






## Examining the Views of School Counselors on the Solution Focused Counseling

### Çözüm Odaklı Yaklaşımın Kullanımına İlişkin Okul Psikolojik Danışmanlarının Görüşlerinin İncelenmesi

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**Abstract.** This study investigates school counselors' perspectives on the implementation of solution-focused counseling within educational settings. The research involved ten school counselors (six female and four male) employed across various educational levels—primary, middle, and high schools—in Izmir. A qualitative phenomenological approach was utilized for this study, and participants were selected through a snowball sampling technique. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview protocol developed by the researchers. Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed two main categories: theoretical and practical. Within the theoretical category, the identified themes included problem areas, strengths, and limitations of solution-focused counseling. The practical category encompassed themes such as techniques, and application preferences. The counselors reported employing solution-focused counseling in their schools and deemed it effective. They also highlighted the challenges posed by large caseloads and substantial workloads, noting that the solution-focused approach significantly aids in addressing these issues. The results are discussed in relation to existing literature on solution-focused counseling and its application in school settings.

**Keywords:** Solution-focused counseling, School, Counselor, Phenomenological design

**Öz.** Bu çalışmanın amacı okul psikolojik danışmanlarının çözüm odaklı psikolojik danışmanın eğitim ortamlarında uygulanmasına ilişkin bakış açılarını incelemektedir. Araştırmaya İzmir'de çeşitli eğitim kademelerinde (ilkokul, ortaokul ve lise) çalışan on okul psikolojik danışmanı (altı kadın ve dört erkek) katılmıştır. Bu çalışmada nitel fenomenolojik bir yaklaşım kullanılmış ve katılımcılar kartopu örnekleme tekniği ile seçilmiştir. Veriler, araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilen yarı yapılandırılmış bir görüşme protokolü vasıtasıyla elde edilmiştir. Görüşmelerin deşifresini içeren analizler sonucunda iki ana kategori ortaya çıkarmıştır: Teorik ve uygulama. Teorik kategorisi altında belirlenen temalar arasında sorun alanları, güçlü yönler ve çözüm odaklı danışmanın sınırlılıkları yer almaktadır. Uygulama kategorisi altında ise işlevsel kullanım, teknikler ve uygulama tercihleri gibi temaları kapsamaktadır. Psikolojik danışmanlar, çözüm odaklı psikolojik danışmayı okullarında uyguladıklarını ve etkili bulduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca, okullarda hatırı sayılır miktarda vakaya muhatap olmaları ve önemli iş yüklerinin yarattığı zorlukların altını çizmişler ve çözüm odaklı yaklaşımın bu sorunların çözüme kavuşturulmasında önemli ölçüde yardımcı olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Sonuçlar, çözüm odaklı psikolojik danışma ve bunun okul ortamlarında uygulanmasına ilişkin mevcut literatürle bağlantılı olarak tartışılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çözüm odaklı danışma, Okul, Psikolojik danışman, Fenomenolojik desen



## Genişletilmiş Özet

**Giriş.** Çözüm odaklı psikolojik danışma, 1980'lerin başında ortaya çıkan postmodern bir terapötik yaklaşımdır ve Insoo Kim Berg ile Steve de Shazer'in öncülüğünde aile terapisi temellerinden beslenir. Bu yaklaşım, danışanın mevcut kaynaklarını ve güçlü yönlerini öne çıkararak, problemleri derinlemesine analiz etmeden işlevsel çözümler arar. Danışan, kendi yaşamının uzmanı olarak kabul edilir ve danışmanla kurulan terapötik ilişki süreçte kritik bir rol oynar. Ayrıca, bu yaklaşım zamanın verimli kullanımıyla etkili sonuçlar ortaya koyar. Okullarda psikolojik danışmanlık hizmetlerinin etkinliği, sınırlı zaman ve kaynaklar nedeniyle önemli bir konudur. Amerikan Okul Psikolojik Danışmanları Derneği, ideal öğrenci/okul psikolojik danışmanı oranının 250'ye 1 olması gerektiğini, mevcut oranının ise 408'e 1 olduğunu belirtmektedir. Türkiye'de de benzer bir durum söz konusudur; burada yaklaşık 5000 psikolojik danışman açığı bulunmaktadır. Bu eksiklikler, psikolojik danışmanların etkinliğini sınırlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, çözüm odaklı psikolojik danışma yaklaşımının okullarda kullanımının etkili ve zaman dostu bir seçenek sunduğu düşünülmektedir. Çözüm odaklı psikolojik danışma, somut ve anlaşılır bir dil kullanır ve yargılayıcı olmayan bir tutum sergiler, yaklaşımın bu yönü de okullardaki gelişimsel ihtiyaçlarla örtüşür. Ayrıca, yaklaşımın kısa süreli ve hedef güdümlü olması okullardaki sınırlı zaman içinde etkin hizmet sunma avantajı sağlar. Literatürde, bu yaklaşımın sınav kaygısı, öfke kontrolü, akran zorbalığı ve davranış sorunları gibi çeşitli alanlarda başarılı sonuçlar sağladığı araştırmalarla desteklenmiştir. Yürütülen bir meta-analizde, bu yaklaşımın öğrencilerin depresyon, kariyer öz yeterliği ve kariyer olgunluğu gibi konularda etkili olduğu saptanmıştır. Çözüm odaklı yaklaşım okullarda karşılaşılabilecek sorun alanlarında etkili sonuçlar ortaya koysa da literatürde okul psikolojik danışmanlarının bu yaklaşımı nasıl uyguladıklarına dair spesifik bir incelemeyle karşılaşmamıştır. Bu nedenle, okul psikolojik danışmanlarının çözüm odaklı psikolojik danışma yaklaşımını nasıl uyguladıkları, hangi sorun alanlarıyla çalıştıkları gibi uygulama pratiklerinin ve görüşlerinin derinlemesine incelenmesi, yaklaşımın etkili şekilde uygulanması için önem arz etmektedir. Nitekim uygulamalar esnasında edinilen deneyimlerin etrafıca ele alınmasıyla işleyişteki güçlü ve zayıf yönleri ortaya konabilir, bu yolla da yaklaşımın kullanımı esnasındaki etkililiğin artmasına katkı sunulabilir. Bu bağlamda araştırmacının amacı okul psikolojik danışmanlarının çalışma ortamlarında çözüm odaklı yaklaşımın kullanımına ilişkin görüşlerini incelemektir.

