

The Effect of Psychodrama on the Level of Assertiveness in Neglected and Abused Adolescents

İhmal ve İstismara Uğrayan Adölesanlarda Psikodramanın Atılgnlık Düzeyine Etkisi

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effect of psychodrama on the level of assertiveness in neglected and abused adolescents. After obtaining the institutional permission for this study, T.C. ethics committee approval was obtained from the Ministry of Health Provincial Health Directorate X Training and Research Hospital Clinical Research Ethics Committee. The population of the study consisted of 21 adolescents and the sample consisted of 13 volunteer adolescents between the ages of 14-18, determined by purposeful sampling technique. The study was conducted between March- May 2017 in child support centers. Psychodrama sessions lasted twice a week for 9 weeks, each session for 3 hours; a total of 18 sessions of psychodrama were conducted. Measurements were carried out before and after psychodrama practice as pre and post-tests. Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) was used as a data collection tool. The data were analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 18.0 package program. Continuous variables are given as mean \pm standard deviation and categorical variables as numbers and percentages. In dependent group comparisons, when the parametric test assumptions were provided, the significance test of the difference between the two partners was used; If the parametric test assumptions were not provided, the Wilcoxon Paired Two-Sample Test was used. After psychodrama, the assertiveness scores of adolescents increased compared to before psychodrama. Psychodrama is an effective method to increase the assertiveness levels of adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescent, assertiveness, child neglect, child abuse, psychodrama

Özet

Bu araştırma, ihmal edilen ve istismara uğrayan ergenlerde psikodramanın atılgnlık düzeyine etkisini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma için kurum izni alındıktan sonra T.C. Sağlık Bakanlığı İl Sağlık Müdürlüğü X Eğitim ve Araştırma Hastanesi Klinik Araştırmalar Etik Kurulu'ndan etik kurul onayı alındı. Araştırma, Mart- Mayıs 2017 tarihleri arasında çocuk destekleme merkezlerinde gerçekleştirildi. Psikodrama oturumları haftada iki kez 9 hafta, her seans 3 saat; toplam 18 seans psikodrama yapıldı. Psikodrama uygulaması öncesi ve sonrası ölçümler ön ve son test olarak yapıldı. Veri toplama aracı olarak Rathus Atılgnlık Envanteri (RAE) kullanıldı. Veriler SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 18.0 paket programı kullanılarak analiz edildi. Sürekli değişkenler ortalama \pm standart sapma olarak, kategorik değişkenler ise sayı ve yüzde olarak verildi. Bağımlı grup karşılaştırmalarında, parametrik test varsayımları sağlandığında, iki ortak arasındaki farkın anlamlılık testi kullanıldı; Parametrik test varsayımları sağlanmadığında, Wilcoxon Paired Two-Sample Test kullanıldı. Psikodrama sonrası ergenlerin atılgnlık puanlarının psikodrama öncesine göre arttığı görüldü. Psikodrama, ergenlerin atılgnlık düzeylerini artırmada etkili bir yöntemdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Adölesan, atılgnlık, çocuk ihmali, çocuk istismarı, psikodrama

1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2014) considers child abuse and neglect "within the scope of affinity, responsibility, power or trust relationship to the child; any physical and/or emotional abuse that could actually or potentially cause the child's life, health, growth and development to be negatively affected; sexual negligence, abuse, attitude, any attitude and behavior that includes commercial or other exploitation. According to the WHO report, the prevalence of physical neglect is 16.3%, and emotional neglect is 18.4% globally among children and adolescents. These high rates exceed the capacity of child protection services to respond effectively. The prevalence in the European Region; is ranged from 9.6% for sexual abuse to physical or 29.1% for mental or emotional abuse. According to the report called "Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Research" made in Turkey in 2010, it is observed that 56% of children who live in Turkey between 7-18 years were subject to physical abuse, 49% of children were exposed to emotional abuse, while 10% of children witnessed to sexual abuse, 25% of children exposed to neglect, 43% to physical, 3% to sexual, and 51% exposed to emotional abuse (UNICEF, 2010). Child abuse is a significant health problem that causes hard-to-treat wounds and injuries to the body and soul. Those working in professions related to children should see the signs and symptoms of abuse/neglect, know that legal notification is mandatory, and how where to apply when necessary. They should be aware that urgent measures need to be taken to prevent further harm to the child. Not only in terms of punishing the perpetrator, but also in terms of the protection of the abused child, if other children are experiencing the same situation, they should be evaluated and, where necessary, protected and supported (Dağlı & İnanıcı, 2011). Assertiveness is the ability of the individual to express his feelings and thoughts and to protect his individual rights. In this respect, it is important in terms of increasing the ability of adolescents to say no to undesirable behaviors (Karmakar, 2020).

