Effect of the Creative Drama–Based Assertiveness Program on the Assertiveness Skill of Psychological Counsellor Candidates

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Abstract

The purpose of this quasi-experimental research is to study the effects of the creative drama-based assertiveness program (CDBAP) on the assertiveness skill of Psychological Counselling and Guidance (PCG) department students. The opinions of experimental group students on the program were obtained through the CDBAP evaluation form. The sample of this research is the first year students attending in the PCG department of Aksaray University–Faculty of Education in the academic year 2010–2011. In this research ˝Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS)˝ developed by Rathus and adopted into Turkish by Voltan-Acar was used in order to measure the dependant variables. The study was carried out with 23 students in total, including 12 in the experimental group and 11 in the control group. At the end of the CDBAP, which has been continued for 10 weeks, it was seen that the experimental group's assertiveness points raised from the pre-test towards the post-test and that it increased at a significant pace comparing to the control group's assertiveness points. On the other hand when the opinions regarding CDBAP were reviewed, it was seen that the program was effective and that the need for programs with such content comes into the picture.

Key Words

Assertiveness, Creative Drama, PCG students, Creative Drama-Based Assertiveness Program (CDBAP), opinions on CDBAP.

The individuals primarily use 3 behavioural patterns while expressing their emotions and thoughts. These are defined as the behaviours involving shyness, assertiveness, and aggressiveness (Torucu, 1994). In other words, some individuals are shy and have some difficulty in expressing themselves, and as a result, they are uneasy to show their emotions and cannot defend their rights. Some are aggressive. They try to communicate with their environ-

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ment with these aggressive behaviours and may disregard the people and their requirements for their own purposes (Mc Whirter & Voltan-Acar, 1998, p. 194). While an aggressive individual meets his/her needs for that time, they may become an unwanted person among the people around him/her. A shy individual may experience some social, psychological and physiological dissatisfaction since they cannot completely meet his/her needs (Voltan-Acar, 1980c). In addition, the assertiveness is the way to defend rights without looking down on others and ignoring their rights (Alberti & Emmons, 1998).

The explanations that some people are less assertiveness than others focus on some basic assumptions. These include: (i) The first assumption: Undue anxiety prevents the assertiveness (Wolpe & Lazarus, 1966 as cited in Ugürol, 2010, pp. 31–32). (ii) The second assumption: An individual who is not assertive lacks of

the talents necessary for it (Lazarus, 1971 as cited in Ugürol, 2010, pp. 31–32). (iii) The third assumption: People assess the outcomes, which they expect before demonstrating assertive and shy behaviours, and choose the one seeming the most appropriate for this outcome (Fiedler & Becah, 1978 as cited in Ugürol, 2010, pp. 31–32).

The ability to establish interpersonal healthy relationships is deemed as a social skill (Arı, 1989; Deniz, 1997). Calderella and Merrell (1997) define the assertiveness skills as one of the aspects of social skills in the detailed study for which they performed to classify the dimensions of social skills. Therefore, one of the basic social skills, "assertiveness" plays an important role in the interpersonal relationships (Arı, 1989; Deniz, 1997).

For the youth, to learn about the differences between shy, assertive and aggressive behaviours, to gain assertive skills and to master in these skills are the ways thereby they can improve self-expression and increase individual responsibilities for their behaviours (Alberti & Emmons, 1998; Galassi & Galassi, 1977). Students lacking of assertive skills may not withstand the pressure by their peers, and as a result, may lose their self-respect. They can be alienated from other people due to unsuitable ways, which they employed in establishing interpersonal relationships; therefore, can become individuals resistant to changes (Arora, 1991; Fox & Boulton, 2003; Morganett, 2005). Individuals having assertive behaviour pattern demonstrate behaviours enabling them to defend themselves in a manner of observing equality and free from unnecessary anxieties, to express their emotions honestly and comfortably and to exercise their rights without overriding others' (Alberti & Emmons, 2002).