**Yöntem.** Bu çalışma, okul psikolojik danışmanlarının çözüm odaklı danışma konusundaki görüşlerini incelemek için nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomenolojik desen kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmada, yaşantılar sonucu elde edilen deneyimlerin betimlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Kartopu örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen 10 katılımcı, çözüm odaklı danışma yaklaşımını okullarda nasıl kullandıklarını ifade etmiştir. Katılımcıların yaş aralıkları 33 ile 47; mesleki tecrübeleri ise 8 ile 21 yıl arasındadır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerde danışmanlara, çözüm odaklı danışmanın etkinliği, kullanılan teknikler, uygulama alanları ve sınırlılıkları sorulmuştur. Veriler betimsel ve içerik analizi yöntemleriyle incelenmiş, analiz sürecinde kodlar, temalar ve kategoriler belirlenmiştir. Kodlayıcılar arası güvenilirlik %82 olarak hesaplanmıştır. Çalışmanın geçerlik ve güvenilirliği, özgünlük, inandırıcılık ve aktarılabirlik kriterlerine dayandırılmıştır.

**Bulgular.** Çözüm odaklı yaklaşımın okullarda nasıl kullanıldığını anlamak için yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerde elde edilen bulgular teorik ve uygulama kategorilerde incelenmiştir.



Teorik kategoride, problem alanları, sınırlı yanlar ve güçlü yanlar olarak üç ana tema belirlenmiştir. Katılımcılar, çözüm odaklı yaklaşımı en çok sosyal, eğitsel, duygusal ve aile içi problemlerle başa çıkmak için kullandıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Sınırlı yanlar temasında ise bu yaklaşımın travmalarla çalışmada yetersiz kaldığı ve problemlerin derinlemesine ele alınmaması gibi düşünceler öne çıkmıştır. Güçlü yanlar arasında zaman dostu olması, somut ve anlaşılır bir yapıya sahip olması ile çözüme odaklanması vurgulanmıştır. Uygulama kategorisinde katılımcıların yaklaşımı kullanırken sıklıkla derecelendirme, mucize soru, istisna durumlar gibi teknikleri tercih ettikleri saptanmıştır. Özellikle bu tekniklerin öğrencilere somut ve anlaşılır bir süreç sunduğu, kısa sürede çözüme ulaşmayı sağladığı belirtilmiştir. Bunun yanında sorunun kökenine inmeme ilkesi de açığa çıkan bir diğer kod olmuştur. Sonuç olarak, çözüm odaklı yaklaşımın okullarda hem uygulamalarda hem de kuramsal manada geniş bir kullanım alanı bulduğu, ancak katılımcılara göre bazı sınırlılıklar da barındırdığı belirtilmiştir.

**Tartışma ve Sonuç.** Bu araştırma, okul psikolojik danışmanlarının çözüm odaklı psikolojik danışma yaklaşımının kullanımıyla ilgili görüşlerini iki ana kategori altında incelemiştir: Teorik ve uygulama. Teorik kategoride, çözüm odaklı yaklaşımın uygulandığı problem alanları olarak eğitsel, sosyal, duygusal ve aile içi sorunlar vurgulanmıştır. Okul psikolojik danışmanları ders çalışma sorunları, zaman yönetimi, akademik başarısızlık, öfke ve kaygı gibi konularda çözüm odaklı yaklaşımı kullanmışlardır. Bu, yaklaşımın farklı problem alanlarında kullanılabilirliğini ve uygulama noktasında esnekliğe sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte okul psikolojik danışmanları çözüm odaklı yaklaşımın sınırlı yanlarını travma ve kökleşmiş problemlerde yetersiz kalma ve problemi derinlemesine ele almama ifadeleriyle belirtmişlerdir. Bu sınırlamalar, katılımcıların EMDR ve BDT gibi diğer ekollerini tercih etmelerinden kaynaklanıyor olabilir. Çözüm odaklı yaklaşımın geleneksel terapi ekollerinden farklı bir bakış açısı sunmasının bu düşüncelerin açığa çıkmasında etkili olduğu düşünülmektedir. Ancak, bu eleştirilerin tüm terapi yaklaşımları için geçerli olduğu ve çözüm odaklı yaklaşımın çeşitli sorun alanlarında diğer yaklaşımlarla birlikte kullanılarak etkili olabileceği söylenilebilir. Uygulama kategorisi altında ise çözüm odaklı yaklaşımın geniş bir uygulama yelpazesinde etkili sonuçlar sağladığı belirtilmiştir. Katılımcıların mucize soru, derecelendirme, istisna durum, açık uçlu sorular ve amigo efekti gibi teknikleri sıklıkla kullandıkları ancak amaç belirleme soruları ve başa çıkma soruları gibi kritik tekniklerin yeterince kullanmadıkları görülmüştür. Ayrıca, grup uygulamaları konusunda sınırlı deneyim ve bilgi eksikliği olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu eksiklikler, okul psikolojik danışmanlarının grup süreçlerine dair yeterli eğitim ve deneyime sahip olmamalarından kaynaklanıyor olabilir. Öneriler doğrultusunda, çözüm odaklı yaklaşımın daha etkili bir şekilde kullanılabilmesi için okul psikolojik danışmanlarına yönelik eğitim programları düzenlenmesi gerektiği söylenebilir. Bu eğitimlerde travma ve kökleşmiş problemlerle ilgili bilgi eksikliklerinin giderilmesi, teknik bilgilerin artırılması ve grup uygulama becerilerinin geliştirilmesi hedeflenmelidir. Ayrıca, rehberlik ve psikolojik danışmanlık programlarına çözüm odaklı yaklaşımın ayrı bir ders olarak eklenmesi, öğrencilerin bu yaklaşımla ilgili daha derinlemesine bilgi edinmelerine yardımcı olabilir. Eğitim faaliyetleri ve lisans programlarına yapılacak entegrasyonlarla, çözüm odaklı psikolojik danışma yaklaşımının etkinliği artırılabilir ve uygulayıcıların bilgi eksiklikleri giderilebilir. Araştırmanın sınırlamaları arasında, katılımcıların yalnızca İzmir il merkezinden seçilmesi ve genel bir genelleme yapılamaması yer almaktadır; bu nedenle farklı illerden katılımcılarla yapılacak araştırmalar, bulguların temsiliyetinin artırılmasına katkı sağlayabilir.



## Introduction

Solution-focused counseling is a postmodern psychotherapy approach that emerged in the early 1980s (Quick, 2013). Under the leadership of Insoo Kim Berg and Steve de Shazer by feeding on the approach and philosophy of family therapy (Iveson, George & Ratner, 2012). In the solution-focused counseling approach, strengths are emphasized based on the client's existing resources and; the client is accepted as the expert of their own life throughout the process (Groot, 2002). In this approach, the client's problems are emphasized on the solutions that work without addressing them in-depth, and functional solutions are discovered instead of those that are inoperative (de Shazer et al., 2007). The therapeutic relationship between the client and the counselor is vital in finding solutions. In addition, since the solution-focused counseling approach is based on a philosophy that prioritizes reaching a solution, time is used effectively and efficiently (Şahin & Siyez, 2023).

