

the effectiveness of a play-based group counseling program in increasing self-assertiveness among syrian refugee students in jordan.

Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry (TOJQI)
Volume 12, Issue 10, October 2021: 4466-4477

The effectiveness of a play-based group counseling program in increasing self-assertiveness among Syrian refugee students in Jordan.

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Abstract:

The study aimed to reveal the impact and effectiveness of a play-based group counseling program in increasing self-assertiveness among Syrian refugee students in Jordan; the study sample consisted of 30 students in the age group (9-11) who are enrolled in a public school affiliated to the Zarqa region in Jordan during the second semester of the year (2018-2019) and was chosen purposively to provide the necessary conditions and facilities for the implementation of the program. The quasi-experimental method was adopted to achieve the objectives of the study where the sample members were randomly distributed into two equal groups, the experimental group (n = 15) , whose members were exposed to the group counseling program prepared by the researchers, and the control group (n = 15), which was not provided with the counseling program.

The Rathus Assertiveness Scale was applied to the sample members in pre and post-measurement; the program is play-based and it consisted of 14 sessions, 2 sessions per week for 7 weeks, and the duration of the session ranged from (60 - 90) minutes.

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The results indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the means of the members of the experimental and control groups on the self-assertiveness test with its two dimensions for the experimental group's interest which indicate the effectiveness of the program in increasing self-assertiveness. The study recommended developing more group counseling programs to address psychological, personal, social, and behavioral issues among Syrian refugee students.

Keywords: group counseling program, self-assertiveness, Syrian refugee students.

1. Introduction

Since March 2011, the internal armed conflict in Syria has imposed more than (20) million people from inside Syria on forced migration and forced a million and a half others to seek asylum in neighboring countries.

As of May/March 2013, Jordan has become a host to more than four hundred and seventy thousand (470,000) Syrian refugees, most of whom are women and children, 15% of them live in international camps and two-thirds of Syrian refugees settle outside international camps and are distributed throughout Jordanian cities. (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, 2014).

Children of refugee families who forcibly left their home countries in search of survival and fear of death and capturing threats are among the most vulnerable groups to the negative effects resulting from exposure to situations of aggression, war, and others. These children show symptoms of anxiety, fear, depression, isolation, and aggression.

(Brown, Pearlman, & Goodman, 2004)

As a result, they are in urgent need of counseling and psychological support to help them cope with the effects of the wars they have witnessed, as the Syrian crisis has impacted children and forced them to go through a cycle of social changes that began with a painful refugee stage and resulted in a loss of self-confidence and an inability to integrate with other students in the schools of the host countries.

Numerous studies and research have revealed that Jordanian refugee children suffer from a variety of psychological issues, including anxiety, anger, a lack of willingness to participate in any activity, incapacity, and difficulties with tasks, psychological, and basic activities.

More than (100) children and adolescents who took part in the study (James, Sovick, Garoff, & Abbasi, 2014) expressed intense fear, anger, and powerlessness, as well as a reluctance to engage in any daily activities.

One of the main causes of turmoil and lack of social skills is the child's passing through some crises and pressures, such as losing a family member, witnessing massacres, being displaced from his environment, or losing someone whom he considers reliable, protective, and defensive along with the difficulty in expressing his feelings honestly in various situations and with different people.

This is because the inability to express feelings in children leads to a child's feeling of inferiority, disappointment, and insecurity, which leads to low self-assertiveness. (Miqdadi, Abu Zaitoun, 2010).

Self-assertiveness is defined as self-expression in which the individual appears to be a defender of his basic human rights, without infringing the rights of others.

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Where the individual develops social skills that allow him to communicate with himself, have pleasure while engaging with others without worry, express his thoughts, and protect his rights without compromising the rights of others. (Cassel & Blackwell, 2002).

Studies have shown that developing social skills leads to an increase in self-confidence and an improvement in children's self-concept. (Al-Safasfa, 2010)

As a result of the foregoing, the importance of group counseling programs for this group became clear to us, in order to reduce the psychological problems that Syrian children face in schools, particularly students whose families have been forcibly evicted from their homes, and armed groups' terrorism has left them with a mixture of feelings of fear, terror, and psychological disturbances.(Hourani, Council, Hubal & Strange, 2011).

2. Paly therapy

Most child counselors believe that play is a natural way for children to express themselves, that it is an automatic expression of feelings and thoughts, and that it is a way for most children to learn about the world and their relationships, to understand the past, and to prepare for the future. Play therapy is one of the most widely used programs for dealing with children's behavioral and psychological issues ,because it has numerous advantages, including allowing the child to express his motivations, feelings desires, and the conflicts that surround him (Dorsey et al, 2017).

Playing with the assistance of counselors aids in the identification of beneficial chances for children to continue their development in a healthy manner, ensuring that play-based guidance programs satisfy the needs of their physical, psychological, social, and emotional personalities (Abu-Assad , 2011).

,The use of play to help children understand what they have experienced, such as stories, drawing psychodrama, and playing with water and sand, may help them gain an understanding of their emotions, alleviate problems, increase social interaction, and adapt to themselves and others, which promotes healing and growth Homeyer(Morrison, 2008).

Many previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of play therapy, including the Miqdadi study (2004) , which aimed to know the effectiveness of play therapy and affirmative training in reducing anxiety, decreasing exposure to abuse, and improving perceived self-efficacy among abused children. The sample of the study consisted of (45) abused children, whose ages ranged between (9-14) years in Jordan.