Studies in respect thereof suggest that the assertive behaviours can be taught, implemented and generalized for other situations (Lange & Jakubowski, 1976; Mc Whirter & Voltan-Acar, 1998, p. 193). The studies related to training of assertiveness, which were conducted abroad, were analysed and found that training on assertiveness increases the assertiveness points (Ferreira, 1995; Horan & Williams, 1982; Hudson, 1984; Huey & Rank, 1984; Kim, 2003; Kipper, 2006; Lazarus, 1966 as cited in Voltan-Acar, 1980a; Mays, 1996; Morgan, 1974; Nota & Soresi; 2003; Wehr & Kaufman, 1987; Wise, Bundy, Bundy, & Wise, 1991). It is seen that the first study in respect thereof was carried out by Voltan-Acar (1980a) in our country. Afterwards, many researchers reached different results in their studies (Bayraktutan, 2006; Çam, 1996; Deniz,

1997; Karahan, 2005; Torucu, 1994; Yatağan, 2005; Yeşilyaprak & Kısaç, 1999).

When the studies are analysed, it was observed that the trainings on improving the assertiveness skills are the programs prepared based on psycho training and intended for increasing the level of social skills by means of communicating with other individuals effectively (Howing, Wodarski, Kurtz, & Gaudin, 1990; Korkut, 2003a; Mckay & Fanning, 1998; McNeilly & Yorke, 1990; Mc Whirter & Voltan-Acar, 1998; Türkçapar, 2007).

In that point, it is recommended as a method in teaching social skills in creative drama (Akın, 1993; De La Cruz, 1995; Freeman, Sullivan, & Fulton, 2003; Kocayörük, 2000). Creative drama is a purpose activity in education. The first dimension thereof is related to the education, and the second one to studies on psychological counselling and guidance (Adıgüzel, 2010, p. 46). Realizing behaviours and skills, which Psychological Counselling and Guidance services aim to give students by creative drama in some cases, can provide more economical and practical benefits (Bozdoğan, 2003, p. 50-57). The game-like feature of drama draws attention to the creative acts and suitability for creativity processes. Because of these features, usage of creative drama in education is in question (San, 1993). Drama provides the individuals with the possibility to recognize and express themselves in group interaction. Drama is an important way to learn. It helps individuals think on the individual and social problems. It ensures to correlate events with situations (San, 2002).

When the studies performed abroad are analysed, it is seen that creative drama has a positive effect upon the level of assertiveness, social skills, problem solving skills, recognizing oneself and others, empathy, and socio-emotional development; besides, it is effective for mitigating the levels of aggressiveness and violence (Bailey, 1997; Danner, 2003 as cited in Çalışkan-Çoban, 2007; Emunah, 1997; Fong, 2006; Jackson & Bynum, 1997; Pomerantz, 2003; Smeijsters & Cleven, 2006; Taylor, 2000; Walsh-Bower & Basso, 1999; Yassa, 1999). The effect of an assertiveness program prepared based on creative drama has not been analysed so far.

Examining the studies on personality characteristics of effective counsellors, it is seen that the features that they have are having successful interpersonal relationships, loving people, having high intelligence potential, having a wide perspective, being self-confident, sensitive, patient, tolerant and self-satisfied (Muslu-Köseoğlu, 1994, s.5).

Nevertheless, promoting healthy behaviours is also important dimension so as dealing with problematic behaviours in psychological guidance and counselling (Korkut, 2003b). In the scope of preventive counselling, taking some precautions in advance to avoid adverse events in the future, and also to organize an activities for enhancing desired event take place (Albee & Ryan, 1998). In this study, it was thought that the creative drama will improve the level of assertiveness pertaining to the Psychological Counselling and Guidance (PCG) students and contribute to their social and professional development, and the program for group counselling was prepared on drama basis.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyse the effect of creative drama based assertiveness program prepared and implemented by a researcher for grade 1 students of Psychological Counselling and Guidance Department (PCG) upon the assertiveness levels of students.

