

The Effect of the Creative Drama Activities on Shyness, Self-Esteem, and Mental Well-Being

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of creative drama on the levels of shyness, self-esteem, and mental well-being in disadvantaged youth. This study was planned in a single group pretest-posttest design. 10 sessions of creative drama activities were held for each group by the drama-trained researchers approximately 120 minutes per week. The data of the study were collected by using the Personal Information Form, Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory, Warwick - Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale, and Shyness Scale. After transferring the data to the computer-aided SPSS package program, the data were evaluated using percentages, averages and significance tests. While the Self-Esteem Scale average score was 59.846 ± 14.986 , the Shyness Scale average score was 61.153 ± 15.032 and Warwick-Edinburg Mental Well-Being Scale average score was 51.096 ± 8.661 before the intervention, it respectively changed to 71.923 ± 13.430 , 49.230 ± 12.267 and 55.384 ± 9.088 and these differentiations in all three dimensions were found to be statistically significant. It was observed that 10-week creative drama sessions increased the level of self-esteem and mental well-being of disadvantaged students as well as decreasing the level of shyness.

Keywords: youth, creative drama, self-esteem, shyness, mental stress

Introduction

The physical and mental health problems of young people socially and emotionally affect the individual, family, and society. Notably, these health problems are observed to be more common among young people living in disadvantaged conditions. Causes such as poverty, substance use, some mental illnesses, family problems, childhood traumas, some chronic illnesses pose some economic and social-based problems that impose difficult living conditions for young people (Health Foundation 2018, WHO 2019).

Mental and accompanying physical problems such as depression, fear, anxiety, decreased self-esteem, eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive behavior disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder are more common in young people with disadvantaged conditions. A decrease in self-respect or self-esteem, in particular, may cause individuals to feel worthless and deterioration of social relationships at all developmental stage (Harris and Orth 2019, Orth 2018). The mentioned problems can significantly reduce the quality of life in young people by constantly

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occupying their minds. In order to get rid of it, young people need programs that can support their self-esteem and reduce their mental stress. One of the most useful tools for increasing self-esteem in young people is creative drama studies (Adıgüzel 2015). Creative drama can produce highly beneficial results in terms of improving the communication skills, social awareness, and self-esteem levels of the participants. The creative drama has been shown to be useful in the development of empathy (Kosti et al. 2015, Scroggs et al. 2016), anger control (Kaçıra Çapacıoğlu, & Yıldız Demirtaş 2017), reducing of speaking anxiety (Ataş, 2015), increasing self-confidence, competence and problem-solving skills (Tsiaras 2016b, Palavan 2017), increasing peer relationship (Tsiaras 2016a) and academic success (Batdi and Batdi 2015, Ulubey 2018). According to the findings obtained in a study conducted by Altuntaş and Altınova (2015), it was found that creative drama activities applied in the experimental group statistically increased the social problem-solving skills of university students. In a study examining the effect of drama education on social skills in university students, it is determined that there was a significant difference between the social skill points of the experimental and the control group (Korukcu et al. 2015).

In the drama process, young people can have a critical approach to the situation they take part in while also gaining insight and finding clues about its solution by adopting this situation as their problems. At the same time, the participant can meet his needs for respect, acceptance, appreciation, taking responsibility, success, and trust in a group (Adıgüzel 2015). In this way, young people start developing the belief that they can control the problems related to their lives. It is stated that particularly the creative drama environment enables young people that suppress their emotions and thoughts and avoid showing them to express themselves in a non-threatening milieu like drama (Adıgüzel 2015, Abacı Karadeniz and Tepeli 2019, Dima and Tsiaras 2020). In this aspect, creative drama contributes to the psychological, social, and cultural development of young people as well as their psychological relief.

However, it draws attention in the literature reviews that the majority of the studies about young people are for diagnosing their existing problems, and the number of studies involving intervention to solve the problems is quite insufficient. This study aims to empower young people with disadvantaged conditions by using creative drama activities, considering that one of the most effective methods to save young people from “victim” perception is developing self-confidence.

