The Effects Of Narrative Therapy Based Psychological Counselling Program On Adolescents' Willpower and Anxiety Levels

Merve KOCA*, Dr. Mehmet DİNÇ*

*Hasan Kalyoncu University

INTRODUCTION

Willpower is the ability of resisting tempting, short-term things to achieve long-term goals, the power to control oneself deliberately and by exerting effort, the effort to establish control over the self and the ability to change one's own reactions. Willpower, which is the core of the self and one of its crucial functions, requires resisting things that are appealing in the short-term to achieve long-term goals, postponing pleasure when needed, suppressing an unwanted thought, emotion or impulse, restraining or stimulating oneself (Muraven and Baumeister, 2000: 247; APA, 2012: 2; Muraven, Tice and Baumeister, 1998: 787). It is stated that people who are weak in willpower are more prone to being anxious due to being more emotionally unstable (Baumeister and Tierney, 2012: 27). On the other hand, managing one's own willpower judiciously enables the person to be successful, healthy and happy in the long run (Muraven, Tice and Baumeister, 1998: 787).

It is seen that as a result of stressful life events during the adolescence period, stress causes internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression on some adolescents while on some others, the results of stress is externalized. But adolescents who use self-control abilities can accommodate themselves better, are less anxious, less depressive and exhibit less behavioural disorders since they are aiming to shift the source of the stress (Compas and ark., 2001: 117).

Narrative therapy is a way of therapy that helps individuals, couples or families to reinterpret their life events (Çelik, 2017: 35). According to narrative therapy, people sometimes talk about their problems more comfortably using metaphors. Because these metaphors help describing the nature of the relationship between the problem and the person (Morgan, 2000:30, 40).

AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research is; to examine the effects of Narrative Therapy based Psychological Counseling Program on Adolescents' Willpower and Anxiety Levels.

METHOD

State-trait anxiety inventory ($\alpha=.96$ and $\alpha=.90$) and adolescent self-regulation scale ($\alpha=.93$) is used in this experimental study based on randomized design with pretest-posttest control group. A group narrative therapy study, in which Baumeister's willpower model and abilities for coping with stress is taken into consideration, consisting of 6 sessions is carried out on the experimental group.

RESULTS

An Analysis of the Pretest-Posttest Point Differences of Self-Regulation and State-Trait Anxiety Variables with Mann Whitney U Test

Research Factors	Groups	N	Avg. Ranking	Total Ranking	U	p
Pretest-Posttest Self-Regulation	Experimental	8	7,31	58,50	22,500	,316
	Control	8	9,69	77,50		
	Total	16				
Pretest-Posttest Trait Anxiety	Experimental	8	11,50	92,00	8,000	,011
	Control	8	5,50	44,00		
	Total	16				
Pretest -Posttest State Anxiet	Experimental	8	10,88	87,00	13,000	,044
	Control	8	6,13	49,00		
	Total	16				

According to the results, it is seen that the points average difference of the experimental group is higher than the control group and the trait ($U=8,000$; $p=,011$; $p<0,05$) and state ($U=13,000$; $p=,044$; $p<0,05$) anxiety points of the experimental group is significantly lower in the last test.

DISCUSSION

The group study organized is effective at reducing the state and trait anxiety level but contrary to expectations it is statistically not effective at increasing the willpower.

It is seen that psychological consultations that are based on narrative therapy give positive results on children and adolescents (Karaimak and Bugay, 2010: 28). This study can be also used to reduce anxiety levels, develop strategies to cope with anxiety and to make room to talk about willpower.

It is important to establish an environment to externalize and analyse the problems in narrative therapy rather than analyse and pathologise the people. This is a good method to distinguish the problem from the person (Elhassan and Yassine, 2017).

According to Raffaelli, Crockett and Shen (2005), the individual differences in self-regulations remain stable around age 8. Based on this information, studies aiming to increase willpower should be made earlier than adolescence, beginning from early childhood.

One of the reasons why this study is not statistically effective at increasing will can be explained with the difficulty adolescents biologically have at controlling themselves since prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain that is responsible of willpower in adolescents, continue to develop throughout adolescence (Jensen and Nutt, 2017: 134-218).

Self-control works like a muscle. Just like how muscles get stronger the more frequently they are used, self-control gets stronger the more frequently it is used too. (Muraven and Baumeister, 2000: 248). Continuity is important in the practice and evaluation of the interventions made for children and adolescents.

Although the group study statistically did not prove to be meaningful at improving willpower abilities, when -as a therapeutic documentation which is a technique of narrative therapy, a letter writing study was held in Session 5- some of the participants have stated in their letters:

"I think this study was really useful for us; for me to use my willpower in a healthy way, to adopt my willpower and responsibilities in life..."

"This study brought really nice things to me. I feel that I have more willpower because people sometimes pour everything out and they can issue better decisions from these. Now I can understand what makes me better when I feel upset, suffocated. I think this study should be executed on everyone."

"Now I can think of how I should be reacting to something, what I should do better. I know to what I must use more of my willpower, in a word how to use it. I think one does not know how much willpower they have, and I found it out. I know how much willpower I have though only partly."

Participants draw their own vase as they reflect on their 'flowerpots' (where they come from and their survival skills), 'soil' (home, everyday life), 'flowers' (knowledges and values), 'shovel' (important people), 'water' (capacity of the willpower), 'window-sun' (environments that strengthen willpower), 'insects' (factors that affect willpower negatively and compete with these), 'seeds' (win back the willpower if it depletes), 'flowers' (dreams and hopes), 'words of wisdom' (beliefs and internal motivation that can use the willpower and can cope with anxiety).

For contact: mervekoca@yandex.com