Effective use of time is of utmost importance in school counseling and guidance activities. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) states that the perfect student-to-school counselor ratio is 250 to 1, whereas the current ratio is 408 to 1 (ASCA, 2023). While the ideal ratio has yet to be reached even in the United States, the birthplace of guidance and counseling services, a similar situation exists in Türkiye. According to a recent statement by the Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Association senior management, there is a shortage of nearly 5000 psychological counselor in schools (Kaplan, 2022). As well as considering that the number of students in Türkiye is approximately 19 million (T.C. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 2024) and the number of school counselors is 42550 (Mebdenhaber, 2024), it is noteworthy that this ratio is approximately 440. In addition, Thompson (2002) emphasizes that reasons such as shortages in the number of school counselors, multiple tasks in schools, and high student enrollment limit the effectiveness of counselors. In a study supporting this view, it is stated that there are problems with guidance services due to the insufficient number of counselors in schools (Karataş & Şahin Baltacı, 2013). In this context, to effectively serve and reach all students, time-friendly approaches that address the needs come to the fore (Tuzgöl Dost & Keklik, 2012). At this point, there is a direct link between the characteristics of the solution-oriented counseling approach and meeting the needs of schools.

The fact that the approach has concrete, clear, and understandable language and adopts a non-judgmental attitude overlaps with the developmental characteristics of the target group in schools (Lethem, 2002). In addition, the short duration of 6 sessions and the effort to build the solution instead of defining the problem in detail are advantages in providing effective service in schools (Gingerich & Eisengart, 2000). In this context, studies that show the use of solution-focused counseling in school counseling and guidance services yield beneficial results and draw attention to the literature. It has been observed that the solution-focused counseling approach has shown functional results in areas such as problem-solving and exam anxiety (Sarıcı-Bulut, 2010), anger control and communication skills (Siyez & Tan Tuna, 2014), peer bullying (Arslan & Akin, 2015) and behavioral problems encountered in the school environment (Franklin, Moore & Hopson, 2008). In addition to individual studies conducted in schools, there are also meta-analysis studies on the effectiveness of this approach. The recurrent findings in these studies are that the solution-focused



approach yields functional results in different problem areas at school (Gingerich & Peterson, 2012; Gong & Xu, 2016; Kim & Franklin, 2009).

The common denominator of the reviewed studies was that the solution-focused approach yields beneficial results in different problem areas encountered in schools. In addition, although the approach was effective, there is no study on how school counselors implement solution-focused counseling. At this point, it would be useful to examine the ideas of school counselors about the practices in depth to explore the implementation practices and address the aspects that need to be developed in practices. In this way, the reflections of an approach actively used in schools will be discussed in depth; concrete outputs on using the solution-focused approach in schools will be revealed. In this way, practitioner-based recommendations can be given at the point of effective implementation of school counseling services. In this context, the question of the research is “what are the opinions of school counselors on the use of a solution-focused approach?” In accordance with this main question, the study aimed to examine the opinions of school counselors about the solution-focused counseling approach. In addition to this aim, it is also aimed to reveal the problem areas in which the solution-focused counseling approach is applied in schools, to get practitioners' opinions on the effectiveness of the approach, to determine the techniques commonly used, and to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the approach. By addressing these aspects through targeted questions posed to school counselors, the study sought to provide informed recommendations for enhancing the practice of solution-focused counseling in educational settings.

## Methodology

In this study, in which the views of school counselors on solution-focused counseling were addressed, phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research designs, was used. In the phenomenological design, the experiences obtained through career life experiences are discussed, and the description of the experience and the basis of the experience are to be revealed (Merriam, 2018). In this context, based on the direct experience of the study participants with the solution-focused counseling approach, the background of using the approach in schools was determined.

### Participants

In this study, snowball sampling, one of the types of purposive sampling, was preferred. In this type of sampling, selecting participants who can provide qualified data in light of the research question and objectives is essential. For this purpose, it is necessary to coordinate with experts who have direct or indirect contact with the target audience, who will guide the selection of participants (Patton, 2018a). The ages of the 10 school counselor (6 female, 4 male) who participated in the study were 33-47 years old (mean: 38,3; standard deviation: 4,80), and their professional experience was 8-21 years. Among the participants included in the study, eight of them took undergraduate and graduate courses on solution-focused therapy; two of them received solution-focused therapy training per se. Five of the participants work in primary school, four in high school and one in middle school. Information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants is given in Table 1.



Table 1.  
Details about the participants

Participant	Age	Experience	Level	Way of Receiving Training SFT*	Training on the Other Echol
P1	34	8	Primary School	Lecture	Emotion-Focused Therapy
P2	37	16	High School	Training	EMDR
P3	41	19	Primary School	Lecture	Psychotherapy
P4	47	21	Primary School	Lecture	CBT-EMDR
P5	35	11	High School	Lecture	CBT
P6	43	21	Primary School	Training	CBT-TA-Gestalt
P7	35	14	Middle School	Lecture	Cognitive Approaches
P8	33	10	High School	Lecture	Art Therapy
P9	43	21	High School	Lecture	TA-EMDR
P10	35	12	Primary School	Lecture	Play Therapy

\*SFT: Solution-focused therapy

### Research questions

The research question is “what are the opinions of school counselors on the use of solution-focused approach?” Six research questions were prepared and directed to the participants to examine the views of counselors on the use of the solution-focused approach in schools. The questions are as follows:

- In what specific problem areas is the solution-focused counseling approach implemented within school settings?
- In which problem areas does the solution-focused counseling approach demonstrate particular effectiveness within schools?
- What techniques are predominantly employed when utilizing the solution-focused counseling approach in schools?
- Is the solution-focused counseling approach applied more frequently in individual counseling sessions or group counseling services within schools?
- What are the identified limitations associated with the application of the solution-focused counseling approach in school environments?
- What are the perceived strengths of employing the solution-focused counseling approach in schools?



## Instruments

### ***Personal information form***

The personal information form designed by the researchers includes inquiries regarding participants' age, professional experience, employment level, type of training received in the solution-focused approach, and any additional training obtained across different educational institutions.