Research Hypotheses

- H1.** There is a statistically significant difference between the Self-Respect Scale pretest-posttest average scores of the students attending the drama sessions.
- H2.** There is a statistically significant difference between the Shyness Scale pretest-posttest average scores of the students attending the drama sessions.
- H3.** There is a statistically significant difference between the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale pretest-posttest average scores of the students attending the drama sessions.

Methods

Type of the Study Design

This study was planned in a single group pretest-posttest design.

Sample and Setting

The study included young people studying a university and having some disadvantages such as violence, poverty, alcoholism, depression, chronic illness, childhood traumas, social traumas, social phobia, and shyness. For this purpose, the department administrations were contacted to identify students who may need creative drama activities. In order to prevent stigma in group formation processes, one-on-one interviews were made with students following purposeful sampling, and only volunteer students were included in the study. Interview processes with students for drama sessions continued until 3 different groups of 20 people were formed. After the drama groups were formed, the studies started with 62 students due to the fact that the two students requested to participate in the activities and needed drama sessions.

Data Collection Tools and Application

The data of the study were collected using the Personal Information Form, Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, Warwick - Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale, and Shyness Scale. After the necessary explanations were made before the drama activities started, stated data collection methods applied to the participants. A week after the drama activities were completed, the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, the Shyness Scale, and the Warwick - Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale were reapplied.

Personal Information Form

The personal information form containing information about individuals was prepared by the researchers by reviewing the relevant literature. The Personal Information Form included some demographic features and 15 questions evaluating students' certain habits.

Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory (CSEI)

It was developed by Coopersmith (1986). It was adapted to Turkish by Turan and Tufan (1987) and its validity and reliability study was carried out. The researchers determined the test-retest reliability of the scale to be 0.65 and 0.76 in the studies they conducted one year apart. The scale consists of 25 expressions with "yes" and "no" response options and consists of items that measure the person's perspective on life, family relationships and endurance. 1 point is given if items 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 14, 19, and 20 in the inventory are marked "Yes". If items 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 are marked as "No", 1 point is given. If they are not answered accordingly, "0" points are given. The

score obtained from the scale is “raw score”. “Real score” is calculated by multiplying it by 4. The total score can vary between 0 and 100 points. If the score of the participants is between 10 and 30, it is in the “low” self esteem group. If it is between 30-70, it is in the “medium” self esteem group. If it is between 70 -100, it is in the “high” self esteem group.

Shyness Scale

“Shyness Scale”, another scale used to collect data in the research, was developed by Chekk and Buss (1981) and adapted to Turkish by Güngör (2001) and reliability coefficient is found 0.83 and Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient is 0.91. As a result of the factor analysis conducted to determine the construct validity of the scale, it was stated that the scale will be evaluated as one-dimensional. The scale, consisting of 20 items, is a 5-point Likert. The lowest score that can be obtained from the scale is 20, and the highest score is 100. The high scores obtained from the scale show a high level of shyness; low scores indicate low levels of shyness. In this study, the Cronbach’s Alpha value of the scale was found .88.

Warwick - Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)

WEMWBS was used to evaluate the “well-being” situation in this research. WEMWBS is originally a one-factor scale consisting of a 14-item and 5-point Likert type. The total score is in the range of minimum 14 and maximum 70, and the increase in the score indicates an increase in the level of mental well-being. The reliability studies of the scale were carried out with the participation of individuals aged 16 and over, and the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient was found 0.89 with the data obtained from 348 people in total. The test-retest reliability of the scale was performed with a one-week interval on 124 people and the correlation coefficient was found to be 0.83 (Tennant et. al. 2007). Adaptation of WEMWBS to Turkish was carried out by Keldal (2015) and Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was found 0.92. In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha value of WEMWBS was found 0.84.

