

Examining the Effectiveness of a Positive Psychology-Based Psychoeducation Program on Adolescents' Character Strengths

Pozitif Psikoloji Temelli Bir Psikoeğitim Programının Ergenlerin Karakter Güçleri Üzerindeki Etkinliğinin İncelenmesi

İrem Yıldırım¹  Ferhat Kardaş² 

¹ Expert Psychological Counselor, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, Faculty of Education, Van, Türkiye

² Assoc. Prof. Dr., Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, Faculty of Education, Van, Türkiye

Makale Bilgileri

Geliş Tarihi (Received Date)

28.12.2023

Kabul Tarihi (Accepted Date)

03.03.2024

*Sorumlu Yazar

İrem Yıldırım

irem_yldrm__@hotmail.com

Abstract: In recent years, recognizing character strengths and virtues, strengthening them, and ensuring their use in all areas of life has become one of the important areas of study. Considering the positive and developmental effects of various studies on children, adolescents, and adults, it appears that conducting studies to develop character strengths is important for individual and community mental health. This study was aimed to increase the character strengths, self-esteem, optimism, gratitude levels and reduce the pessimism levels of adolescents. A 2x3 split-plot experimental design with pre-test, post-test, follow-up test and control group were used in the study. A total of 32 students participated in the research. A 15-session intervention program based on positive psychology was applied to the participants in the experimental group. Character Strengths Inventory (VIA-IS-P), Pears-Harris Self-Concept Scale for Children, Optimism-Pessimism Scale and Gratitude Scale were used to collect data in the study. Research revealed that the positive psychology-based psychoeducation program applied was effective in increasing adolescents' self-esteem, optimism, gratitude, and total character strength levels and reducing their pessimism levels; the applied psycho-education program has a medium effect value in increasing adolescents' character strengths, self-esteem and optimism levels and decreasing their pessimism levels, and a high effect value in increasing their gratitude levels.

Keywords: Character strengths, optimism, gratitude, self-esteem

Öz: Son yıllarda karakter güçlerinin ve erdemlerin fark edilmesi, güçlendirilmesi ve yaşamın her alanında kullanılmasının sağlanması önemli çalışma alanlarından biri hâline gelmiştir. Yapılan çeşitli araştırmalar çocuklar, ergenler ve yetişkinler üzerindeki olumlu ve geliştirici etkileri göz önüne alındığında, karakter güçlerini geliştirmeye yönelik çalışmalar yapılmasının birey ve toplum ruh sağlığı açısından önemli olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu çalışmada ergenlere yönelik pozitif psikoloji temelli ve karakter güçlerini geliştirme odaklı bir psiko-eğitim programı hazırlanmış ve ergenlerin karakter güçleri, özsaygı, iyimserlik, şükran düzeylerinin artırılması ve kötümserlik düzeylerinin azaltılması amaçlanmıştır. Çalışmada ön test, son test, izleme testli, kontrol gruplu 2x3'lük split-plot deneysel desen kullanılmıştır. Araştırmaya toplamda 32 öğrenci katılmıştır. Deneysel gruptaki katılımcılara 15 oturumluk pozitif psikoloji temelli müdahale programı uygulanmıştır. Veri toplama araçları olarak Karakter Güçleri Envanteri (VIA-IS-P), Pears-Harris Çocuklar İçin Öz Kavramı Ölçeği, İyimserlik-Kötümserlik Ölçeği ve Şükran Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde betimsel istatistikler, Mann Whitney-U testi ve Wilcoxon işaretli sıralar testinden yararlanılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları, psiko-eğitim programının ergenlerin öz saygı, iyimserlik, şükran ve toplam karakter güçleri düzeylerini artırmada ve kötümserlik düzeylerini azaltmada etkili olduğunu; psiko-eğitim programının ergenlerin karakter güçleri, öz saygı, iyimserlik, düzeylerini artırmada ve kötümserlik düzeylerini azaltmada orta, şükran düzeylerini artırmada ise yüksek etki değerine sahip olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Ulaşılan bulgular çerçevesinde araştırmacı ve uygulayıcılara öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Karakter güçleri, iyimserlik, şükran, öz saygı

Yıldırım, İ ve Kardaş, F. (2024). Examining the effectiveness of a positive psychology-based psychoeducation program on adolescents' character strengths. *Erzincan University Journal of Education Faculty*, 26(1), 92-103. <https://doi.org/10.17556/erziefd.1411176>

Introduction

William James, one of the pioneers of psychological science, once said in an article he wrote more than a hundred years ago: "We are only half awake compared to the state in which we ought to be. Our fires are damped our drafts are checked. We use only a small portion of our mental and physical resources" (James, 1907). According to James (1907), human beings were creatures that performed below their true potential and had different strengths that they could have used but did not use. This area of discussion, introduced by William James, came to the fore again nearly a hundred years later, in the early 2000s, with Martin Seligman as president of the American Psychological Association (APA). Different discussions within this framework paved the way for the emergence of the positive psychology approach. Seligman (2021) as, APA president, said, "I do not believe that you should spend more effort than necessary to fix our weaknesses. Instead, I believe that the greatest success and deepest emotional satisfaction in

life comes from developing and using your unique strengths." His statements paved the way for the emergence of the field of positive psychology by emphasizing the inadequacy of the pathology and disease-oriented model. Positive psychology focuses on topics such as character strengths, optimism, gratitude, forgiveness, flow, positive personality traits, self-esteem, psychological well-being and happiness. In this respect, this approach aims to move individuals from a positive state to a more advanced level, rather than from a negative state to positive (Seligman, 2002). With the process that started in the early 2000s, interest in positive psychology increased worldwide, positive psychology courses were opened in world universities, postgraduate programs in the field of positive psychology were opened, and high-impact journals in this field were published (Wedding & Niemiec, 2018).

One of the topics and practice areas addressed by the positive psychology approach is the issue of character strengths and virtues (Park & Peterson, 2008; Peterson &

Seligman, 2004). Strong character traits are defined as stable and universal personal characteristics that are expressed through thinking, feeling, willing and action. Accordingly, both the person and others value and benefit from these characteristics. Therefore, these characteristics are considered the cornerstones of human well-being and human development (Wedding & Niemiec, 2018). According to another definition, character expresses the morally valuable aspects of all the emotions, thoughts and behaviors of the individual; the combination of characteristics defined as valuable and good character constitutes character strengths (Park & Peterson, 2008).

Character and self are structures open to change and development at almost every age. Changes in character also greatly affect the self. Individuals who are satisfied with their own self are those who have high self-esteem, high level of adaptation, effective coping strategies and high psychological resilience (Adams, 1995). Individuals who are satisfied with their own self are also more at peace with their past, more satisfied with their present, and more hopeful about the future so they are more likely to be more optimistic and more grateful (Park, et al., 2004). These results reveal the importance of individuals having a more developed self and character structure in order to increase individual and social health. In this regard, the importance of discovering and using character strengths draws attention.

