

Evaluation of Effectiveness of Group Counselling Program Based on Eclectic Approach to Reduce the Social Anxiety of Candidate Teachers “Qualitative Data Analysis”

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ABSTRACT The aim of this research is to investigate the effectiveness of the “Group Counselling Program to Reduce the Social Anxiety” developed with the aim of reducing the level of social anxiety of candidate teachers in the final year of university. Quasi experimental design with Pretest-Post Test and Control Group was used in the research. 28 voluntary students studying in the Departments of Guidance and Psychological Counselling and Early Childhood Education were the sample of the research. “Social anxiety” measurements formed by “social avoidance, being criticized and individual worthlessness” points before and after the implementation of the program, have been compared by using t-test and it has been determined that the social anxiety decreased significantly in favour of the experimental group.

INTRODUCTION

Having a good quality human resource is of great importance for a country in order to be involved among developed countries. Undoubtedly, obtaining a qualified human resource is related to the education system of the country. Similarly, the success of the education system depends on the quality of the trained teachers (Erden 1998). Teachers are generally expected to make appropriate behavioural changes to the profession in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains at the end of their training. Besides these, there are other important characteristics among effective teaching attributes that the teacher candidates will possess. These characteristics include being model for both students and other people in the society. Parental and peer support were uniquely associated with decreased loneliness and social anxiety, respectively (Cavanaugh and Buehler 2015).

Social anxiety is defined as a situation where the individual expects discomfort and tension that he/she will behave in a manner that is not appropriate in different social situations, will fall into a bad situation, will leave a negative impression, and will be evaluated negatively (stupid, poor, inept, incompetent, etc.) by others (Gümüş 2010). People experiencing social anxiety feel considerable discomfort to interact in social situations and to perform any action in these situations. Researchers working on this issue define social

anxiety as fear of being negatively evaluated by others, negative expectations of behaving clumsily during interpersonal interactions, avoidance behaviour to guard against falling into bad situations in front of others and a problem accompanied by physiological responses disturbing these behaviours (Beidel et al. 1985).

It can be said that social anxiety essentially has a cognitive structure as it is characterized by negative expectations. However, besides being cognitive, physical, emotional, and behavioural dimensions are also the other complementary aspects of the cycle forming and continuing social anxiety. Individuals are in a worried state when social anxiety is triggered. The increasing level of anxiety arises disturbing physiological responses. Changes such as faster beating of the heart, difficulty in breathing and blushing (Leary and Kowlaski 1995) are the indicators of the tension people experience.

Social anxiety is frequently seen in candidate teachers. It is possible to encounter students who cannot feel comfortable in the group, who cannot express themselves in class, who break out in a cold sweat while doing presentation and who are afraid of speaking in public despite knowing the answers to questions asked in class. For this reason, social anxiety of a candidate teacher should be addressed and resolved during his/her training. In this research designed with this in mind, the question “Does Structured Social Anxiety Reduction (SSAR) have an impact on

reducing the level of social anxiety of Group Psychological Counselling Program teacher candidates?", was intended to be answered.

METHODOLOGY

Research Model

This research was supported by qualitative paradigms and was conducted by a semi-experimental research pattern. Research took place in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, at Lefke European University/Fazil Kucuk Faculty of Education.

Population and Sample

The population of research consists of the final year students of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus Lefke European University Dr. Fazil Kucuk Faculty of Educations, Departments of Guidance and Psychological Counselling and Early Childhood Education. By using purposeful and homogeneous sampling, the sample consisted of 28 final year students studying at Lefke European University Dr. Fazil Kucuk Faculty of Educations, Departments of Guidance and Psychological Counselling and Early Childhood Education. Assignment operation of the experimental and control groups has been carried out in order to ensure equality in number in terms of gender variable (7 males and 7 females in each group), by random sampling method.

Data Collection Tools

The data collection tools of the research are Social Anxiety Scale developed by Özbay and Palanci (2001) and SKAY-GPD (Group Counselling Program to Reduce the Social Anxiety) developed by the researcher.