Psychodrama is a type of experiential psychotherapy developed by Moreno, in which individuals use guided role-playing to work on their personal and interpersonal problems and to work on possible solutions through action (Orkibi& Feniger-Schaal, 2019). It is crucial to develop an integrated therapy model to meet the therapeutic needs of children and adolescents. Psychodrama is an effective treatment method for behavioral problems of children and adolescents, post-traumatic stress disorder, adjustment problems, eating disorders, substance dependence, solving grief, and for children and adolescents experiencing identity confusion. These play relations that he established with the children enabled Moreno to lay the foundations of "play" and "dramatic reenactment" (Gökler & Danişman, 2011). Psychodrama, which allows individuals to stage problems instead of talking, is a very suitable psychotherapy option for adolescents (Ulusoy et al.,2023).

The behaviors of the individual should be appropriate to their inner world and not contrary to the external situation and reality. The individual should meet his/her own needs determined by feelings and thoughts following the reality of his/her environment. According to Moreno, only those who have the ability to adapt can survive. It is defined as spontaneity to respond appropriately to the situation.

When we consider spontaneity from this aspect, there is a similarity between spontaneous behavior and assertiveness (Dökmen, 2003).

Although groups of children who do not know each other are ideal in child psychodrama, child psychodrama groups can be constituted to develop common skills with the children in the same environment as well. Psychodrama, due to its nature and structure, deals with the unhealthy as well as the healthy one and the development of the personality. Children can improve themselves within the group in personality development, emotional development, self-expression, coping with anger, sociability, and many more. From this aspect, it is apparent that a child with a different improvement will also benefit from group practices (Altınay, 2011).

Psychodrama takes place as an effective method in the field of child and adolescent psychotherapy with its wide range of flexibility and expansions in terms of development, growth, and emotional learning.

2. Method

This study was conducted as a quasi-experimental study.

2.1. Purpose and Type of the Research

This study aims to examine the effect of psychodrama on the level of assertiveness in neglected and abused adolescents.

2.2. Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: The level of assertiveness will increase after psychodrama.

2.3. Population and Sample of the Research

The population of the study consists of 21 female adolescents staying in the child support center, and the sample consists of 13 volunteer female adolescents between the ages of 14-18 determined by purposive sampling technique. The study was conducted between March- May 2017 in child support centers. Psychodrama sessions lasted twice a week for 9 weeks, each session for 3 hours; a total of 18 sessions of psychodrama were conducted. The content of the study was conveyed to the adolescents by the group manager. The psychodrama study was carried out by a psychodramatist who completed psychodrama training at The Federation of European Psychodrama Training Organizations (FEPTO) at the Abdülkadir Özbek Psychodrama Institute.

2.3.1. Inclusion Criteria

Staying in the institution

Being literate

2.3.2. Exclusion Criteria

Having a psychiatric diagnosis according to DSM 5

2.3.3. Extraction Criteria

Not following the group rules - not attending two consecutive sessions

2.4. Data Collection Tools of the Research

Sociodemographic Information Form and Rathus Assertiveness Schedule were used in the study. Measurements were carried out before and after psychodrama practice as pre and post-tests.

2.4.1. Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS)

RAS, developed by Rathus (1973) to measure the levels of assertiveness and aggressiveness in interpersonal relationships, was adapted into Turkish by Voltan (1980). In Voltan's study, the test-retest reliability of the scale was 0.92, the split-half test reliability was 0.77, and the correlation coefficient was 0.70 in the criterion-dependent validity study. RAS consists of 30 items, 13 positive (3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 18, 20, 21, 22, 25, 27, 28, 29), and 16 negative (1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 24, 26, 30) statements. Negative statements are scored by reverse coding. The individual evaluates himself/herself with a 6-degree scale ranging from +3 to -3. Scores vary between -90 and +90; -90 points indicate the highest level of aggressiveness, and +90 points indicate the highest level of assertiveness. Scores of +10 points and above indicate assertiveness, while scores below indicate timidity. In this study, the pre-test Cronbach's Alpha value of the scale was 0.85, and the post-test Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.66.