### ***Semi-structured interview form:***

The interviews utilized both a personal information form and a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of six questions. The interview questions were initially developed by the researchers and subsequently refined based on feedback from three faculty members specializing in guidance and counseling. Experts eliminated questions that were irrelevant to the research purpose and would elicit similar responses. After the expert opinions, the research questions were finalized. In the head, 6 questions were added to the semi-structured interview. The finalized questions posed to the school counselors were as follows: (1) In what specific problem areas is the solution-focused counseling approach implemented within school settings? (2) In which problem areas does the solution-focused counseling approach demonstrate particular effectiveness within schools? (3) What techniques are predominantly employed when utilizing the solution-focused counseling approach in schools? (4) Is the solution-focused counseling approach applied more frequently in individual counseling sessions or group counseling services within schools? (5) What are the identified limitations associated with the application of the solution-focused counseling approach in school environments? (6) What are the perceived strengths of employing the solution-focused counseling approach in schools?

## Research process

Following the preparation of the interview questions, permission was obtained from the Dokuz Eylül University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee for the conduct of the study (Decision no: 2020-4254). After obtaining the necessary permissions, online interviews were conducted with 10 school counselors. Interviews were conducted online as the time period of data collection coincided with the period when curfews were imposed due to isolation measures due to the coronavirus outbreak. The study's second author conducted all interviews to ensure consistency in the interviews, and similar explanations were given. Before starting the interviews, all participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw at any stage of the research to combat potential ethical problems that information personally identifying the participants (such as school name and age) would not be included in the interview recordings and transcripts, that the interview recordings would be kept in an encrypted file on the first researcher's computer until the research process was over, and that they would be permanently deleted after the research process was completed. After receiving approval from the participants, the interview questions were started. The interviews lasted between 15-20 minutes.





## Data analysis

10 school counselors' descriptive data, such as age, gender, level of employment, the way in which they received the solution-focused short-term approach training, and whether they had training in a different school psychological approach, were processed using descriptive analysis. The answers given by the participants to the open-ended questions in the semi-structured interview form were analyzed using the inductive analysis method, one of the content analysis methods. The interview records were first transcribed and converted into text for content analysis. Inductive analysis aims to identify categories, themes, and patterns based on the available data set. Accordingly, the findings are reached by the researchers, who analyze and focus on the data set (Patton, 2018b). Subsequently, the first and second authors independently coded the data, achieving an inter-coder reliability of 82%, calculated using the formula proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), an inter-coder reliability of 80% or higher is considered acceptable, thus the 82% reliability rate obtained in this study is deemed satisfactory.

## Credibility, confirmability, transferability and consistency

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state qualitative studies' validity and reliability conditions as authenticity, credibility, and transferability (as cited in Creswell, 2021). Accordingly, detailed readings were made from the literature to determine the research topic and ensure the study's validity; no study referred to school counselors' opinions about using the solution-focused approach in schools. In this context, the selected topic is unique. As for the credibility condition, the study's third author has many scientific studies on qualitative research, school counseling, and solution-focused counseling approach; the third author has deep knowledge of theory and practice in related subjects. In this direction, the process was carried out by receiving feedback from the relevant scientists at every research step. In addition, the fact that expert opinion was taken in creating the semi-structured interview form and that the participants were working at different levels contributed to the credibility. In addition to these, the fact that the participants included in the study have more professional experience and that each of them has taken courses or training on solution-oriented approach also contributes to the credibility dimension. Finally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize that it is necessary to be in the relevant field for a certain period (as cited in Creswell, 2021). Accordingly, both the authors of the study and the participants have been working in the field of guidance and counseling for many years. In this context, the researcher and participant profiles contribute to the credibility condition. For transferability, which is the last condition of validity and reliability, details such as data analysis, design, selection of participants, the process of formulating questions, and determining the topic presented in the research report can guide those who want to conduct studies on the solution-focused counseling approach in the future. In this context, it is thought that the research will provide a perspective in line with the principle of transferability for those who want to conduct studies on a similar subject.

## Findings

The findings from the analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with 10 school counselors were listed under 5 themes in the theoretical and practical categories. The themes under the theoretical category were named "problem areas with the solution-focused approach is used functionally," "limitations," and "strengths," while the themes under the practical category were named "application preference," and "techniques." In addition, the abbreviation "P" corresponds to the participant's statement, and the numbers following K correspond to the coding number. In this context, under the theoretical category, three themes, namely problem areas, limitations, and strengths, were examined, and the related themes were expressed under the headings problem areas, limitations and strengths. The emerging themes and codes are presented in figures 1 and 2.