Implementation of the Research

After the sessions were planned and the groups were formed, the time and place for the drama activity were decided according to the weekly course schedules of the students. Drama activities were held in two different halls, which were affiliated to the Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports and where youth services were carried out, since there was no suitable hall in the university. 10 sessions of creative drama activities were held for each group by the drama-trained researchers approximately 120 minutes per week. The themes were applied to all three groups in the same way. Participants who could not attend one session due to any difficulty were given the flexibility to attend other sessions.

Each session was held in three stages as a warm-up, preparation and re-enactment and evaluation. The warm-up preparation phase was carried out with music in a way to include movements and games that may attract the interests and attention of young people. The reenactments, which were important for the drama

activities, were planned in a way to increase students' self-respect and self-esteem, to help them face their fears, to enable them to realize their communicative skills, and to express their feelings.

The main themes of the drama sessions were determined as follows;

Session 1: Meeting, communication with the group - interaction.

Session 2: Getting to know yourself.

Session 3: Communication skills / Face to face, eye to eye communication.

Session 4: Communication skills / Compliment responses.

Session 5: Confronting social phobia/fears.

Session 6: Trust-Insecurity.

Session 7: Protection from violence / Accurate expression of emotions.

Session 8: Facing Shyness / Fears.

Session 9: Expression of emotions.

Session 10: Assertive behaviors.

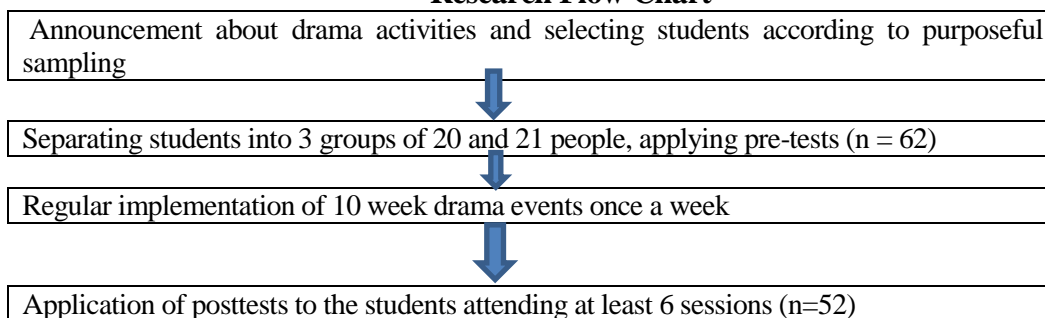
Evaluation of the Data

After transferring the data to the computer-aided SPSS package program, the data were evaluated using percentages, averages and significance tests. Firstly, the normality distribution analysis was performed on the data using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The difference between the scale scores before and after the intervention was assessed with the Paired-Samples t-Test and Bivariate (Pearson) correlation analysis was used to determine whether there was a relationship between scale scores. The relationship between the number of sessions and scale scores was decided by Anova. For statistical evaluation, $p = 0.05$ was taken for the level of significance.

Ethical Dimension

After the study was planned, written consent was obtained from the a University Non-Interventional Research Ethics Committee (14.01.2019 Date, Decision No: 9) in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration.

Research Flow Chart



Results

The following conclusions based on the study conducted with some disadvantaged university students were reached after the evaluation of the drama activities that were carried out for 10 weeks. 85.5% of the students included in the study consisted of female students, the majority of whom were studying at the vocational school and the faculty of health sciences, and the vast majority (80.6%) of them were first-year students. 38.7% of the students stated that they graduated from Anatolian high schools, 4.8% of them worked, 16.1% smoked and 6.5% used alcohol. 61.3% of the students also stated that they had experienced a traumatic event such as family divorce, childhood violence, loss of close relatives, immigration that damaged their self-confidence in the past. Some familial characteristics of students were also evaluated within the scope of the study.