Peterson & Seligman (2004), as a result of both empirical and historical analyzes they conducted, made categorizations based on approximately 200 virtues and put forward a model consisting of 24 character-strengths. Accordingly, character strengths must have features such as being universal, not limited to a culture, being measurable, being satisfactory, not detracting from other features, and being characteristic (Wedding & Niemiec, 2018). After the classification of character strengths, studies on recognizing, developing, and using character strengths in various areas of life have begun to increase. Dimensions related to our state of well-being, such as relationships, flow, success, meaning, and positive emotions, become possible thanks to a good character (Park & Peterson, 2009; Peterson, et al., 2007; Wedding & Niemiec, 2018).

Awareness and effective use of character strengths creates satisfaction within and around the individual, increases the quality of life, and gives the individual a sense of success (Park & Peterson, 2005). The benefits of discovering and using character strengths are important in terms of reducing individuals' negative behaviors and increasing their positive behaviors (Botvin et al., 1995; Compton and Hoffman, 2013). In terms of reducing negative behaviors, it makes it easier to cope and adapt to difficult situations by reducing stress and dysfunction (Modini et al., 2015). In terms of increasing positive behaviors, it increases positive outcomes such as self-acceptance, supportive social relationships, success, competence/effectiveness, respect for others and respect from others, respect for life, mental and physical health, satisfying work/school life, subjective well-being and healthy individual-family-society (Kabakçı, 2016). Similar studies have shown that realizing one's strengths and using them in various areas of life is positively related with happiness, raising healthy children, business success, higher well-being, and hope (Park, et al., 2006; Proctor, et al., 2009; Seligman, 2019; Wedding & Niemiec, 2018).

Character strengths also have a positive relationship with well-being in the field of education (Proctor, et al., 2011).

Longitudinal research results have revealed that young people with more personal strengths at the age of 16 have a lower risk of developing psychiatric disorders, experience fewer educational and occupational problems, encounter fewer interpersonal difficulties, and have less criminal behavior when they reach the age of 22 (Bromley, et al., 2006).

Character strengths are not innate and difficult to change qualities, like talents (Park & Peterson, 2004). Unless certain abilities are innate, there are serious limitations in acquiring or improving them later. Unlike talents, character strengths such as courage, love of learning, multi-faceted perspective, loving-being-loved, self-control, responsibility, gratitude, self-esteem, curiosity can be built from scratch or even built on a weak foundation, with sufficient perseverance, awareness, and positive attitude. They can take root and flourish with training (Seligman, 2002). This reveals that character strengths can be developed through systematic training and effort.

One of the concepts closely related to character strengths, self and strong personality traits is self-esteem. Self is, in its most general definition, the person's thoughts about himself (Rosenberg, 1986), the sum of everything that he or she can say about himself/herself (James, 1950; 1963). Positive and negative evaluations about the self-determine the degree of self-respect of the person and this attitude is defined as self-esteem. Positive evaluations that are realistic indicate high self-esteem, and negative evaluations indicate low self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1979). Research has shown that realistic and improved self-esteem has protective and improving effects on the individual (Maxwell & Doman, 2000). Accordingly, it is expected that a person's perception and evaluation of his or her own self will significantly affect the awareness of character strengths and the level of use of these strengths.

Self-esteem begins to develop in connection with the self-image from childhood and becomes a decision-making mechanism for personality development during adolescence. When the young individual who tests himself during adolescence and believes in his capabilities sees that he has a developed and realistic self-esteem, he will experience this period with a high level of functionality and build a healthy personality structure that can be maintained after adolescence and into adulthood (Kohut, 2009). Positive psychology positions self-esteem among positive emotions and argues that if an individual has self-esteem, regardless of whether it is low or high, then the individual has a strong resource and this resource can be strengthened (Ulusoy, 2020).

One of the positive personality traits discussed within the framework of character strengths and conceptualized in different ways in the literature is optimism. Optimism is generally defined as the tendency to think more positively and have more positive experiences (Scheier & Carver, 1985; Carver et al., 2010; Carver & Scheier, 2014). Positive thinking is not a way of thinking disconnected from reality; it is an internal source of motivation from which the individual receives support in order to achieve vital goals (Demirci, 2017). While the tendency to think positively is related to optimism, the tendency to think negatively is associated with pessimism (Seligman, 2007). Optimistic individuals think that no matter what the event or situation is, it is temporary, the negativity is specific to the event or situation, and is not largely due to their own personality traits (Seligman, 2002). Individuals with true optimism experience less stress, stand more confident in life, and become more successful and hopeful; They know that they have the power to cope with events more easily and effectively and they respect themselves

more (Peterson & Seligman, 1984). Pessimistic individuals, on the other hand, think that the negative events and situations they experience are caused by deficiencies in their own self; internalizes these shortcomings. They generalize a negative event to other life events and think that the negative consequences of the events will be permanent. This mindset leads the individual to despair and increases life obstacles (Seligman, 2021). Optimism has a nature that emerges and can be improved through learning experiences (Seligman, 2007). Considering its effects on individuals, increasing optimism from an early age thereby reducing pessimism accelerates the personal and social development of individuals (Seligman, 2002).

Gratitude is one of the concepts discussed in the literature in the context of strong character traits and used as a healing power in the field of mental health in recent years (Kardaş & Yalçın, 2018). Gratitude in the field of psychology, is appreciating, focusing on the positive aspects of one's possessions, being satisfied with one's situation, focusing on the beautiful aspects of life and events, expressing admiration and satisfaction, and being able to thank oneself and others (Kardaş & Yalçın, 2018). Feeling gratitude increases the individual's personal and social well-being, increases self-esteem by making the individual aware of the value he gives himself and his environment, and is a preventive mechanism against mental diseases by contributing to less negative emotions (Lyubomirsky, 2008). In addition to being considered as a personality trait in some sources, the concept of gratitude is also considered as a virtue or habit, with cognitive-affective-behavioral dimensions (Emmons, 2004), an emotion that occurs independently of personality and events (Kardaş & Yalçın, 2018; Emmons, 2009). Gratitude is also a strength of character that can be learned and developed. Due to its impact on individuals, it has become one of the broad study areas of positive psychology, distinguishing it from other character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Gratitude and optimism are interrelated concepts. There are similarities between them in terms of approaching situations and events from a positive perspective. However, while the feeling of gratitude is mostly considered to be related to evaluating the present positively and accepting the past, optimism also includes positive expectations for the future (Lyubomirsky, 2009). At this point, the coexistence and development of optimism and gratitude have an integrative effect on the individual's satisfaction with his entire life (Peterson et al., 2007). A high level of satisfaction with the past, present and future also increases individuals' self-satisfaction and therefore increases his/her self-esteem (Peterson & Seligman, 1984). Thus, it enables the individual to achieve holistic well-being, which is the ultimate goal of positive psychology (Carr, 2017).

Considering its positive and developmental effects on children, adolescents, and adults, it seems that conducting studies to develop character strengths is important for individual and community mental health. In this study, a psycho-educational program focused on character strengths was prepared for adolescents, and it was aimed to increase the levels of character strengths, self-esteem, optimism, gratitude and reduce the levels of pessimism in adolescents. For this purpose, the hypotheses that the character strengths-focused developmental positive psychology-based intervention program has a positive effect on character strengths, self-esteem, optimism and gratitude and a negative effect on pessimism in adolescents were tested.