Method

Research Design

This study was prepared in order to test the effect of assertiveness program prepared semi-experimentally with the method of creative drama upon the grade 1 students of Psychological Counselling and Guidance Department (PCG), with a pretest-posttest groups and experimental-control groups. The model with pretest-posttest and control group (PCG) was employed in the study. The contributors are measured with respect to the independent variable before and after the experimental operation (Büyüköztürk, 2007, p. 19).

Universe and Sampling (Research Groups)

In order to determine the students to participate in the study, "Personal Information Form" and Rathus Assertiveness Scale (RAS) developed by Rathus (1973 as cited in Voltan-Acar, 1980b, p. 23-25) and adapt to Turkish by Voltan-Acar (1980b) was employed. The said scale was implemented by a researcher on 94 students at total, including 69 female and 25 male students studying in grade 1 in Psychological Counselling and Guidance Department (PCG) during the academic year of 2010-2011. Experimental group (7 female and 5 male students) and control group (8 female and 4 male students)

was composed of 12 students at total per each group. The opinion of Adıgüzel (1994, p. 528) that healthy results could be obtained by groups with 12 to 15 people was considered while determining the number of students to participate in the study.

Instruments

In order to determine the assertiveness levels of the students in the study, Rathus Assertiveness Scale (RAS) developed by Rathus (1973 as cited in Voltan-Acar, 1980b, p. 23-25) and adapt to Turkish by Voltan-Acar (1980b) was employed. It was found out that the points for validity and reliability of the scale were high (Hollandsworth & Galassi, 1977 as cited in Öner, 1996, p. 456; Voltan-Acar, 1980b, p. 23-25).

In order to collect qualitative data pertaining to the study, 4 open-ended assessment questions involving opinions for CDBAP were directed to the students in the experimental group. The responses to the open-ended questions were construed with content analysis. The fundamental purpose in content analysis is to reach concepts and relationships, which may clarify the collected data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005, p. 227).

Process

Creative Drama Based Assertiveness Program (CDBAP) prepared by the researcher under study is a program for group guidance in which creative drama method is used. 10 sessions were scheduled at total, each of which would last for 90 minutes. There is a ranking to be observed considering the features of the contributors and nature of the group in creative drama studies. Adıgüzel (2005) states this ranking as "preparation, personification and evaluation. Each session includes improvisations, role-plays, pantomime, group sharing and group discussions.

Analysis of Data

Because the groups do not have a regular distribution, non-parametrical tests were used in analysing the obtained data. The data were analysed with Kruskal-Wallis H and Mann-Whitney U tests for unrelated measures and Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for associated measures (Büyüköztürk, 2006; Karaatlı, 2006, p. 10). In order to assess Creative Drama Based Assertiveness Program (CDBAP) employed in the study, an assertiveness questionnaire

composed of open-ended questions was conducted on the psychological counsellor candidates in the experimental group. Encoding of data obtained from the questionnaire was performed so as to reflect similarities and differences, and themes bringing the codes alike together were found (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The frequencies and percentages of the encoded data were calculated (Tavşancıl & Aslan, 2001).

Results

At the end of the study, it was found that there was a meaningful difference among the students in the experimental group with respect to the pretest-posttest points for assertiveness ($z=-3.06$, $p> .05$). It was also found that the average of the last measure points belonging to the students in the experimental students was higher than those of the students in the control group. It can be said that these results show that Creative Drama Based Assertiveness Program (CDBAP) is effective in the increase of the assertiveness skills participating in the program.

In addition the views of the psychological counselling candidates in the experimental group with respect to the assessments of Creative Drama Based Assertiveness Program (ABCDP);

Discussion

When analysing the study findings, if the students of the experimental group, in which CDBAP was applied, were compared to those in the control group, it was found that there was a meaningful difference between the point averages of pre-test and post-test in Rathus Assertiveness Scale (RAS) in favour of the experimental group. This finding demonstrates that the students of the experimental group in CDBAP are efficient to increase the assertiveness points.