Considering the findings obtained; it was observed that the majority of mothers (87.1%) and fathers (64.5%) had education level in primary school and below, 12.9% of the students stated that their family's economic status was poor and 87.1% stated that their family income was barely enough to meet the expenses. The average number of persons per household was 8.09 ± 2.20 , and the students were found to have an average of 6.50 ± 3.05 siblings.

Self-esteem, shyness, and mental well-being scale scores of the students included in the study were evaluated. Before the intervention, it was reported that the students scored 59.935 ± 14.367 (Min; 32, Max; 84) from the CSEI, 61.274 ± 14.941 (Min.24; Max. 100) from the Shyness Scale, and 51.258 ± 8.323 (Min. 34; Max. 70) from the WEMWBS (Table 1).

Table 1. *Distribution of Participants' CSEI, Shyness and WEMWBS Scores before the Intervention (N = 62)*

Scales	Mean \pm SS	Min.	Max.
CSEI	59.935 ± 14.367	32	84
Shyness Scale	61.274 ± 14.941	24	100
WEMWBS	51.258 ± 8.323	34	70

Within the scope of the study, the correlation between participants' pre-intervention CSEI, Shyness, and WEMWBS scores with some variables were investigated. Since the students were recruited from disadvantaged groups and the disadvantage type could be different for each student, it was observed that scale scores were not affected by some variables such as gender, familial income level, past traumatic event experience, and smoking status ($p > 0.05$) (Table 2).

Table 2. Relationship of Participants' CSEI, Shyness, and WEMWBS Scores before Intervention with Some Variables (N = 62)

	CSEI (Mean ± SS)	Shyness Scale (Mean ± SS)	WEMWBS (Mean ± SS)
Sex			
Female	59.245±14.781	62.924 ±14.842	50.735±8.408
Male	64.000±11.489	51.555±12.084	54.333±7.500
	t=0.840 p=0.363	t=2.174 p=0.026	t=-1.203, p=0.217
Family Income Level			
Poor	57.500±11.698	55.625±10.253	52.000±8.944
Meet their needs	60.296±14.780	62.111±15.412	51.148±8.310
	t=0.261 p=0.610	t=1.320 p=0.255	t=0.072 p=0.790
Traumatic Events			
Experienced	59.263±13.278	61.868±15.700	51.263±7.978
Not Experienced	61.000±16.183	60.333±13.930	51.250±9.018
	t=0. p=0.212 p=0.647	t=0.153 p=0.697	t=0.001 p=0.995
Smoking			
Smoker	62.400±11.805	58.100±14.738	49.400±4.718
Non-smoker	59.461±14.862	61.738±15.044	51.615±8.838
	t=.347 p=.558	t=.534 p=.468	t=.590 p=.445

In this study, the differentiation between the participants' CSEI, Shyness Scale, and WEMWBS scores before and after the intervention were evaluated. According to the findings; While the mean CSEI score before the intervention was 59.846 ± 14.986 , it increased after the intervention to 71.923 ± 13.430 and the difference was statistically significant ($t = -4.885$ $p = 0.001$); while the average score of Shyness Scale before the intervention was 61.153 ± 15.032 , after the intervention, it decreased to 49.230 ± 12.267 and the difference was statistically significant ($t = 4.265$ $p = 0.001$). When the WEMWBS score averages were evaluated the mean value, which was 51.096 ± 8.661 before the intervention, increased to 55.384 ± 9.088 after the intervention and the difference was statistically significant ($t = -2.450$ $p = 0.018$) (Table 3).