Social Anxiety Scale (SAS)

It has been developed with the aim of determining the "social anxiety" problems experienced by university students. The scale developed to possess usefulness for the university student population has been prepared to measure the skills of university students, convenient to social situations and their anxiety that may arise in these situations. Test was subject to the criteria and construct validity. The relevant five scales

of the SCL-90 scale, Rathus Assertiveness Schedule and the Social introversion sub-test of MMPI test have been used for the criterion validity. A 30-item three-factor test structure was formed as a result of the factor analysis on construct validity. Factor analysis was performed by SPSS factor (SPSS 10.0/windows). Factorability was examined by different methods in the performed factor analysis. First, the correlation matrix among all the agents was analysed and compliance was searched. Sample compliance and Sphericity tests were performed. KMO sampling adequacy coefficient was found as .90, Barlett Sphericity was found significant at the level of 3644.58 and $p < .001$. In the initial factor analysis, eigenvalues of the factor analysis which were greater than one were examined by using cyclic method and the maximum number of significant factors were examined by using charting method (screen test). The number of factors which are conforming and can be explained is three. These three factors obtained by the results of varimax rotation factor analysis were called (1) social avoidance, (2) anxiety to be criticized and (3) individual sense of worthlessness. The total variance explained by three factors is 32.9 percent.

SKAY-GPD Program

SKAY-GPD Program arranged to reduce the social anxiety level of candidate teachers was created on the basis of an eclectic approach integrating existential, rational, emotional, behavioural and cognitive behavioural approaches. Specificity of the program arises from the activities designed to cope with anxiety and the enactment of convenient contents of session. Program has a coverage of anxiety situations arising in cases where individuals cannot carry out their existential responsibilities, in coping with this anxiety, cognitive and behavioural awareness raising activities, attempt to carry out the existential responsibility and the relevant evaluations. The determined plan for each session within the content of the structured program is as follows:

I Session: Disclosure of the process, meeting with group members and leaders, determining group rules, disclosure of the aim of group and creation of the aims of members.

II Session: Recognizing feelings and behaviours, comprehending the dynamic underlying the emotional, behavioural and physical reaction

in context of the ABC Model and applying this on the experienced events.

III Session: Distinguishing between rational and irrational thoughts.

IV Session: Giving information about the negative automatic thoughts against social anxiety, sharing of the views on the automatic thoughts of group members.

V Session: Coping with the cases of anxiety and irrational thoughts in cases where the individual cannot carry out the existential responsibility.

VI Session: Being able to realize their constant avoidance behaviours against the concerns of the group members.

VII Session: Enabling the members experiencing social anxiety to use the appropriate social skills in social situations.

VIII Session: Evaluation and termination of group process.

Analysis of Data

SPSS 20.00 software package was used for the analysis of quantitative data. The control to see whether the research data show normal distribution has been carried out by Shapiro Wilks test (Table 1) and the pre- and post-test measurements of the experimental and control groups were evaluated by the parametric method t-test due to normal distribution of the groups. The level of significance criteria was accepted as 0.05 in interpreting the results.

RESULTS

Processing Way of Research

The first stage of the research includes the pretest application for the experimental and control groups by using the Social Anxiety Scale developed by Özbay and Palanci (2001). It is de-

termined that the experimental and control groups do not show a significant difference in terms of social anxiety levels (Table 2). Accordingly, it was accepted that the experimental processing input behaviour of the members of both groups were homogeneous. In following phase of the process steps, a total of 8 sessions of SKAY-GPD Program has been applied to the experimental group, once a week during eight weeks, where each session lasted for 90 minutes.

Table 2: The independent sample t test results of social anxiety scale pre-test and post-test of the experimental and control groups

Measurement	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	P
Experimental group pretest	14	89.92	8.92	.828
Control group pretest	14	89.71	6.39	

Post-test was carried out on the experimental and control groups at the end of the program. Data on the pre and post-test results of the experimental and control groups were compared to t-test in line with the group uniformity and the normal matching dispersion characteristics and the differences between measurements were analysed.