Method

Research Design

A 2x3 split-plot experimental design with pre-test, post-test, follow-up test and control group were used in the study. Split-plot model is a mixed design consisting of two factors, in which inter- and intra-group measurements are used together (Büyüköztürk, 2017). The first factor refers to the experimental procedure conditions (experimental and control groups), and the second factor refers to repeated measurements (pretest, posttest, follow-up test).

Research Sample

A total of 54 8th grade students studying at a school in the center of Van province in the 2022-2023 academic year participated in the study. 48 of the participants were women and 6 were men. Students' participation in the study was completely voluntary.

Research Instruments

Character strengths inventory (VIA-IS-P): This short form of the inventory, developed by Peterson & Seligman (2004) to evaluate six virtues and 24 character-strengths and revised for adolescents, were used for measuring the character strengths. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the VIA-Character Strengths Inventory (VIA-IS-P) Turkish Form subscales ranged between .63 and .89, and the average was calculated as .75. Corrected item-total correlations ranged from .27 to .83. The findings show that the scale provides construct validity.

Pears-Harris self-concept scale for children: The scale (Piers & Harris, 1964) is used to determine the development of the self-concept in children (9-19 years old). The total score of the scale is 80 and a high score from the scale means that the individual is positive about himself/herself. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency values of the scale ranges between 0.81 and 0.89.

Optimism-pessimism scale: It was developed by Çalışkan & Uzunkol (2018) to measure the optimism and pessimism levels of adolescents between the ages of 11-16. As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, a structure consisting of 16 items and two dimensions was revealed, explaining 43.24% of the total variance. As a result of reliability studies, Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients were calculated as .86 for optimism and .82 for pessimism.

Gratitude scale: The scale developed by Kardaş & Yalçın, (2019) aims to measure the level of gratitude felt by individuals. The lowest score that can be obtained from the scale is 25, while the highest score is 125. High scores indicate high levels of gratitude. The scale consists of 6 dimensions in total. These dimensions has been named as positive social comparison, expressing gratitude, focusing on the positive, appreciating the contributions of family and environment, experiencing a feeling of abundance instead of deprivation, and being grateful for simple things. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency value of the scale was calculated as 88.

The structure and content of the psycho-educational program: The positive psychology-based intervention program, developed as 15-sessions for adolescents, was created on the basis of Group Guidance Services within the scope of School Counseling Services. One of the important points to work on character strengths in the context of Counseling services is 'prominent strengths'. Starting character strengths training with prominent strengths can enable young

individuals to highlight their strengths rather than their weaknesses. Thus, it gives the message that character strengths actually exist within their own selves and that the main purpose is to ensure that these already existing strengths emerge (Park & Peterson, 2009). For this reason, the character strengths sessions of the psycho-education program were created with the objectives of 'recognizing character strengths, revealing existing character strengths, and recognizing character strengths that have not come to the fore'.

In the literature, two main approaches to optimism are discussed: 'dispositional optimism and optimistic explanation style'. Optimistic explanation style is a skill that begins to develop in childhood when cause-effect relationships begin to be established. With effective social and environmental experiences, children and adolescents can be enabled to have a more optimistic view of life before entering adulthood and to invest in their future by turning this perspective into a character trait (Metalsky, et al., 1982). This study is based on the goal that optimism can be learned through environmental experiences. The 'Optimistic Explanation Style' approach, which belongs to Seligman's 'Learned Optimism Theory', has been the mainstay of the optimism sessions. Based on the 'Optimistic Explanation Style' approach, the Adversity-Thought-Consequence model was presented and taught in the optimism sessions. This model, which is a Cognitive

Behavioral Model, is positioned in this program in 6 sessions, on 'gaining the ability to catch pessimistic thoughts and transform these thoughts into optimistic thoughts'.

When the literature on the concept of gratitude is examined, it is stated that feeling grateful is a feature that naturally develops and is maintained in individuals, unless there are obstacles from the environment (Kardaş & Yalçın, 2018). Considering the disruptive effects of environmental stimuli, it is possible that negative behaviors such as superiority, inability to accept shortcomings, jealousy, and grudges, which have the potential to develop in individuals, especially from childhood, may turn into some even more negative personality traits if not intervened. It is stated that this situation may prevent gratitude (Emmons, 2009). This may also suggest that the development of character strengths has a facilitating effect on the development of gratitude. Therefore, it is recommended to address situations that may hinder the development of gratitude before gratitude interventions (Kardaş & Yalçın, 2018). Based on this perspective, the gratitude sessions of the psycho-educational program started with the acquisition of 'recognizing situations that may prevent gratitude'. Other gratitude outcomes and activities were designed based on the 6 sub-dimensions of the gratitude model put forward by Kardaş & Yalçın (2019) for two groups.

Table 1. Content of positive psychology-based adolescent psycho-education program

Sessions	Attainments	Activities
Session 1	Understand the goals of the developmental positive psychology-based intervention program.	Meeting, group rules and informing about group process
Session 2	Being able to recognize and classify character strengths.	Character powers cube Character powers board
Session 3	Recognizing which character strength(s) are dominant.	My dominant strength in my life script (Scenario writing technique)
Session 4	Using the dominant character strength in daily life.	I use my dominant strength (Role-play technique)
Session 5	Recognizing character strength(s) that are not come to forefront	Building my dominant strength (Play dough technique) (Circle technique)
Session 6	Understanding the concepts of optimism-pessimism.	My point of view (Video, story, photo interpretation technique)
Session 7	Recognizing and distinguishing what thoughts and feelings are Understanding how thoughts and emotions affect each other.	My list of feelings and thoughts (Case study technique) Twister game
Session 8	Recognizing how optimistic and pessimistic thinking styles affect our reactions to events. Realizing that pessimistic thoughts can turn into optimistic thoughts.	Thought production machine (Metaphor technique) Boomerang emotion-thought game
Session 9	Understanding what the explanation style is. Recognizing the pessimistic thoughts and realize that they can be transformed into optimistic thoughts. Understanding the Conflict-thought-consequence model.	Optimistic or pessimistic? (Exposition technique) Cts model with 6 thinking hats technique
Session 10	Understanding the ways to transform pessimistic thoughts into optimistic thoughts.	I'm optimistic now (6 thinking hats technique)
Session 11	Developing a real 'optimistic perspective'.	Movie day (Pollyanna) (Movie watching technique)
Session 12	Recognizing situations that may prevent gratitude.	Who is in front of me? (Empty chair technique)
Session 13	Focusing on the positive features about oneself and accept the negative aspects. Focusing on the good characteristics and strengths instead of shortcomings or flaws in oneself.	My letter of gratitude (Letter writing technique)
Session 14	Finding things to be grateful for in the family and environment. Expressing gratitude.	Gratitude storm (Brainstorming technique) Gratitude rose (Material development)
Session 15	Evaluation and termination	Gratitude party (Certificate of participation)

Since the character strengths, optimism and gratitude attainments and activities created for the psycho-education program are also self-esteem enhancing activities, and it is thought that these will affect the self-esteem level of adolescents, direct self-esteem activities were not included in the program. Positive intervention activities were designed by using the methods of scenario writing, role playing, circle, case study, playing games, creative thinking, use of metaphor, direct expression, 6 thinking hats, empty chair, letter writing, movie analysis, brainstorming, material development' teaching.