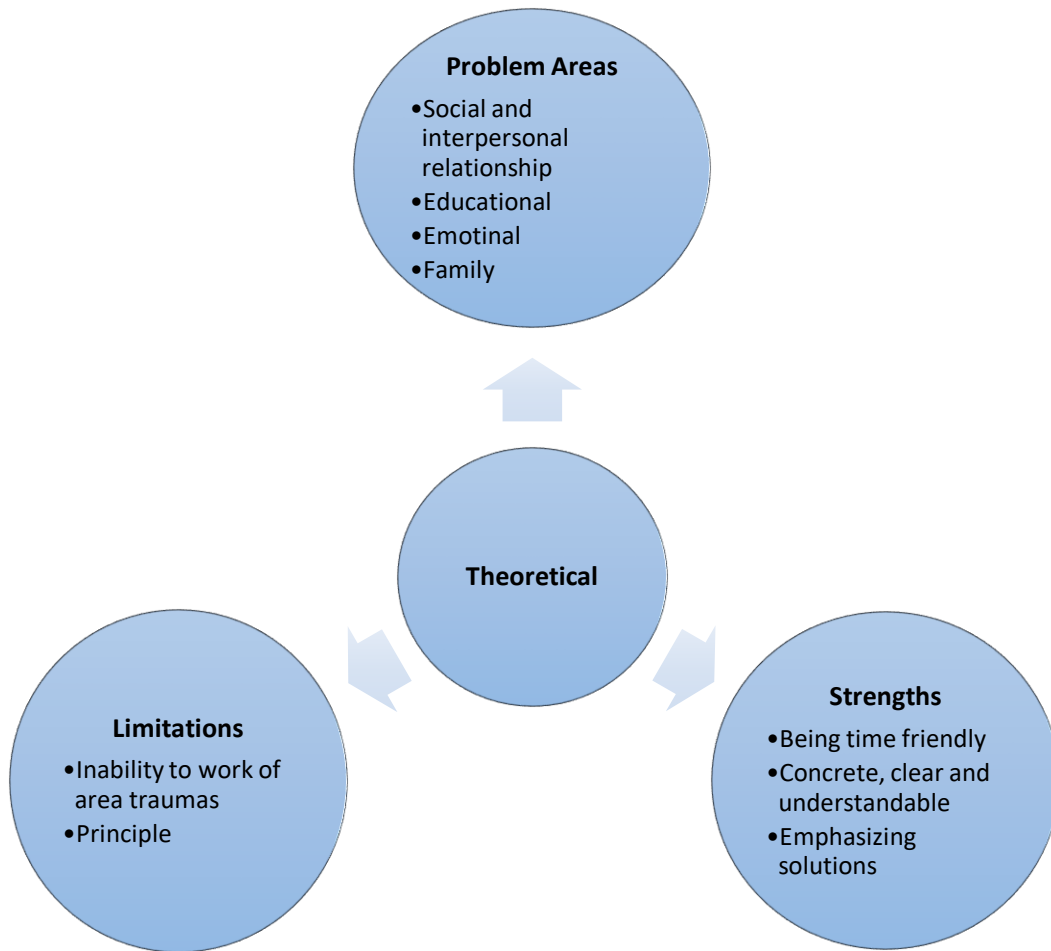


Figure 1. Themes and codes under the theoretical category

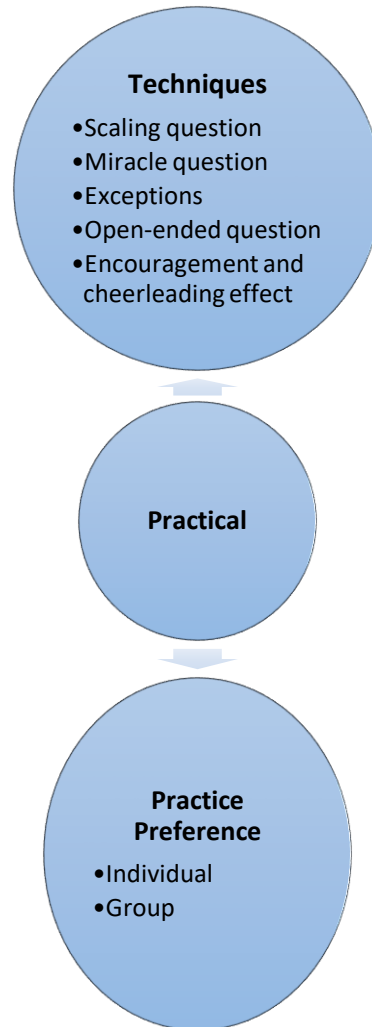


Figure 2. Themes and codes under the practical category

### **Problem areas with the solution-focused approach is used functionally**

The question of school counselors on which problem areas they mainly use the solution-focused approach in schools revealed responses indicating that the approach is actively used in a wide range of problem areas. Accordingly, 4 codes were identified under the theme of problem areas: social, educational, emotional, and family problems. The codes obtained under the theme of problem areas are summarized in Table 2:

Table 2.

Problem areas with the solution-focused approach is used functionally

	<i>n</i>
Social and interpersonal relationship	8
Educational	6
Emotional	5
Family	4



As seen in Table 2, school counselors stated that the solution-focused approach was used for social and interpersonal relationship problems (n = 8), educational problems (n = 6), emotional problems (n = 5), and family problems (n = 4), respectively. Participant 7, who stated that they used the relevant approach under the code of social problems, noted the following:

P7: *...it is instrumental in friend relations. Especially in this adolescence period, it works in their communication with their friends and in their problems. I have seen that it works in such areas.*

In addition to the participants who stated that they use the solution-focused approach in social problem areas, some participants noted that the relevant school is used in educational problems:

P7: *On study subjects, gaining study habits and efficient study techniques...*

P8: *...especially in study methods, for example, when working with unsuccessful students, I use solution-focused therapy to focus on their past success.*

P9: *It can be very effective if the student's motivation level is high. Especially in increasing course success, it is more effective if motivation is lost.*

The participant coded P7, who emphasized that he actively used the solution-focused approach in family problems, stated these emphases as follows:

P7: *In my school, parents are not very interested in their children. I use it in cases such as conflicts between children and parents, not being able to control them.*

Participant 1 and 4, who stated that she used the solution-focused approach in the field of emotional problems by supporting it with the techniques of the solution-focused approach, said the following:

P1: *There is also anxiety. Anxiety helps not to cure it but to define it like this, to name it a little bit in the sense that the child makes sense of it. I use it because we work intensively with it in schools.*

P4: *For example, I use it for anger. For example, we give the child a rating scale about their anger right then and there. There, the child rates their rage. When he comes to me, for example, 7-8. How can we reduce this in the following processes? We use that rating scale for a few weeks..... It works very well with emotions. Especially rating scales are instrumental. I use that.*

## Strengths

School counselors identified the strengths of the solution-focused approach as being time-friendly, concrete, clear, and understandable and emphasizing solutions. Table 4 shows the codes belonging to the theme of strengths:

Table 3.  
Strengths of solution-focused therapy

	<i>n</i>
Being time friendly	9
Concrete, clear and understandable	5
Emphasizing solutions	3



As seen in Table 4, school counselors revealed the codes of being time-friendly (n = 9), concrete, clear, and understandable (n = 5), and emphasizing the solution (n = 3) as the strengths of the solution-focused approach respectively. Participants 3, who emphasized the concrete, precise, and understandable nature of the approach for students, parents, and teachers as a strength, stated the following:

P3: *It is a method that parents can understand, making it easier for parents and teachers to see the results quickly, see the behavioral change quickly, and apply to you more. In other words, it is a method that shows the usefulness of the psychological counseling service.*

In addition to the clear, understandable, and concrete structure listed among the strengths of the solution-focused approach, it was stated that the feature of reaching a solution quickly by completing the applications in a short time makes the application functional. The following opinions were reached under the time-friendly approach theme:

P5: *I deal with about 400 students at the school. We do not provide counseling to all students, but all students involved in the counseling process have the following advantages. It is short-term. Knowing it will end between 2-5 sessions gives us an advantage. Sometimes, it can take 1 session. At this point, the most significant strength is that it is short-term, giving us an advantage in time.*

P9: *Also, it is shorter in terms of time and sessions; that is, there is a chance to solve many problems in shorter 5-6 sessions. It is more effective when we consider the structure of the school. This method also helps to shorten the number of sessions.*

It was expressed as one of the strengths of the solution-focused counseling approach in terms of being useful in terms of time and reaching a solution quickly to cope with multiple tasks in the school environment effectively:

P5: *One of the strengths is saving time on the problem. Thanks to this approach, the child does not keep talking about the past. Generally, we understand childhood as telling the problem when we think of counseling. One of the strengths here is that focusing on solutions without focusing on the problem allows us to use the process actively.*

P9: *It is an essential opportunity for us to emphasize the solution. Because when we always talk about the problem, we perceive the person as a problem. Their life is just a problem. However, we push them to show that the process in which they experience this problem can also be a development opportunity for them. At the same time, they must have faced similar problems before. There may be times when he overcame them. We ignore these and consider that person only as a problem.*

Under the practice category, 2 themes, namely techniques and practice preference, were examined; the relevant themes were expressed under the headings techniques and practice preference.