Findings of Research

Findings of the research investigating the effectiveness of SKAY-GPD Program prepared to reduce the social anxiety level of candidate teachers are given below.

Experimental and Control Groups Social Anxiety Scale Findings on the Analysis of Obtained Data from Pre and Post-Test Applications

Findings obtained by Social Anxiety Scale (SAS) pre-test and post-test measurements of

Table 1: Normality test results of measurements on the basis of SAS by the Shapiro-Wilks regarding experimental and control groups

Dependent variable	Group	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	Degree of freedom	P value
Pretest SAS	Experimental	.9	14	.4
	Control	.8	14	.1
Post TestSAS	Experimental	.9	14	.2
	Control	.9	14	.4

the experimental and control groups are given in Table 3. No significant difference was found between the pretest results while a statistically significant difference was observed in favour of the experimental group (Table 3) between the SAS pre-test and post-test scores of the students in the experimental group after the performed t-test in order to compare the SAS pretest and post test scores $t(13)=31.69, p<0.05$.

Table 3: t-test results of experimental and control groups regarding pre-test- post-test SAS scale

Measurement	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	P
Experimental group pretest	14	89.39	8.92	.000
Experimental group post test	14	24.50	4.79	
Control group pretest	14	89.71	6.39	
Control group post test	14	94.71		.007

A difference between the SAS pre and post-test scores of the students in the control group was observed at the level of $p>0.05$ as $t(13)=-3.20$ but it was observed that the difference was not significant.

Experimental and Control Groups Social Avoidance Sub-scale - Findings on Data Analysis Obtained from Pre-Test and Post-Test Applications

Data obtained by Social Avoidance Sub-scale pre-test and post-test measurements of the experimental and control groups are given in Table 4. No significant difference was observed between pre-test results while the Social Avoidance level of students in the experimental group was significantly lower when the Social Avoidance Sub-scale post-test scores was compared. A statistically significant difference ($t(13)=26.38, p<0.05$) was observed between the social avoidance sub-scale pre-test and post-test scores of the students in the experimental group in favour of the experimental group (Table 4).

The difference between the social avoidance sub-scale pre and post-test scores of the students in the control group was obtained at the level of $p<0.05$ as $t(13)=-4.16$, it was observed that the difference was significant.

Table 4: t-test results of experimental and control groups regarding pre-test and post-test social avoidance sub-scale

Measurement	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	P
Experimental group pretest	14	36.21	4.04	.000
Experimental group post test	14	7.14	2.03	
Control group pretest	14	36.07	3.12	
Control group post test	14	38.71	4.65	.001

Experimental and Control Groups Being Criticized Sub-scale Findings on Data Analysis Obtained from Pre-Test and Post-Test Applications

Data obtained by Being Criticised Sub-scale pre-test and post-test measurements of the experimental and control groups are given in Table 5. No significant difference was observed between the pre-test scores while it was determined that the Being Criticised level of students in the experimental group was significantly lower when the Being Criticized Sub-scale post-test scores are compared. A statistically significant difference ($t(13)=14.33, p<0.05$) was observed in favour of the experimental group (Table 5) between the being criticized sub-scale pre and post-test scores of students in the experimental group.

The difference between the pre and post-test scores of the being criticized sub-scale of students in the control group was obtained at the level of $p<0.05$ as $t(13)=-2.52$, it was observed that the difference was significant.