Implementation of the Psycho-education Program

1st session - introduction and group rules: Practitioner introduces himself. It explains the purpose of the group. She says that they will be together for 15 weeks and that continuous and active participation in the group is important. As an introductory activity, each member is asked to introduce themselves and then tell them about an aspect/feature/trait that they like most about themselves. The group's cohesion is ensured. The group rules are determined. After the group rules are determined, the students/members are thanked, and the session ends with homework.

Note: It is important to warmly welcome members in each session, talk about homework assigned at the beginning of the sessions, and encourage each member to share.

2nd session - character strengths: The concepts of 'character', 'strengths' and 'character strengths' are mentioned. Members are asked what they know about these concepts. Concepts are explained. It is mentioned that there are 24 character strengths, all of them are grouped under six virtues and that they can be used in many areas of life (e.g. family, social environment, school, etc.).

After the information is given, the practitioner distributes the intact intelligence cubes and one indelible colored pencil. He states that these cubes will be the 'Cube of Virtues and Powers'. Each member writes 6 virtues in the middle parts of the cubes, and the character strengths representing each virtue on the remaining parts. After the writing process is completed, the cubes are mixed. Members are asked to restore the cubes during the sessions and the cubes are presented to the members as gifts. Then the group move on to the second activity.

The practitioner hangs a large piece of cardboard on the board, which is divided into 6 sections, with 6 virtues as headings in each section. She takes out the jar containing two sample sentences representing each character strength, taken from the 'VIA Character Strengths Inventory'. She asks each member to draw a piece of paper from the jar, tell which character strength this paper belongs to, and stick it under the title of whichever virtue it represents. All members do this until the papers run out. After the papers are completed, the evaluation phase begins. Homework is assigned and the session ends.

3rd session - character strengths: Information is given about the dominant character strength(s). Members are asked which character strength is dominant in them and why. After discussing the answers, the activity begins.

Worksheets containing life scenarios reflecting 24 character strengths are distributed. Scenarios are read. Each member scores the 5 scenarios they feel closest to, between 1-10, and the 5 character strengths that each member gives the highest score are revealed. Scenarios and ratings are talked about. These 5 powers are often described as the dominant powers.

An evaluation is made, homework is assigned and the session ends.

4th session - character strengths: Information is given about the importance of using dominant character strengths in daily life and how they are used. The group leader starts the activity.

Members are divided into 6 groups. The group leader takes out two jars containing papers. In one jar there are 6 virtues (1-knowledge-wisdom, 2-courage, 3-humanity-love, 4-justice, 5-moderation/temperance, 6-transcendence) and in the other 6 social environments (1-school, 2-hospital, 3- There are market/market, 4-holiday center, 5-relief area, 6-official institution (e.g. bank, police station, civil registry office, etc.)) Each group draws one card from the virtue jar and one from the social environments jar in daily life. Based on the two papers drawn, the groups are asked to write a scenario. For example, if the papers drawn are courage - hospital, a scenario in which the virtue of courage is at the forefront is designed in a hospital environment. After the scenarios are prepared, all groups act out the scenarios. After the animations are completed, an evaluation is made, and homework is given. Then the session is terminated.

Note: In order for all members to integrate with each other, it is important to ensure that the groups are distributed randomly and that there is no grouping.

5th session - character strengths: Members were asked: 'So far, we have talked about virtues and character strengths. You have all evaluated your own character strengths. You discovered what character strengths you have. You have learned the most dominant character strengths, the ones that stand out in you. In fact, you have started to reveal different aspects of yourself, that is, to discover yourself. Maybe you've never heard what we talked about before. However, starting from today, you know the answers to many questions such as what character strength is, what is the place and importance of these strengths in our lives, and how do we use these strengths. Now, we will make a sculpture of our dominant power in the first row using play dough. I care about this statue because these statues will remain as a memory of our group, we will have created a concrete product that belongs to our character strengths, and when we see this statue, we will have the opportunity to think about ourselves and our character traits. For this reason, I think this exercise will be an important point in your self-discovery process.' and the activity is started.

All members take out their play dough. Everyone shapes their statue by thinking about their own dominant power and answering the question, "What would this dominant power of mine look like if it were a statue?" After the sculptures are finished, an evaluation is made, and the second activity begins.

All members and the practitioner sit in a circle. Each member is asked to name their dominant character strength, and the other members are asked to evaluate these strengths mentioned by their friends. After the evaluations for each member are completed, a prominent feature of the group is considered, and this feature is given as the name of the group. After the activity is over, an evaluation is made in the circle, homework is given and the session ends.

Note: The purpose of this event is to show members that their strengths are also noticed from the outside and to encourage them to embrace their own strengths. Therefore, as it should be from the beginning of the sessions, the practitioner can act as a good observer of the positive aspects of the members in this activity, initiate conversations by giving examples of

the undiscovered strengths of the members, show active participation, and encourage other members to speak and express their opinions.

6th session - optimism: The concepts of 'optimist' and 'pessimist' are emphasized. A short film depicting optimistic and pessimistic perspectives is watched, photographs are examined, and the selected story is read. To reinforce the concepts of optimist and pessimist, members are asked how they think in general, whether they tend to think optimistically or pessimistically, and the answers are discussed. Then the group move on to the next activity.

Members are provided with scientifically based information supported by research on the differences between optimistic and pessimistic people (thinking styles, health, success, problem-solving skills, happiness levels, etc.). It is learned what members think about the information. There is a debate about whether optimistic thinking is necessary or not. The session is evaluated, homework is given, and the session is terminated.

7th session - optimism: The concepts of emotion and thought are discussed. Definitions of concepts are made. The activity that supports understanding the relationship between emotion and thought, is started.

Worksheets containing various sample situations are distributed to members. They are given time to write their feelings and thoughts in the boxes opposite the sample situations. Written feelings and thoughts are read by members. If there are examples where emotion is used instead of thought and thought is used instead of emotion, these are emphasized more and distinctions between emotion and thought are made. After discussing what has been written, we move on to the next activity.

Members are divided into groups of four. The rules of the Twister game are explained. Apart from these rules, it is stated that there is another rule: 'In order to be able to participate and continue the game, it is necessary to know whether the sentences/words prepared by the practitioner express feelings or thoughts.' The game starts and, if desired, the game can be continued after the session is over. An evaluation is made, homework is assigned and the session ends.

8th session - optimism: A case study on optimistic and pessimistic thinking is shared. Members are asked to think of situations they encounter in daily life that cause them to think negatively, as in the case study. Then, in order to change the outcome of these situations, they are asked to imagine our brain as a machine' and produce thoughts that can change the outcome. The homework given in the previous session is used to provide case study diversity. Case studies are discussed. The practitioner points out that when members share, 'thoughts reveal emotions, which in turn result in reactions.' An evaluation is made, and the next activity is started.

The practitioner takes the Boomerang stick. He asks what the stick is and how it might have anything to do with the session. Answers are received. Then, what the boomerang stick is, and its brief history are explained. All members are given the opportunity to try Boomerang. After the trials are completed, the evaluation phase begins, homework is given and the session ends.

