric assumptions by increasing sample size and ensuring normality. The intervention was delivered by a single researcher. Although this ensures consistency, it may also introduce biases related to the practitioner's approach. Replication by more than one practitioner will increase the reliability of the intervention. The study relies on self-report instruments for data collection, which may be subject to social desirability bias or inaccuracies in self-assessment. The inclusion of objective or behavioural measures may provide more robust evidence.

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