Table 5: t-test result of experimental and control groups regarding pre-test and post-test being criticized sub-scale

Measurement	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	P
Experimental group pretest	14	29.6	3.	.0
Experimental group post test	14	12.6	4.0	
Control group pretest	14	29.6	3.1	
Control group post test	14	31.8	2.6	.0

Experimental and Control Groups Individual Worthlessness Sub-scale Findings on Data Analysis Obtained from Pre-Test and Post-Test Applications

Data obtained by Individual Worthlessness Sub-scale pre-test and post-test measurements

of the experimental and control groups are given in Table 6. No significant difference was observed between pre-test results while it was identified that the Individual Worthlessness level of students in the experimental group was significantly lower when the Individual Worthlessness Sub-scale post-test scores were compared. A statistically significant difference ($t(13)=25.02, p<0.05$) was observed in favour of the experimental group (Table 6) between the individual worthlessness sub-scale pre and post-test scores of students in the experimental group.

A difference between the individual worthlessness sub-scale pre and post-test scores of students in the control group was obtained at the level of $p>0.05$ as $t(13)=-.163$, it was observed that difference was not significant.

Table 6: t-test result of experimental and control groups regarding pre-test and post-test individual worthlessness sub-scale

Measurement	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	P
Experimental group pretest	14	23.2	2,3	.0
Experimental group post test	14	4.7	1.6	
Control group pretest	14	24.0	2.2	
Control group post test	14	24.1	2.5	.8

DISCUSSION

In the research, it was identified that the group psychological counselling program structured by eclectic approach to reduce the social anxiety is effective at a statistically significant level. It was also identified in the pre-test and post-test applications of the experimental and control groups that the scores of the candidate teachers in the experimental group significantly decreased, in other words their concerns were decreased. Nevertheless, any changes were not identified in the social anxiety levels of students in the control group. This finding is similar to the research findings on identification of the concerns of candidate teachers carried out by Gümüş (2002). In this research of reducing the social anxiety, Gümüş (2002) reached the result that the program developed in order to fight against the social anxiety reduces the social anxiety levels of candidate teachers. Similarly, it was found out in the research by Seligman and Ollendick (2011) by using cognitive behavioural therapy tech-

niques on students with high social anxiety level that the used therapy techniques are effective in reducing the anxiety.

At the end of the group psychological counselling program structured to reduce the social anxiety, it was concluded that the change in the post test scores of social avoidance, being criticised and individual worthlessness sub-scales were significantly different in favour of the experimental group. In a similar research carried out by Purehsan and Saed (2010), it was observed that cognitive behavioural therapy and group work are effective as a result of a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test results of cognitive behavioural group therapy developed to reduce the social anxiety level of university students.

It can be said that the SKAY-GPD Program has a positive effect in reducing the concerns of candidate teachers along with the general aim of the program. Nevertheless, observing a significant difference in comparing the pre-test and post-test scores of social avoidance and being criticised of the control group suggested that a different effect played role in the decrease in pre and post-test scores of social avoidance and being criticised sub-scales other than SKAY-GPD Program. This result can be considered to be reached by an independent variable out of the scope of the experimental scheme. This case is considered to be made more effective for the anxiety expressed in social avoidance and being criticised sub-scales of the SKAY-GPD Program. It is assumed that independent variables such as changes made in employment conditions that are highlighted on this issue in the proposals concerning all the candidate teachers which may reduce their anxiety may affect the research results. This case emphasizes that the determining roles of the independent variables should be well analysed in the research process including experimental procedures.

CONCLUSION

In this research, it was concluded that group psychological counselling program structure to reduce the social anxiety of candidate teachers is effective in reducing the general social anxiety level of candidate teachers. It was observed that the program showed a significant difference in the social avoidance, being criticised and individual worthlessness sub-scales in favour of the

experimental group. In this context, the program serves the aim for which it was developed. In the light of obtained data, following recommendations may be taken into account for the research and studies to be carried out similar or relevant subjects. This research has been carried out for candidate teachers at the final year of university. It has been understood that including programs that will support the controlling and reduction of anxiety of candidate teachers from the first years of university education will provide significant benefits. In the research involving experimental processes to reduce anxiety, it appears to be important to take into account the effects of independent variables that would be factors on reductions or increase in the anxiety and on perception changes and creation or reduction of anxiety due to news about being assigned to the job, working conditions in the occupation and similar issues.

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