2.5. Ethical Aspect of the Research

After obtaining the institutional permission for this study, T.C. ethics committee approval was obtained from the Ministry of Health Provincial Health Directorate X Training and Research Hospital Clinical Research Ethics Committee (Serial No: 111).

2.6. Limitations of the Research

The fact that the study was conducted with a small sample group and only adolescents girls constituted the limitation of the study.

2.7. Analysis and Evaluation of Data

The data were analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 18.0 package program. Continuous variables are given as mean \pm standard deviation and categorical variables as numbers and percentages. In dependent group comparisons, when the parametric test assumptions were provided, the significance test of the difference between the two partners was used; If the parametric test assumptions were not provided, the Wilcoxon Paired Two-Sample Test was used.

3. Results

The average age of the adolescents in the study is 15.46 ± 1.33 and all of them (N = 100%) are girls.

Table 1. Adolescents Before and After Psychodrama According to RAS Distribution of Assertiveness Levels (N=13)

	Before Psychodrama				After Psychodrama			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Aggressiveness	2	15,4	0	0	0	0	2	15,4
Med	9	69,2	0	0	8	61,5	1	7,7
Assertiveness	2	15,4	0	0	0	0	2	15,4
			Total n=0; % 0		Total n=8; %61,5		Total n=5; % 38,5	
Total	n=13; %100				n=13; % 100			

* $p < 0.05$ statistically significant difference; t for intergroup comparisons= Independent groups t test; for within-group comparisons $t = T$ test in dependent groups, $kk =$ Pearson chi-square test, $\# =$ Fisher exact chi-square test

When examined at the distribution of assertiveness levels of adolescents according to RAS; It was found that 2 adolescents who were in the shy level before psychodrama passed into the assertiveness class after psychodrama. Similarly, one of the 9 adolescents who were in the medium level before psychodrama passed to the assertiveness class after psychodrama, and the number of adolescents in the assertiveness class, which was 2 before psychodrama, increased by 3 people after psychodrama and reached 5 people.

Table 2. RAS Pre-Test – Post-Test Point Average (N=13)

	X ± S.S	Med (min- maks)	p	t
Before Psychodrama	103,46 ± 22,87	97 (75-152)		
After Psychodrama	116,77 ± 16,89	113 (93-143)	0.11	-1,727

* $p < 0.05$ statistically significant difference; t for intergroup comparisons= Independent groups t test; t for within-group comparisons= t -test in dependent groups

When the mean RAS scores were examined, no statistically significant difference was found between the adolescents' pretest-posttest assertiveness scores. However, there was an increase in assertiveness score average of the group after psychodrama.

4. Discussion

In this section, the results obtained from the study conducted in a quasi-experimental design in order to examine the effect of psychodrama on assertiveness levels in adolescents exposed to caregiver trauma are discussed in line with the literature. Due to the lack of studies examining the effects of psychodrama on assertiveness among adolescents who have experienced abuse and neglect, an attempt has been made to discuss the topic based on related psychodrama studies. This study found that psychodrama increased the assertiveness levels of abused and neglected adolescents. The results support the literature. It has been determined that the assertiveness levels of adolescents increase with the assertiveness training and psychodrama applied to the adolescent group who are the victims of peer bullying in India (Sudha, 2019). Adolescents' assertiveness scores increased after psychodrama applied to adolescents. Vaillancourt-Morel et al. (2019), in their study on childhood sexual abuse and the self in adolescence, stated that child sexual abuse violence was associated with more self-mutilation and a more divided ego. It is critical to strengthen the self in the development of