## Limitations

School counselors stated the limitations of using solution-focused counseling in their institutions under two headings: As indicated in Table 3, the participants revealed the codes of being ineffective when working with traumas (n=9) and not tackling the problem in depth (n=8) as the



limitations of the solution-focused approach. At this point, the participants who emphasized that using the solution-focused counseling approach in deep-rooted, profound, and traumatic problems would not produce functional results listed the following statements:

Table 4.  
Limitations of solution-focused therapy

	<i>n</i>
Inability to work of area traumas	9
Principle	8

P5: *Although the solution-focused literature says that it is practiced in severe cases, traumatic processes, I think that in processes such as trauma, more weighted, more in-depth approaches that take the client more in-depth are more appropriate... I do not apply solution-focused in traumatic situations at school. In processes such as the loss of a mother... if the child needs to express their feelings... solution-focused seems more prosaic.*

In parallel with the view that using a solution-oriented approach in traumatic situations would not be effective, it was also stated that not addressing the problems in depth was among the limitations. Participant 4 noted that the fact that the approach does not address the problems in depth is a limitation of the following words:

P4: *Now, solution-focused has the advantage that, yes, at that moment, the child came in angry and could not cope with it at that moment... We solved it solution-focused, but you cannot practice with the underlying causes of this anger in solution-focused. So, the limited part seems like that to me. So it's a bit like a pill... Why is he worried? Why is his current emotional state like this... Yes, we calmed him at that moment, we solved his problem, but he came to you again. Because we don't work on the underlying emotional state.*

The emphasis on the fact that the philosophy of the solution-focused counseling approach includes basic assumptions such as not addressing the problem in depth, not going to the root of the problem, and conducting a solution-oriented dialogue and that this approach will not reveal useful results in traumatic, deep-rooted and profound problems was expressed in different ways by most of the participants. Based on the participants' views, the view that the solution-oriented approach's philosophy of not going to the root of the problem will create limitations in trauma and deep-rooted problems comes to the fore.

## Techniques

When the participants were asked which techniques of the solution-focused approach they frequently used, such as miracle questions, exceptions, scaling, open-ended questions, and cheerleading effects were received. At this point, the participants have a good command of the techniques of the solution-focused approach. Table 6 shows the details of the techniques mentioned by the participants:



Table 5.  
Techniques used in solution focused approach

	<i>n</i>
Scaling question	9
Miracle question	7
Exceptions	4
Open-ended question	3
Encouragement and cheerleading effect	1

As seen in Table 6, school counselors use scaling (n = 9), miracle questions (n = 7), exceptions (n = 4), open-ended questions (n = 3), and encouragement and cheerleading (n = 1) techniques in solution-focused approach, respectively. Participant 6, who serves in a primary school, explained the use of the rating technique as being understandable in a way that is suitable for children's cognitive structures and used the following statements:

*P6: Scaling is very useful. It is very useful, especially in anger. I think these are the most useful for me; they raise awareness. It quickly concretizes in children. Seeing it... Sometimes, they come themselves. I was angry today, too, but I gave them a score, and they said 5, for example. The anger that was 8-9 the day before...*

While school counselors serving the primary school group stated that they preferred the scaling technique due to its suitability to the cognitive structure of the child, participants 5 and 8 emphasized that the technique was also effective in revealing the reality of the problem perception and determining the level of progress:

*P5: I always use a scaling process in every session; if I am already solution-focused, I always ask a scaling question weekly... If I give homework to determine the complaints about the child's anxiety level, I use scaling questions so that the child realizes the effectiveness of the homework.*

*P8: In the first session, scaling is very useful for me. I do that in the first session to find out how realistic their perception of the problem is at first. In the following sessions, it was very effective when I asked them how many points they would give to the problem this time, for example, at the end. He also realizes the development in between.*

In addition to the scaling technique, the miracle question technique was also widely used. Here, too, there is a participant who stated that the miracle question reveals effective outputs to provide a concrete process in children:

*P4: I use the miracle question, especially the miracle question, or sometimes turn it into a magic wand. The miracle question is very good for children.*

Participant 2 stated that the miracle question revealed functional results during the sessions:

*P2: I usually use the miracle question. This is a technique I have been using for years; I see the benefits of it. Miracle questions are valuable to me. It is the best technique I have received in a solution-focused counseling approach.*



In addition to stating that the use of the miracle problem is common for various reasons, it was also noted that the use of the exceptions technique is also frequently preferred:

P7: *Obviously, because it is more about making the other party think, I often use the moments of exceptions.*

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Based on Participant Number 7's emphasis on the technique to make the other party think, there are also school counselors who stated that they use open-ended questions to make the client reason and talk:

P1: *Open-ended question is also an intensively used technique. What do you expect at the beginning, what do you want, and what do you want to achieve as a result of this therapy? That part is also good.*

P8: *Or we can also ask questions like what would have happened if this problem did not exist.*

Most school counselors stated that they use techniques such as scaling, exceptions, miracle questions, and open-ended questions. In addition to these techniques, participant 5 mentioned encouragement and the cheerleading effect, which have limited recognition in solution-focused approach practices, although they are challenging to use:

P5: *Encouragement and cheerleading. I find it challenging to use these, but I use them as much as possible. It could go better with my undergraduate formation. Culturally, I have more difficulty using it because I have prejudices about the client's awkwardness. Especially in the process of using it, I used it frequently in solution-focused, cheerleading effects.*

### Practice preference

Participants stated that their preference for using the solution-focused counseling approach predominantly included practices with the individual. Findings regarding the practice preference are presented in Table 6.

Table 6.

Practice preference of solution-focused therapy

	<i>n</i>
Individual practice	9
Group practice	1

According to Table 6, only 1 school counselor preferred group practices, while the other participants (n = 9) preferred individual practices. Accordingly, Participant Number 5 stated that individual practices were preferred more because the school environment was not conducive to group processes, confidentiality, and time constraints:

P5: *I use it much more often in individual counseling. Since I am in vocational high school, it may not be easy to do group counseling. This is because the children's hours could be more suitable, there are also courses, etc. We may need help formally doing group work and finding the appropriate time. However, confidentiality protection is one of the most essential elements in group work. We actually have difficulties when we consider the age groups in high schools.*





The school counselors emphasized that group practices were limited due to time, privacy problems, and factors related to the school environment (suitable space, noise, etc.) and that individual practices were preferred. These justifications are mainly associated with the client group and contextual variables. However, some participants also preferred individual practices because they needed more experience in group practice:

P4: *I use individual counseling techniques more often. As for group counseling techniques, I have yet to gain experience. But I use them more comfortably individually. I have never practiced with a group.*

In addition to school counselors who focus on individual practices due to personal and contextual factors, Participant Number 6 stated that he used both individual and group practices for reasons such as the problem area and providing mental health services to a large part of the target group in the school:

P6: *I use it individually. You can go into more detail when talking to the child. When I think about it, I also use it in group interviews. Sometimes, it is very spontaneous with us. You have a lot of done, and you combine them all. When I think about it, I also use solution-focused in the group.*

In summary, under the themes of individual and group practices, the difficulty of the school environment to meet the conditions required for group practices, time constraints, privacy problems, and the lack of experience of school counselors in group practices revealed that the participants focused on individual practices. In addition, a limited number of participants stated that they carried out both individual and group practices according to the criteria of the problem area studied, the needs of the school, and the dissemination of the service to a broad audience.