Note: It is recommended to go outdoors to play the boomerang game. The purpose of the Boomerang game is to explain that thoughts lead to emotions. The following expressions can be used: "As you can see, the boomerang has two ends. Today we will call one of these ends the thought end and the other the emotion end. Whatever speed

and angle you throw the boomerang, it will come back to you at that angle and speed. In other words, just as we throw the end of it, which we call thought, the emotion end follows the thought end and returns to us at the same speed and shape we threw it. The logic of boomerang is to throw the stick at the right angle and speed and have it come back to our hand in the same way. Boomerang is a difficult skill to master, but with practice you can make your boomerang return directly to your hand. It may take some time, but once you master it, the feeling of a boomerang returning to your hand is truly amazing. Changing our thoughts is an equally difficult skill. However, once you learn it and learn it by constantly repeating it, you will not believe the changes in you, and you will start to enjoy life more."

9th session - optimism: It is said that the differences in thinking between optimistic and pessimistic people arise from their 'explanatory style'. It is explained what optimistic and pessimistic explanation styles are. Then, the 'catching pessimistic thoughts' phase of the TDS Model (Adverse - Thought - Result) is explained by using the 6 thinking hats technique. When using the 6-hat thinking technique, white, black, red, blue, green and yellow hats made of cardboard are used. At the end of the session, an evaluation is made, homework is given and the session ends.

10th session - optimism: The second stage of the TDS Model, 'transforming captured pessimistic thoughts into optimistic thoughts' is explained.

Note: Each hat color represents a concept of the TDS model. The practitioner wears hats representing the concepts while explaining these concepts so that the subject attracts attention, the concepts are remembered, and the direct expression technique is not boring. While members are asked to give examples of situations related to the subject, members can be made to wear hats that match the examples they give.

11th session - optimism: The theme of 'Developing a truly optimistic perspective' is emphasized. The movie Pollyanna (2003), which allows talking about realistic optimism, is watched. After the movie is finished, an evaluation is made, homework is given and the session ends.

12th session - gratitude: Information is given about the concept of gratitude. The necessity and importance of gratitude and the situations that prevent the development of gratitude are mentioned. The activity begins.

Members are divided into 9 groups. Each group draws one of the cards, on one side of which the situation that prevents gratitude is written, on the other side, a situation that expresses the opposite meaning of this situation and a dialogue about these situations are written. The drawn cards are read. Then the groups are asked to write an original dialogue about the situations. After the dialogues are written, two chairs are brought to the middle of the classroom. One of the chairs is the 'positive me' chair, the other is the 'negative me' chair. Members are asked to act out positive dialogue when sitting in the 'positive me' chair, and negative dialogue when sitting in the 'negative me' chair. The same member simulates sitting on both chairs and imagines himself/herself sitting in the empty chair. After the animations are done, the person, who imagines himself sitting in the other chair, tells how he feels about the sentences he heard and whether he is grateful for what he heard. The same activity can be continued by two different members sitting opposite each other on chairs. After the activity is completed, an evaluation is made, homework is given, and the session is terminated.

13th session - gratitude: Members are asked to write letters under predetermined headings to remind them of their strengths and positive aspects and to support them in expressing their feelings of gratitude. After the letters are finished, members who want to share them read their letters. Sharing is done. After the activity is completed, an evaluation is made, homework is given, and the session is terminated.

14th session - gratitude: Brainstorming technique is explained. The blackboard in the classroom is divided into two. One side of the board is reserved for 'Words Expressing the Feeling of Gratitude', and the other side is reserved for 'Things We Are Thankful For in Our Lives'. By brainstorming, suitable words and concepts for both headings are produced and written under the headings. What was written is discussed and the next activity is started.

Members are asked to make a wind rose as large as possible and in the colors, they want, using the papers they brought. After the wind roses are finished, it is desired to write an expression of gratitude on each branch of the wind rose, and under the expressions of gratitude, things, or people for whom gratitude is given or for which gratitude is forgotten should be written. It is recommended to use what is written on the board. Wind roses are discussed after they are completed. An evaluation is made, homework is assigned and the session ends.

15th session - evaluation and termination: The last session ends with a party so that all members remember this day with positive emotions. Before moving on to the party, the topics discussed, and activities carried out throughout all sessions are remembered and short evaluations are made. The activities that are enjoyed the most are talked about. After the evaluations are completed, the practitioner distributes name-specific certificates to each member stating the subject of the psychoeducation and the success achieved. He thanks each of them for their participation. He appreciates them for their success. In the first session, it produces the articles in which each member introduces himself and which is decided to be published at the end of 15 sessions. He distributes them to their owners. Members who want to read and evaluate themselves are given the right to speak. Members who share their articles are asked what they think, and the development process is discussed. Psychoeducation is completed by having a gratitude party.

Procedure

Participant, parent, school and Van Yüzüncü Yıl University Social and Humanities Publication Ethics Committee permissions are received first (In the decision of the relevant board dated 30.05.2023 and numbered 2023/14-13).

An announcement was made to the 8th grade students at Lütfiye Binnaz Saçlı Secondary School, within the borders of the central İpekyolu district of Van province, that a psychoeducation program would be implemented, the content of the training was explained and 88 students who wanted to participate voluntarily were determined. Preliminary interviews were held with the students who applied for the training and information was given about the purpose and details of the training. As a result of preliminary interviews, a total of 54 students remained. The remaining 54 students were randomly divided into the experimental and control groups. A pre-test was administered to both groups before the training started. A psychoeducation program consisting of 15 sessions of 45 minutes (one class hour) was applied to the experimental group in the school's conference hall, two days a week. The

control group was given a 45-minute efficiently studying program once a week for three weeks. A post-test was administered at the end of the training to the students who attended the experimental and control groups continuously throughout the training period. In the post-test application, there were 16 students in the experimental group and 17 students in the control group. In order to equalize the numbers of both groups, a random student's posttest was removed from the control group. Four weeks after the posttest was administered, a follow-up test was applied to the experimental group. The process was concluded with a total of 32 students, 16 participants from the experimental group and 16 participants from the control group.

Data Analysis

SPSS Statistics 26 program was used to analyze the research data. Since the number of samples in the experimental (16) and control (16) groups was below 30, non-parametric tests were used, assuming that the data were not normally distributed. Mann Whitney-U test was applied to test the significance of the difference between the character strengths, self-esteem, optimism, pessimism, and gratitude pre-test scores of the participants in the experimental and control groups. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to examine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. In order to determine whether the applied psychoeducation program had a significant effect on the character strengths, self-esteem, optimism, pessimism and gratitude scores of the experimental and control groups, a difference score was obtained by subtracting the post-test scores of the participants in both groups from the pre-test scores for all dependent variables. Mann-Whitney U-Test was applied again to determine whether the obtained difference score created a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups.

Findings

The mean and standard values of the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up tests of the participants in the experimental and control groups in the study for self-esteem, character strengths, optimism, pessimism and gratitude are presented in Table 2.

Since the number of participants in the current study was limited, Mann Whitney U test was performed to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups. Whitney U test results for character strengths, self-esteem, optimism, and pessimism and gratitude variables are given in Table 3.