assertiveness skills. With psychodrama, individuals' self-confidence and self-esteem increase, and this situation affect the individual's assertive behavior. Pandey et al. (2016) stated in their study that after the assertiveness training given to adolescent girls, their self-esteem increased. Darjan et al.'s (2020) study found a strong correlation between self-esteem and assertiveness. They found that adolescents who were subjected to peer bullying had less self-esteem and insufficient assertiveness skills. In a study by Kaya and Karaca (2018) examining the relationship between assertiveness and trait anxiety in adolescents, they found a significant negative relationship between the level of assertiveness and trait anxiety in adolescents. As the level of assertiveness increased, adolescents' anxiety decreased. According to the program prepared by using psychodrama methods for "assertiveness competencies in close relationships" in the study of Santos, et al. (2020), increased assertiveness of couples; contributed positively to revising the concepts of marital satisfaction, communication, and intimacy between couples. In the study of Al-Ebwini and Abou-Dagga (2020), using psychodrama to analyze the psychological needs of an eight-year-old traumatized girl in the Gaza Strip, a conflict zone; After the sixth session, the mental state of her child improved significantly, according to the statements of the mother and the people around her. In a study conducted by Brecklin and Ullman (2005), with 3.187 female students to assess the relationship between self-defense or assertiveness training and sexual victimization, it was reported that those who had received self-defense or assertiveness training prior to their unwanted sexual experiences made the criminal less aggressive or stopped the attacker. The result of this study has revealed once again how important it is to develop assertiveness skills in adolescents who have been neglected and abused. Assertiveness has been identified as a protective factor especially for sexual victimization, educating and developing adolescents in assertiveness skills can help reduce the risk of sexual victimization. In the assertiveness training program conducted by Morgan (2018) to prevent sexual victimization in female adolescents, it was stated that with the increase in assertiveness skills of adolescents, there were small increases indicating and rejecting sexual boundaries. It is also founded that adolescents' dating relationships declined in conflict situations. Psychodrama groups provide the children with the opportunity to stage, direct and realize their traumas, as well as providing a connection with other group members. Thus, it has been reported that it reduces many psychiatric symptoms of children (Tavkar & Hansen, 2011). Psychodrama and other creative arts serve as a bridge to the subconscious to change negative cycles and enable the examination and integration of positive traits that the member is not aware of (Toscani, 1998). Considering the psychodrama studies applied to children and adolescents, it was determined in the results of the study that psychodrama is an effective method in developing positive behaviors in children and adolescents. In the study of Carbonell and Partelero (1999), in which the effectiveness of psychodrama in traumatized girls of middle school age was examined, it was stated that after psychodrama, girls had a decrease in the symptoms of introversion, anxiety and depression. In the study conducted by Üneri in 2016, it was stated that in adolescents with social anxiety disorder, psychodrama increased the sociability of adolescents with timid personality traits. In the study of Şimşek et al. (2020), it was found that adolescents' empathy levels increased and social anxiety levels decreased after psychodrama. In the study of Mojahed et al. (2021), group psychodrama was found to be effective in reducing aggression, social anxiety, and attention deficit hyper activity (ADHD)

symptoms in adolescents. Giacomucci and Marquit reported (2020) significant reductions (over 25%) in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in their study, investigating the effectiveness of trauma-focused psychodrama in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder. In the psychodrama study in which Soysal (2020) examined the effect of female adolescents on peer relationships, a significant increase was found in the commitment, trust, self-disclosure, and loyalty scores of the adolescents in the experimental group compared to the control groups. Neglected and abused children and adolescents are mostly individuals who have low self-confidence, have a negative self-concept, show depression and anxiety symptoms, cannot protect their rights, and are not aware of the necessity of this (Nyarko et al., 2014). Psychodrama is an effective method for eliminating these missing aspects. The results of the study are important in terms of revealing that psychodrama contributes to the elimination of this deficiency. Adolescents' being sociable in their relationships and having high social skills make it easier for them to adapt to the conditions they encounter. It is under consideration that it is crucial to determine the reasons and areas of concern that prevent adolescents from expressing themselves assertively in the face of increasingly challenging conditions and examine the relationship between anxiety and assertive behavior within the framework of individual, familial and social variables.

5. Conclusion

After psychodrama, the assertiveness scores of adolescents increased compared to before psychodrama. Psychodrama is an effective method to increase the assertiveness levels of adolescents who have traumatic experiences. In order to develop assertiveness skills of children and adolescents, it is recommended to be taught as an elective course in schools or to disseminate the practices within the program.

Authors Contributions

Topic selection: ÇŞ; Design: AK, EAY; Planning: ÇŞ, AK, EAY; Data collection and analysis: ÇŞ, EAY; Manuscript writing: ÇŞ; Critical review: AK, EAY.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest was declared by the authors.

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