## Results, Discussions and Recommendations

The main question of this study is, "What are the views of school counselors on the use of a solution-focused approach?". By analyzing the semi-structured interview questions created around this question this study, school counselors' views on using a solution-focused counseling approach were discussed, and two categories were identified: theoretical and practical. Under the theoretical category, 3 themes emerged under the names of problem areas with the solution-focused approach was used, limitations and strengths, while under the practical category, the themes of techniques and practice preference emerged based on the participants' practice experiences.

In the first theme under the theoretical category, educational, social and interpersonal relations, emotional, and family problems were emphasized in the problem areas with the solution-focused approach was used. The participants stated that the solution-focused approach was used in problems such as study problems, inability to manage time, low academic achievement, anger and anxiety problems, and inability to get along with peers and parents. Accordingly, the solution-focused counseling approach is used in many problem areas. According to Ulaşan (2018), counselors frequently encounter problem areas such as course failure, indifference to lessons, peer pressure, and parental attitudes in schools. Sklare (2023) states that the solution-focused approach is actively used in dealing with these problem areas. In this context, the problem areas in which the participants



actively used the solution-focused approach align with those mentioned in the literature. Accordingly, it can be interpreted that the solution-focused approach will be used with different problem areas spread over a wide scale in terms of diversity. It was concluded that the solution-focused counseling approach was applied to various problems in different areas and that positive outcomes were obtained following these applications. As stated by the participants, the solution-focused approach has been used in multiple fields. In a comprehensive meta-analysis study conducted by Gingerich and Peterson (2012), 43 studies examining the effectiveness of the solution-focused counseling approach were reviewed; 32 studies brought significant positive change; 10 studies positively affected clients, although not substantial. In other words, the solution-focused counseling approach revealed positive results in 42 of the 43 studies. However, these studies were conducted in different areas, such as children's academic and behavioral problems, family problems, and occupational problems (Gingerich & Peterson, 2012). In a similar study, 251 studies in which the solution-focused approach was applied were examined; it was found that the approach revealed positive results in approximately 86% of these studies (Neipp & Beyebach, 2022). Accordingly, it was confirmed in the light of both quantitative and qualitative data that the solution-focused counseling approach can be effectively applied to different problem areas and client groups.

In addition to emphasizing problem areas with the solution-focused approach is actively used, the approach's limitations were also discussed. Participants believe that the solution-focused counseling approach is inadequate in cases involving trauma and that not addressing the problem in depth will not lead to long-term recovery. A comprehensive meta-analysis of the effectiveness of the solution-focused approach revealed that the approach is effective in a wide range of problem areas, including trauma, crime, and psychopathologies (Gingerich & Peterson, 2012). At this point, it is thought that the participants' view that the approach cannot be used for traumas and deep-rooted problems stems from a lack of knowledge. However, EMDR and CBT schools come to the forefront in the responses to whether the participants received training from a school other than the solution-oriented approach asked in the personal information form. In these cognitive-oriented approaches, participants may see the different perspectives and propositions advocated by the solution-focused approach as a limitation by the approach of addressing the problem in depth brought by the traditional therapy approach. In this parallel, it is stated that the solution-focused counseling approach has been subjected to intense criticism because it offers propositions contradictory to traditional therapy schools' prevailing teachings (Şahin & Siyez, 2023). Some of these criticisms are that emotions are not addressed, long-term healing cannot be achieved, and working with every problem area and client is impossible. The participants of this study also emphasized the criticisms of not working with long-term healing and trauma in their statements, as mentioned above. Şahin and Siyez (2023), in their study on the solution-focused counseling approach, stated that the statement that a solution-focused approach would not be appropriate for every problem area and client is a justified criticism. Still, it is a valid situation for all ecoles. At this point, it can be argued that using the solution-focused counseling approach with different therapy approaches in various problem areas will be a functional way to overcome this limitation.

When we look at the counseling and guidance services provided by counselors working in schools, it is noteworthy that protective and preventive mental health services, educational



problems, personal and social problems, and service areas related to occupational and career choice come to the fore (Yeşilyaprak, 2013). Accordingly, although it is a primary field of study, using a solution-focused counseling approach in career guidance services has not been included. Miller (2006) states that solution-focused career counseling, which prioritizes the functional and robust aspects of the individual in career problems, consists of 3 stages and addresses individual and contextual factors together in line with the constructivist paradigm, is used in career problems. At this point, it can be interpreted that there is a lack of information about the use of solution-focused counseling approaches in the career field.

After the statements about the approach's limitations, strengths were also mentioned. In light of the question posed in this direction, the codes of a time-friendly approach were revealed, emphasizing solution, being concrete, clear, and understandable. Current data indicate that even in the United States of America (USA), where the field of guidance and counseling was born and which is at the highest level in terms of quality, institutional structure, and level, the ideal student-to-school counselor ratio cannot be achieved (ASCA, 2023). At this point, school counselors face high school size and deal with multiple problem areas and tasks in a limited time frame (Sklare, 2023). In addition, it is stated that it is essential to obtain quick solutions, especially in adolescence, as many problem areas are encountered simultaneously (Meydan, 2013). In this direction, school counselors who provide services to all students under time pressure need economical applications in terms of time and lead to quick results. Based on the participant statements, it was determined that the solution-focused approach has strengths in terms of effective use of time thanks to its perspective, which does not have concerns such as focusing on the problem, going to the root, and addressing the problem in depth. In this context, considering the explanation that the solution-focused approach is effective in reaching and intervening a large portion of the students (Adigüzel & Göktürk, 2013), it can be said that the advantages brought by the nature of the approach under the time-friendly code are effective.

Another strength expressed by the participants is the structure of the approach that emphasizes the solution and the functional aspects of the person. Accordingly, since the problem is not examined in depth, it is solved quickly, and an attractive quality emerges for the clients (Sklare, 2023). However, when the counselor's primary focus is on the person's strengths, the client focuses on how to overcome the problem instead of thinking about the root of the problem (Doğan, 2000). At this point, it can be said that the structure of the approach that prioritizes reaching a solution is attractive both for counselors who strive to work under time pressure and for clients who are exposed to multiple problem areas, especially at school age.