When Table 3 is examined, according to the Whitney U test results, the participants in the experimental and control groups had character strengths ($U=119.500$, $p=.75$), self-esteem ($U=124.000$, $p=.88$), optimism ($U=106.500$, $p=.42$). No statistically significant difference was found between the two groups in terms of pre-test scores, pessimism ($U=99.500$, $p=.28$) and gratitude ($U=109.000$, $p=.47$). This finding reveals that the character strengths, self-esteem, optimism, pessimism and gratitude scores of the participants in the experimental and control groups did not differ before the applied psychoeducation program.

In the light of the findings obtained above, Wilcoxon signed-rank test was performed to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental and control groups, the results obtained from the experimental group are given in Table 4.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation values

Variable	Group	Process	N	Mean	SD
Character Strengths	Experiment	Pre-test	16	306.06	30.57
		Post-test	16	346.63	27.37
		Follow-up test	16	348.5	28.14
Self-esteem	Control	Pre-test	16	291.50	62.11
		Post-test	16	292.88	62.05
		Follow-up test	16	292.88	62.05
Optimism	Experiment	Pre-test	16	41.81	8.20
		Post-test	16	56.00	5.14
		Follow-up test	16	57.00	4.97
Pessimism	Control	Pre-test	16	41.88	8.93
		Post-test	16	43.13	9.27
		Follow-up test	16	43.13	9.27
Gratitude	Experiment	Pre-test	16	23.50	7.25
		Post-test	16	34.25	7.31
		Follow-up test	16	34.69	7.16
Pessimism	Control	Pre-test	16	25.25	7.77
		Post-test	16	26.00	7.73
		Follow-up test	16	26.00	7.73
Gratitude	Experiment	Pre-test	16	23.88	6.97
		Post-test	16	16.38	3.93
		Follow-up test	16	16.00	3.81
Pessimism	Control	Pre-test	16	21.69	6.25
		Post-test	16	21.44	6.50
		Follow-up test	16	21.44	6.50
Gratitude	Experiment	Pre-test	16	76.38	13.87
		Post-test	16	100.06	7.52
		Follow-up test	16	100.44	7.26
Pessimism	Control	Pre-test	16	77.88	20.92
		Post-test	16	78.81	21.39
		Follow-up test	16	78.81	21.39

SD:Standart Devitation N:Number of Samples

Table 3. Results of the non-parametric Mann Whitney-U test

Variable	Group	N	S.M.	S.T.	U	Z	p
Character Strengths	Experimental	16	17.03	272.50	119.500	-.32	.75
	Control	16	15.97	255.50			
	Total	32					
Self-esteem	Experimental	16	16.75	268.00	124.000	-.15	.88
	Control	16	16.25	260.00			
	Total	32					
Optimism	Experimental	16	15.16	242.50	106.500	-.81	.42
	Control	16	17.84	285.50			
	Total	32					
Pessimism	Experimental	16	18.28	292.50	99.500	-1.08	.28
	Control	16	14.72	235.50			
	Total	32					
Gratitude	Experimental	16	15.31	245.00	109.000	-.72	.47
	Control	16	17.69	283.00			
	Total	32					

Table 4. Wilcoxon signed rank test

Variable	Post-test/Pre-test	N	S.M.	S.T.	Z	p
Character Strengths	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	-4.38	.000
	Positive Ranks	25	13.00	325.00		
	Equal	7				
Self-esteem	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	-4.72	.000
	Positive Ranks	29	15.00	435.00		
	Equal	3				
Optimism	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	-3.93	.000
	Positive Ranks	20	10.50	210.00		
	Equal	12				
Pessimism	Negative Ranks	17	9.41	160.00	-3.26	.000
	Positive Ranks	1	11.00	11.00		
	Equal	14				
Gratitude	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	-4.11	.000
	Positive Ranks	22	11.50	253.00		
	Equal	10				

As a result of the analysis, between the pre-test and post-test scores of the students, character strengths ($Z = -4.38$; $p < .05$), self-esteem ($Z = -4.72$; $p < .05$), optimism ($Z = -3.93$; $p < .05$), pessimism ($Z = -3.26$; $p < .05$), gratitude ($Z = -4.11$; $p < .05$); a significant difference was found in favor of pre-test scores. According to these findings, it can be said that the program implemented to increase students' character strengths, self-esteem, optimism, and gratitude levels and to increase their pessimism levels is effective.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics

Group	Variable	N	Mean	S.E.
Experimental	DifferenceCS	16	40.56	8.09
	DifferenceSE	16	14.19	3.92
	DifferenceOpt	16	10.75	8.87
	DifferencePsm	16	-7.50	5.76
	DifferenceGrt	16	23.69	8.15
Control	DifferenceCS	16	1.38	1.86
	DifferenceSE	16	1.2500	.77
	DifferenceOpt	16	.75	1.39
	DifferencePsm	16	-.25	.77
	DifferenceGrt	16	.94	1.57

Table 6. Results of the Mann Whitney-U test

Variable	Group	N	S.M.	S.T.	U	Z	p
Character Strengths	Experimental	16	24.50	392.00	000	-4.85	.000
	Control	16	8.50	136.00			
	Total	32					
Self-esteem	Experimental	16	24.50	392.00	000	-4.87	.000
	Control	16	8.50	136.00			
	Total	32					
Optimism	Experimental	16	24.31	389.00	3.000	-4.85	.000
	Control	16	8.69	139.00			
	Total	32					
Pessimism	Experimental	16	9.63	154.00	18.000	-4.34	.000
	Control	16	23.38	374.00			
	Total	32					
Gratitude	Experimental	16	24.47	391.50	.500	-4.88	.000
	Control	16	8.53	136.50			
	Total	32					

Table 7. Cohen value calculated to reveal the effectiveness of the difference between groups

Variable	Group	Process	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cohen's d	Effect Size
Character Strength	Experimental	Pre-test	306.06	30.57		
		Post-test	346.63	27.37	-1.99	-0.70
		Follow-up test	348.5	28.14		
	Control	Pre-test	291.50	62.11		
		Post-test	292.88	62.05		
		Follow-up test	292.88	62.05		
Self-esteem	Experimental	Pre-test	41.81	8.20		
		Post-test	56.00	5.14	-2.07	-0.71
		Follow-up test	57.00	4.97		
	Control	Pre-test	41.88	8.93		
		Post-test	43.13	9.27		
		Follow-up test	43.13	9.27		
Optimism	Experimental	Pre-test	23.50	7.25		
		Post-test	34.25	7.31	-1.47	-0.59
		Follow-up test	34.69	7.16		
	Control	Pre-test	25.25	7.77		
		Post-test	26.00	7.73		
		Follow-up test	26.00	7.73		
Pessimism	Experimental	Pre-test	23.88	6.97		
		Post-test	16.38	3.93	1.32	0.55
		Follow-up test	16.00	3.81		
	Control	Pre-test	21.69	6.25		
		Post-test	21.44	6.50		
		Follow-up test	21.44	6.50		
Gratitude	Experimental	Pre-test	76.38	13.87		
		Post-test	100.06	7.52	-3.42	-0.86
		Follow-up test	100.44	7.26		
	Control	Pre-test	77.88	20.92		
		Post-test	78.81	21.39		
		Follow-up test	78.81	21.39		