Table 3. The Difference between Participants' CSEI, Shyness Scale and WEMWBS Scores Before and After the Intervention

	CSEI (Mean ± SS)	Shyness Scale (Mean ± SS)	WEMWBS (Mean. ± SS)
Pretest (n=62)	59.846±14.986	61.153±15.032	51.096 ±8.661
Posttest (n=52)	71.923±13.430	49.230±12.267	55.384±9.088
Significance Test	t=-4.885 p=0.001	t=4.265 p=0.001	t=-2.450 p=0.018

Within the scope of the study, the correlation between participants' CSEI, Shyness Scale and WEMWBS post-test scores were observed. According to the findings, there was a negative correlation between self-esteem and shyness. Accordingly, shyness decreased as self-esteem increased and there was a positive,

meaningful correlation ($R = 0.471^{**}$) between shyness and mental well-being. Besides, there was a significant negative correlation between shyness and mental well-being ($R = -0.488^{**}$), in other words, the level of mental well-being increased as shyness decreased (Table 4).

Table 4. Correlation Analysis Results between Participants' CSEI, Shyness and WEMWBS Post-Test Scores ($N = 52$)

Factors	CSEI	Shyness Scale	WEMWBS
CSEI		-0.417 ^{**}	
Shyness Scale			-0.488 ^{**}
WEMWBS	0.471 ^{**}		

^{**} $p < 0.001$.

Another aspect evaluated within the scope of the study is how students' attendance to creative drama sessions affects scale scores. When the relationship between the number of participation in structured creative drama sessions and the CSEI, Shyness Scale and WEMWBS post-test scores were evaluated, it was observed that as the number of attendance to sessions increased, Self-Esteem and WEMWBS scores increased and Shyness Scale scores decreased. While the correlation between the number of sessions and average scores on CSEI ($t = 4.424$ $p = 0.004$) and Shyness Scale ($t = 3.015$ $p = 0.027$) were statistically significant, it was observed that there was a close correlation between the number of sessions and WEMWBS scores (Table 5).

Table 5. Relationship between Number of Drama Sessions and CSEI, Shyness Scale and WEMWBS Post-Test Scores ($N = 52$)

	CSEI (Mean ± SS)	Shyness Scale (Mean ± SS)	WEMWBS (Mean ± SS)
Number of Sessions			
6 sessions	16.250 ± 3.387	56.333 ± 10.525	53.833 ± 9.590
7 sessions	16.866 ± 2.474	50.666 ± 9.875	52.800 ± 9.298
8 sessions	17.500 ± 2.976	50.750 ± 17.588	53.500 ± 9.985
9 sessions	20.555 ± 2.351	45.555 ± 10.619	56.333 ± 6.000
10 sessions	20.250 ± 3.770	38.500 ± 11.735	63.375 ± 6.843
Significance Test	$t = 4.424$ $p = 0.004$	$t = 3.015$ $p = 0.027$	$t = 2.248$ $p = 0.078$

Discussion

Findings obtained in this study that was conducted with young people, studying at university and having some disadvantages such as social phobia, poverty, substance use, traumatic experience, mental stress, showed that 10-week drama sessions had a positive effect on their self-esteem, shyness and mental well-being. Particularly, the demand from our participating students about the continuation of drama activities gives an idea about the degree of effectiveness. Reducing the level of stress and shyness through creative drama activities was highly important

especially for the students starting university soon to adapt to university life. Although short-term effects of the operation were evaluated after 10 weeks of intervention, the long-term effects of drama sessions could not be assessed since the universities were closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Turkey and the students returned home.

The socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of the students, included in the study, were similar. It was remarked that they have lots of siblings and belong to a family in which the socioeconomic level was low, education opportunities were limited, and the social status of women was relatively low due to attachment to the traditions. All these variables could be considered among factors that reduce self-esteem, increase both the level of shyness and traumatic experiences, stated in Table 1. Thus, drama sessions were structured to help students know themselves, face shyness and social phobias, recognize barriers to communication, and develop self-esteem.