When the literature is analysed, assertiveness skills training programs developed based on different theories to be applied to the students in secondary schools, high schools and at universities is effective (Bayraktutan, 2006; Chambless, Hunter, & Jackson, 1982; Çeçen-Eroğlu & Zengel, 2009; Çulha & Dereli, 1987; Efe, Öztürk, Koparan, & Şenışık, 2008; Hodges, 1984; Kaya, 2000; Korkut, 2003a; Mays, 1996; Okur, 2008; Rothenan & Armstrong, 1980; Şahin, 1999; Trickey & Topping, 2004; Topukçu, 1982; Torucu, 1994; Ugürol, 2010; Uşaklı, 2006; Walksman, 1984; Yatağan, 2005). Accordingly, it can be said that study findings in the literature support the findings of this study.

However, when the literature is analysed, it is also observed that there are some study results suggesting that assertiveness skills programs developed based upon different theories to be applied to sec-

Table 1.
The Views of the Psychological Counselling Candidates in the Experimental Group with Respect to the Assessments of Creative Drama Based Assertiveness Program (ABCDP)

Questions	Views	Frequency	Percentage
1. How did CDBAP contribute to your life?	- I have evaded from my shyness	5	41,6
	- I am more self-confident	4	33,3
	- I can establish more healthy relationships	4	33,3
	- I am acting more comfortably	3	25,0
	- I have learnt to say "no"	2	16,6
	- I have improved my social relationships	2	16,6
	- I have experienced positive changes in my personality	2	16,6
	- I have learnt where and how to behave	2	16,6
	- I believe its future contribution to performance of my profession	2	16,6
	- My prejudices have been decreased	2	16,6
2. What were the aspects of CDBAP, which you like and dislike?	- It was enjoyable	5	41,6
	- The activities were nice	2	16,6
	- I found the chance to express myself	2	16,6
	- There was an intimate environment	2	16,6
	- It was interesting	2	16,6
	- I have learnt to say no	2	16,6
3. Do you want your other friends to join such a program as well? **What are the reasons for that?**	- Yes	12	100,0
	- I would like everyone to benefit from the knowledge in this program	4	33,3
	- I want the shy and timid to participate in this program	4	33,3
	- In order to eliminate your prejudices	2	16,6
	- In order to say "no"	1	8,33
	- Because it will contribute to their profession	1	8,33
4. What are your critics and recommendations for CDBAP?	- There should be regular group studies to be created with different contents	4	33,3
	- What was done was enough	3	25,0
	- All the grade 1 students commencing to study at university should attend such a program	3	25,0

ondary school, primary school and university students is not effective (Altun, 2006; Göktürk, 2009; Kim, 2003; Özdağ, 1999; Steward & Lewis, 1986; Ünal, 2007). These findings do not support the results obtained from the study.

The assessment form of CDBAP was applied to the subjects in order to evaluate the effectiveness of ABCDP in the study and their opinions were received. It was revealed that the most frequent response by the subjects to the question related to contribution of the participation in CDBAP to their lives was the one "I have evaded from my shyness", being followed by the responses, "I am more self-confident" and "I can establish more healthy relationships". When the literature is analysed, there are studies suggesting that assertiveness programs have contributed to the participators in respect thereof (Hurt, 1986; Karahan, 2005; Korkut, 2003a; Walksman, 1984; Yeşilyaprak & Kısaç, 1999). The reason for emergence of such a result can be defined as the effect of the program applied.

According to the results obtained from the study, it can be recommended that the effect of program for assertiveness skills be analysed at different grade levels and on different theoretical basis with the students of Psychological Counselling and Guidance Department for the future studies. Failure to form a placebo group in order to control the effect resulting from the fact that the subjects participated in a group study independent of the experimental procedure applied; therefore, they knew that the researcher expected them to demonstrate positive behaviours and they made a special effort not to let down on these expectations (Gümüş, 2002) was considered as the limitation of this study.

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