Table 8. Wilcoxon signed rank test

Variable	Follow-up test-Post-test	N	S.M.	S.T.	Z	p
Character Strengths	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	-2.97	.003
	Positive Ranks	11	6.00	66.00		
	Equal	5				
Self-esteem	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	-2.72	.006
	Positive Ranks	9	5.00	45.00		
	Equal	7				
Optimism	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	-2.33	.020
	Positive Ranks	6	3.50	21.00		
	Equal	10				
Pessimism	Negative Ranks	4	2.50	10.00	-1.86	.063
	Positive Ranks	0	.00	.00		
	Equal	12				
Gratitude	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	-1.89	.059
	Positive Ranks	4	2.50	10.00		
	Equal	12				

According to the results obtained to show the effectiveness of the difference between groups, the applied psychoeducation program has a moderate effect size in increasing the character strengths ($d=-0.70$; $p\geq 0.5$), self-esteem ($d=-0.71$; $p\geq 0.5$), optimism ($d=-0.59$; $p\geq 0.5$) levels of adolescents and reducing their pessimism levels ($d=0.55$; $p\geq 0.5$), and has a high effect size in increasing their gratitude ($d=-0.86$; $p\geq 0.8$) levels.

As seen in Table 8, a statistically significant difference was found between the character strengths ($Z = -2.97$; $p = .003$), self-esteem ($Z = -2.72$; $p = .006$) and optimism ($Z = -2.33$; $p = .020$) in the post-test and follow-up test scores of the participants in the experimental group, in favor of the follow-up test scores. However, it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between the participants' pessimism ($Z = -1.86$; $p = .063$) and gratitude ($Z = -1.89$; $p = .059$) in the post-test and follow-up test scores. These findings show that the significant effect of the psychoeducation program applied in the experimental group on the participants' character strengths, self-esteem and optimism continues to increase over time. In addition, it can be said that the program maintained the participants' gratitude levels, although it did not increase them over time, and similarly kept their pessimism scores low, although it did not reduce them further. When all the findings are evaluated as a whole, it can be said that the psycho-educational program developed is effective and maintains this effect over time.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Positive psychology does not only consider reducing or eliminating the individual's problem as an ultimate goal, it also aims to increase the well-being and quality of life and the lifelong development of the individual (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In order for the lifelong development process to progress in a healthy way, it is important to experience productively the childhood period, when life begins to be discovered, and the adolescence period, when personality development is largely shaped. Positive psychology emphasizes the importance of discovering character strengths and using them in daily life to increase the productivity of childhood and adolescence and support lifelong development.

According to Park & Peterson (2008), the critical period for the development of character strengths is childhood and adolescence. Adulthood periods are not delayed periods for the

discovery and proper use of character strengths. However, intervening in the experiences and values that are often stereotyped in the individual until adulthood may be more difficult than in youth. Erikson (1963) suggests that certain strengths are necessary foundations for other strengths. For example, strengths such as genuineness, open-mindedness, perspective, leadership, forgiveness, and spirituality are character strengths that are more common in adults than in young people. The basis of these powers lies in strengths such as love of learning, creativity, social intelligence, self-esteem, teamwork and optimism, which are more frequently observed in children and adolescents than in adults. For this reason, character strengths that begin to be discovered in the early stages of life and become a part of the self-increased intellectual, emotional, and behavioural predictability of adulthood (Park & Peterson, 2008).

Studies on character strengths show that life satisfaction and subjective well-being (Brdar et al., 2011; Proctor et al., 2011) are highly related to character strengths, and the strongest predictors of these two variables are hope, love, gratitude, optimism, and enthusiasm for life (Park et al., 2004; Peterson et al., 2007; Brdar & Kashdan, 2010; Gillham et al., 2011). In addition to these findings, Shoshani & Slone (2016) revealed that the discovery and development of character strengths play an important role, especially on the psychological resilience of adolescents. Based on the importance of character strengths, in this study, a psycho-educational program focused on character strengths was developed for adolescents, and with this intervention program, it was aimed to increase the levels of character strengths, self-esteem, optimism, gratitude and reduce the levels of pessimism in adolescents.

The findings of this study revealed that the Positive Psychology-Based Psychoeducation Program was effective in increasing adolescents' self-esteem, optimism, gratitude, and total character strength levels and reducing their pessimism levels. When looking at the degree of this effect, it was observed that it had a medium level of effect on character strengths, self-esteem, increasing optimism and reducing pessimism, and a high level of effect on increasing gratitude. Based on this result, it can be said that the developed program has a medium and high level of impact. Considering the permanence of the program over time in developing character strengths, self-esteem, optimism, and gratitude in adolescents and reducing pessimism, it was concluded that the program continued to increase its effect on character strengths, self-

esteem and optimism over time. It has been revealed that it maintains gratitude levels over time, although it does not increase them, and similarly keeps pessimism scores low, although it does not decrease them further.

Martinez-Marti & Ruch (2014) found that all character strengths were positively related to psychological resilience. Similarly, these researchers determined that, despite different socio-demographic variables, character strengths increase self-efficacy, optimism, life satisfaction, developing positive social relationships and self-esteem. Studies (Lyubomirsky 2001; Lyubomirsky et al., 2006; Ferguson & Goodwin, 2010; Tagay & Şahin-Baltacı, 2017), examining the role of self-esteem and optimism in the subjective well-being of adolescents have determined that optimism and self-esteem have a direct and significant relationship with subjective well-being. In another study, Kardaş et al., (2019) examined the effects of gratitude, optimism, hope and life satisfaction on psychological well-being. It was concluded that gratitude, optimism, hope, life satisfaction and psychological well-being were positively related to each other, and gratitude was the strongest predictor of psychological well-being. Various studies also (Chan, 2013; Lin, 2015) have found that gratitude is an important and strong predictor of well-being and is positively related to life satisfaction (Robustelli & Whisman, 2018). The Positive Psychology Based Adolescent Psychoeducation Program developed within the framework of this study revealed positive relationships between character strengths, self-esteem, optimism, and gratitude variables. This shows that the experimental findings in this study are consistent with the correlational research results in the literature.

Ongoing studies on character strengths have shown that awareness and effective use of character strengths increases happiness and reduces depressive symptoms (Seligman et al., 2005; Gander et al., 2013). It has also been found to increase students' desire to study and their well-being (Forest et al., 2012), and is one of the strong predictors of life satisfaction (Park & Peterson, 2009). Similarly, it has been determined that using character strengths at a low level reduces emotional control and increases social anxiety (Hofmann, 2007), while using character strengths more often leads to less stress and greater success in creating and achieving life goals (Wood et al., 2011; Li & Liu, 2016).

The results obtained from the studies have revealed that if character strengths, self-esteem, optimism, and gratitude are developed; and pessimism is reduced, individuals' cognitive, affective and behavioural well-being will increase. Considering that the Positive Psychology Based Adolescent Psycho-education Program is effective on increasing character strengths, self-esteem, optimism, gratitude and reducing pessimism, it is predicted that the well-being of adolescents who discover their character strengths through the prepared psycho-educational program will increase, starting from adolescence and continuing into adulthood.