After the activities involving the 10-week creative drama sessions, the students' Self Respect, Shyness, and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale scores were differed significantly from the pre-intervention phase. In this context, while Self-Respect and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale scores increased satisfactorily, Shyness Scale scores also decreased as desired. In a study planned interventionally by Palavan (2017), the problem-solving skills levels and self-confidence levels of college students of primary education have improved after being introduced to the drama education. In the meta-analysis study of Ulubey (2018), the creative drama has a positive effect on skill development in students. In the study of Altuntaş and Altinova (2015), it was shown that drama activities had a positive effect on recognizing the emotional needs of university students (Altuntaş and Altinova 2015). In the study of Zaghoul (2018), it was indicated that creative drama improved the students' thinking and communication skills. As for the studies of Scroggs et al. (2016), the creative drama was shown to be effective in increasing empathy levels of university students. In the study conducted by Sarıkaya et al. (2019), it was observed that creative drama increased self-esteem and decreased social anxiety scores in nursing students. The work of Zaghoul (2018) demonstrated that the communication skills and thinking skills of the university students were increased after the intervention. In the study of Kaçıra Çapacıoğlu and Yıldız Demirtaş (2017), the application of creative drama was found to be effective in reducing the anger level of 9 th-grade students. According to study of Abacı Karadeniz and Tepeli (2019), creative drama education was effective in coping with shyness and improving assertive behavior of adolescent.

As can be seen from the latest study and findings from other studies, creative drama studies can have a positive effect on self-esteem and mental well-being among young age groups as well. However, when the literature review was made broadly, it was seen that creative drama activities play too little part in increasing adaptation, preventing mental problems, or gaining social skills in university youth. It was noteworthy that creative drama studies were used as a learning method mostly to increase the effectiveness of the lessons in high school and earlier terms. However, university students also need to be supported for developing

emotional maturity, effective coping strategies, coping with emotional situations such as social phobia, and shyness.

In this study, it was observed that the difference in self-esteem, shyness, and mental well-being scores was also related to the number of attendance to the sessions. Since participants taking part in more than half of the sessions were included in the final assessment, students with five or fewer participants were excluded from the assessment. It was observed in the evaluation that the intervention efficiency increased as the number of sessions increased. However, since the creative drama was mostly performed in dependent groups (students in formal education), how this dimension changed in other studies was not evaluated sufficiently. In this last study, the correlation between self-esteem, shyness, and mental well-being was examined. While there was a positive correlation between self-esteem and mental well-being, there was a negative correlation between self-esteem, mental well-being, and shyness. Shortly, it was seen that students felt better as they obtain self-realization, their shyness decreased, and their self-esteem increased. Although the parameters are not the same, it was shown in the study of Duraku et al. (2018) that low self-esteem was associated with the lower levels of psychological distress. In a descriptive study conducted with collage students in, there was important correlation between mental health and self-esteem (Nguyen et al. 2019), and in the study of Wulandari and Ridfah (2018), show that there was correlation of shyness towards self-esteem. In the study of Abdullah and Hashemi (2022), it was seen that creative drama activities increased the self-esteem levels of aggressive students. A systematic review written by Keane and Loades (2017) highlights the two-way relationship between self-esteem and mental illness. In this study, it is recommended to develop self-esteem in students. As can be seen from these results, one dimension can affect another positively due to the holistic structure of human health.

Conclusion

When the findings of the study were evaluated in general, it was observed that creative drama sessions applied to disadvantaged young people for 10 weeks had a significant effect on the participants' self-esteem, shyness, and mental well-being. Also, as the number of sessions attended increased, it was seen that the difference in scale scores was higher and the success of the intervention increased. Based on the findings, it was observed that there was a correlation between self-esteem, shyness, and mental health. Also, an improvement in one dimension affected and improved the other dimension.

Impact Statement

Considering the findings, recommendations include reconducting similar studies with larger samples and a control group and also conducting creative drama sessions in the first semester of the university education program, especially for

students having problems with shyness, stress, and adaptation since they have just started university.

Limitations

The research has some limitations. The study design was pre-posttest design and was carried out in a small group of students. The findings obtained from the study cannot be generalized to all students, especially students from different cultures.

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