In addition to these aspects emphasized by the participants, there are also different strengths mentioned in the literature. Doğan (2000) states that the clients' developmental characteristics should be considered when selecting the therapy school to be used. Accordingly, since the attention and perception capacities of school-age clients are not at the adult level and long-term approaches do not address the cognitive structure, it is stated that the short-term nature of solution-focused counseling overlaps with the characteristics of the clients, and this is among the strengths (Doğan, 2000). However, it is stated that approaches that go to the root of the problem and examine



it in depth may create a barrier, especially for adolescent clients. Adolescence is a sensitive period against being criticized. At this point, it is stated that addressing the problem in detail in traditional approaches may create the impression of being blamed, criticized, and judged. In the face of such a risk, it is stated that the nature of the solution-oriented approach, which prioritizes change, is optimistic, and emphasizes past successful experiences, is another of its strengths (Meydan, 2013).

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The participants who stated that the approach produced effective results in different problem areas mentioned the techniques they actively used in the solution-focused counseling approach as the second theme under the practical category. Accordingly, in parallel with the theory-based explanations, it was stated that miracle questions, scaling, exceptions, open-ended questions, and cheerleading effect techniques were frequently used. de Shazer et al. (2007) noted that these techniques are included in the solution-focused approach and are functionally used in the problem areas mentioned above. However, it is noteworthy that the participants did not mention some critical techniques for using the solution-focused approach. Goal-setting questions, homework assignments, and coping questions are some techniques. In solution-focused counseling, unlike other approaches, the goals should be concrete, behavioral, positively expressed, containing parts that serve the larger purpose, and emphasized as what is desired to be rather than what is not. Goals are the main factor that determines the road map of the therapy. Therefore, it is crucial to ask the right questions about goal setting in the process (Sklare, 2023). Considering that the efficient use of time in schools is essential to prevent disruption of services, starting the process with the right goals is necessary. Accordingly, it is a crucial requirement for the participants to know goal-setting questions. Another technique that the participants did not mention was coping questions. This technique aims to explore the client's existing resources; the client is asked how they prevent the situation from getting worse. This paves the way for accessing exceptional situations (Iveson, 2002). Since discovering clients' strengths is the key to the solution, practitioners must skillfully use coping questions. At this point, the participants need information reinforcement about the techniques, as in the goal-setting questions.

The message creation and homework step is aimed at reinforcing the client's strengths and providing preparation for the transition to the solution (Sklare, 2023). It is seen that the participants did not mention these techniques either. In addition, as a result of the diversification of interest and studies on the solution-focused approach in recent years (Şahin & Siyez, 2023), current techniques such as 10-second counseling, using puppets, using a sand tray to embody the miracle question, and using the solution-focused approach in group practices (Sklare, 2023). It is seen that the participants also need reinforcement in terms of current techniques.

The last theme under the practice category draws attention to the implementation preferences of school counselors' solution-focused counseling approach. Most of the participants stated that they use individual practices more frequently; group practices remain at a limited level. When the report prepared by the Council of Higher Education for guidance and counseling undergraduate programs is examined, it is seen that while there is an individual counseling practice course in the program, there is no group counseling practice course (Council of Higher Education [YÖK], 2018). However, some undergraduate programs were added in 2021 and Association for



Evaluation and Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs (EPDAD) revised the standards for psychology undergraduate education in 2022. In this revision, the development of group counseling skills is also mentioned (EPDAD, 2022). In addition, in Türkiye, group counseling skills are acquired through group counseling courses in undergraduate programs. Although most undergraduate programs include the relevant course, the opportunity to manage the process with a community of organic members and to lead a group is not available in every university (Pamukçu & Kağnıcı, 2017). As a matter of fact, in a study conducted by Büyükgöze-Kavas (2011), some of the participants stated that they led a group of their friends within the scope of the practice course, while others said that they had to find their clients. In addition, working with resistant members and experiencing anxiety about the management of the group were stated as the main difficulties encountered by the participants regarding group processes (Büyükgöze-Kavas, 2011). At this point, the limited group applications of the solution-focused counseling approach can be explained by the lack of experience of school counselors in group processes. In a comprehensive review study by Akşab and Türk (2022), the result that practice experience increases counseling self-efficacy draws attention as a frequently repeated finding in different studies. As seen in the undergraduate course contents reported by YÖK, counselors may be focusing on counseling with individuals since the inclusion of counseling with individuals increases counseling self-efficacy. In the systematic review study conducted by Neipp and Beyebach (2022), 251 studies in which a solution-focused counseling approach was applied were examined in depth. About half of these studies stated that the solution-focused counseling approach was used in individual applications, while group applications remained limited. At this point, the statements of the participants in this study reveal that the lack of knowledge and experience in conducting group counseling processes comes to the fore.

In line with the findings discussed, it is essential to make suggestions and implement them to use the solution-focused counseling approach more effectively. Accordingly, it draws attention to the necessity to organize training activities for school counselors to overcome the lack of knowledge about the solution-focused approach due to situations such as the belief that trauma and deep-rooted problems cannot be practiced, having incomplete information about techniques and not mentioning that the solution-focused approach is applied within the scope of career guidance. Training to be organized in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education, Guidance and Research Centers, and universities can contribute to the knowledge and application of techniques by counselors who actively use the solution-focused approach in the field. In addition, practicing with groups is another area where training is needed. Based on the conclusion that the high number of students will make it impossible to do individual practice with each student, there is a need for training programs to be offered to school counselors to increase their group skills. In addition, it can be said that would be useful to add the solution-focused counseling approach as a separate course to the undergraduate program, considering the effectiveness of the solution-focused approach in schools and the fact that schools are the main employment area for graduates of the guidance and counseling program. From this point of view, with the integration into the undergraduate course content and additional training to be given to field experts, misconceptions based on ignorance of technical knowledge and theory (such as it is ineffective with trauma and deep-rooted problems) can be prevented.



This study has some limitations. The first is the inability to generalize the research results due to the selected design. To overcome this limitation, interviews were conducted with several participants that would allow for data saturation; a relatively sufficient number of participants were reached for standard qualitative research. Another limitation of the study is that the participants were selected only from the Izmir city center. Including different cities in other studies may be useful in overcoming this limitation.

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As a result, the solution-focused counseling approach is effective in school practices; the short, concrete, understandable, and solution-focused structure appeals to students' developmental levels. In addition, although the approach is actively used, it is seen that practitioners need to overcome their need for knowledge and convey current developments regarding the approach. In this direction, it is thought that organizing activities such as in-service training, supervision studies, and dissemination of group practices would be beneficial.



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