In the light of current findings, it is recommended to increase the number of programs aimed at developing character strengths and prepare them for different age groups. The Positive Psychology-Based Psychoeducation Program developed within the scope of this study was prepared for adolescents and 8th grade students in the 14-year-old group were preferred as the sample group. Conducting a study on what the results would be if the program was applied to the 14-18 age group could expand the application area of the program. The program has been prepared as 15 sessions. The application

was carried out 2 days a week and the program took approximately 8 weeks to complete. If it is implemented as 1 lesson per week during guidance hours in schools, the completion time of the program reaches 16 weeks. If this time is too much for practitioners and students, it may be recommended to reduce the number of activities in the program or implement them gradually. Although the participants of this program were determined voluntarily, most of the participants were women. It would be better if the balance between men and women was taken into account in future studies. Finally, since the program includes cognitive-affective-behavioural gains, it is important to consider that the person who will implement it should have application competence in group guidance.

Author Contributions

All authors were equally involved in all processes of the article. All authors read and approved the final version of the study.

Ethical Declaration

This study was carried out with Van Yüzüncü Yıl University Social and Humanities Publication Ethics Committee permission (In the decision of the relevant board dated 30.05.2023 and numbered 2023/14-13).

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with any institution or person within the scope of the study.

References

- Brdar, I., & Kashdan, T. (2010). Character strengths and well-being croatia. *Journal of Research in Personality*, (44), 151-154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2009.12.001>
- Brdar, I., Anic, P. & Rijavec, M. (2011). Character strengths and well-being: Are there gender differences? In I. Brdar (Ed.), *The human pursuit of well-being: A cultural approach*. Springer, 145-156. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1375-8_13
- Bromley, E., Johnson, J. G., & Cohen, P. (2006). Personality strengths in adolescence and decreased risk of developing mental health problems in early adulthood. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 47, 315-324. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.comppsy.2005.11.003>
- Büyüköztürk, Ş. (2017). *Manuel od data analysis for social sciences*. Ankara: Pegem Akademi.
- Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Segerstrom, S. C. (2010). Optimism. *Clinical psychology review*, 30(7), 879-889. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2010.01.006>
- Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (2014). Dispositional optimism. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 18(6), 293-299. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2014.02.003>
- Chan, D. W. (2013). Subjectivewell-being of Hong Kong Chinese teachers: The contribution of gratitude, forgiveness, and the orientations to happiness. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 32, 22-30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.12.005>
- Compton, W. C., & Hoffman, E. (2013). *Positive psychology: The science of happiness and flourishing*. (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

- Çalışkan, H. & Uzunkol, E. (2018). Developing an optimism-pessimism scale in adolescents: Validity and reliability study. *The Journal of Happiness & WellBeing*, 6(2), 78-95.
- Emmons, R. A. (2004). *The psychology of gratitude: An introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Emmons, R.A. (2009). *Gratitude*. In (S.J. Lopez. Ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology*. (p. 442-447). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hofmann, S. G., (2007). Cognitive factors that maintain social anxiety disorder: A comprehensive model and its treatment implications. *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*, 4(36), 193-209. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16506070701421313>
- James, W. (1907). The Energies of Men. *The Philosophical Review*, 16(1); 1-20.
- Kabakçı, Ö. F. (2016). Character strengths and virtues: A new approach to strengths-based counseling and values education. *Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Journal*, 6(45), 25-40.
- Kardaş, F. & Yalçın, İ. (2018). Gratitude: A current issue in mental health. *Current Approaches in Psychiatry*, 10(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.18863/pgy.334494>
- Kardaş, F., Çam, Z., Eşkisü, M. & Gelibolu, S. (2019). Gratitude, hope, optimism and life satisfaction as predictors of psychological well-being. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 82(5), 81-100. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2019.82.5>
- Kardaş, F. & Yalçın, İ. (2019). Validity and reliability study of gratitude scale. *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences*. 18(69), 13-31. <https://doi.org/10.17755/esosder.406306>
- Lin, C. C. (2015). Gratitude and depression in young adults: The mediating role of self esteem and well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 87, 30-34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.07.017>
- Lyubomirsky, S. (2001). Why are some people happier than others? *American Journal of Psychology*, 56(3), 239-249. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.239>
- Lyubomirsky, S., Tkach, C., & Dimatteo, M. (2006). What are the differences between happiness and self-esteem? *Social Indicators Research*, 78, 363-404. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11205-005-0213-y>
- Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). *The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting life you want*. New York: The Penguin Press.
- Modini, M., Abbott, M. J., & Hunt, C. A. (2015). A systematic review of the psychometric properties of trait social anxiety self-report measures. *Journal of Psychopathology*, 37(4), 645-662. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10862-016-9573-7>
- Park, N., Peterson, C. & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). Strengths of character and well-being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(5), 603-619. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1521/jscp.23.5.603.50748>
- Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). *The values in action inventory of character strengths for youth*. In K. A. Moore ve L. H. Lippman (Eds.), *What do children need to flourish: Conceptualizing and measuring indicators of positive development* (pp. 13-23). New York: Springer. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/0-387-23823-9_2
- Park, N. & Peterson, C. (2008). *The cultivation of character strengths*. In M. Ferrari & G. Potworowski (Eds.), *Teaching for wisdom*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2009). Character strengths: Research and practice. *Journal of College and Character*, 10(4), 1-10. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2202/1940-1639.1042>
- Peterson, C. & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strength and virtues: A hand book and classification*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Proctor, C., Maltby, J., & Linley, P. A. (2011). Strengths use as a predictor of well-being and health-related quality of life. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 12, 153-169. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10902-009-9181-2>
- Robustelli, B. L., & Whisman, M. A. (2018). Gratitude and life satisfaction in the United States and Japan. *Journal of Happiness Studies: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Subjective Well-Being*, 19(1), 41-55. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10902-016-9802-5>
- Rosenberg, M. (1986). *Conceiving the self*. New York; Basic Books.
- Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1985). Optimism, coping, and health: Assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology*, 4(3), 219-247. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037//0278-6133.4.3.219>
- Seligman, M., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55, 5-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.5>
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). *Positive psychology, positive prevention, and positive therapy*. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 3-9). Oxford University Press.
- Seligman, M. Steen, E., Tracy A., Park, N. & Peterson, C., (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60(5), 410-421. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.5.410>
- Seligman, M. (2021). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*, (S. Kunt-Akbaş, Tr.) İstanbul: Eksi Kitaplar Bookstore.
- Shoshani, A., & Slone, M. (2016). The resilience function of character strengths in the face of war and protracted conflict. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6(2006). <http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.02006>
- Tagay, Ö. & Şahin- Baltacı, H. (2017). Subjective well-being and time attitude among adolescents: Mediator role of self-esteem and optimism. *PAU Faculty of Educational Journal*, (41), 131-144. <http://dx.doi.org/10.9779/PUJE811>
- Ulusoy, M.A. (2020). *The effectiveness of positive psychology-based group counseling on lie-telling tendency and self-respect of 7th grade students*. (Thesis Number:633894) [Doctoral Thesis, Marmara University-İstanbul] Higher Education Council National Thesis Center.
- Wedding, D., & Niemiec, R. M. (2018). *Positive psychology at the movies: Using films to build virtues and character strengths*, (G. Kafa, Tr.). İstanbul: Kaknüs Publication.