The results showed the effectiveness of the program in reducing symptoms of anxiety and exposure to abuse and improving the perceived self-efficacy of children.

Elliot's study(Elliot, 2017) also found that play therapy was beneficial in improving the adaptive capacity of Syrian refugee children in Jordan. The study group, which comprised 21 Syrian refugee children in Jordan, showed a reduction of 15% in emotional and behavioral issues as well as stress symptoms.

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According to the study (Al-Qa'aymah, 2018), child-centered play counseling was beneficial in treating post-traumatic stress disorder and depression among Syrian children in Jordan. In the Jordanian governorate of Zarqa, the study was done on (24) children aged (7-9) years.

The study (Al-Hawamdeh, 2019) also showed that a group counseling program based on cognitive-behavioral therapy and play therapy was successful in reducing emotional and behavioral difficulties in a group of (40) Syrian students aged (12-14) years in Mafraq, Jordan.

Al-Rifai (2020) study found that a counseling program based on promoting and psychodramatic exercises were helpful in lowering aggression among Syrian children in Jordan. The study involved (40) students from Jordan's Hakama Primary School for Boys.

Accordingly, the current study sought to examine the effect of a play-based group counseling program in increasing the self-assertiveness of Syrian refugee students in Jordan.

3. Research problem

The problem of the study is to ask the following question: What is the effect of a play-based group counseling program in increasing the self-assertiveness of Syrian refugee students in Jordan?

4. Research Hypotheses

At the significance level ($\alpha=.05$) there are statistically significant differences in the means of self-assertiveness between members of the experimental and control groups in the post-assessment.

5. Research objectives

To investigate the effectiveness of a play-based group counseling program in increasing the self-assertiveness of Syrian refugee students in Jordan.

6. Research significance

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it deals with an age group for which many researchers have emphasized the importance, namely the childhood stage, and it will provide counselors with a play-based guiding program, which will include psychodrama, role-playing, drawing, purposeful stories, cooperative and sports games to be used with children concepts.

7. Research Terminologies:

Group counseling program

Group counseling (Corey & Corey, 2016) is defined as a type of counseling in which a number of counselors with comparable problems and disorders work together in small groups. In this study, it is procedurally described as a set of scientifically prepared and play-based guiding activities and experiences psychodrama, storytelling, debates, drawing, intentional promoting, and cooperative games employed in the current study. The total number of sessions was 14, and the duration of each session was accurately (60-90) minutes.

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Self-assertiveness

Self-assertiveness, according to Mehmet (2004) is an individual's ability to effectively communicate his feelings, thoughts, and opinions toward people and situations around him, as well as to assert his rights without infringing on others' rights. The degree to which the study sample participants obtain on the Self-assertiveness scale established for this study is determined procedurally in this study.

Syrian refugee students

They are a group of Syrian refugee students (n = 30) who are in the fifth and sixth grades at Al-Khwarizmi School for Boys in Zarqa during the academic year (2018-2019).

8. Study methodology and procedures:

This research followed a quasi-experimental method, as evidenced by the presence of an independent variable, the counseling program based on play-counseling, and a dependent variable, the level of self-assertiveness among Syrian refugee children in Jordan

Study sample

,The current study sample included thirty Syrian children from Al-Khwarizmi School in Zarqa, Jordan who were in the fifth and sixth grades and whose ages ranged from eight to sixteen years old (9-11).

The participants were divided into two groups: A: The experimental group consisted of 15 students (n = 15) all of whom received counseling. B : The control group consisted of 15 students (n = 15) who were not given any counseling.

Study tools

Rathus AssertivenessSchedule -RAS, which is a thirty-item self-assessment scale . Grumbling to alleviate injustice, spontaneity, linguistic fluency, price controversy, avoiding confrontation in public places, assertiveness while dealing with others, disputing and general conversation, of the scale self-expression sensitivity is the eight dimensions.

Many Arab studies have used the scale, including (Al-Ashhab, 1988) which translated and codified it for the Jordanian environment, and (Al-Ashhab) evaluated the scale's reliability and validity, as well as (Suhail, 2018) and (Shakara, 2016) Each of them has independently evaluated the scale's reliability and validity. The validity and reliability of the scale were verified in the current study in the following ways:

Scale validity

The validity of the arbitrators was extracted from the scale by presenting it to (10) experts in guidance and mental health from faculty members of Hashemite University, the University of Jordan, and the Arab University of Amman, who assessed the appropriateness of the phrases for the age group, the clarity of their language, and representation of the scale's dimensions. The arbitrators' remarks were positive, and no amendment was made.

Scale reliability

The reliability of the scale was determined using internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) and resulted in a total scale of (0.81) assertiveness while dealing with others (0.82), grumbling to alleviate injustice (0.81) self-expression (0.79) and argument general discussion (0.82) spontaneity (0.78), verbal fluency (0.76) and avoidance of confrontation public places (0.80).

Group counseling program

The researchers developed a play-based group counseling program by consulting relevant psychological and educational literature, including (Reference Guide of Activities for Psychological and Social Support (Unurwa, 2016), (Ma'ale, 2016), (Juma, 2016) and (Hijazi and Ghrab, 2012).

Members of the experimental group were exposed to a play-based counseling program. The counseling program consisted of 14 sessions spread out over seven weeks at a rate of two sessions per week, with each session lasting an hour (60-90) minutes.

The group counseling program's logical validity was confirmed by presenting it to (9) arbitrators with PhDs in counseling, mental health, and psychology from Jordanian universities, who assessed its appropriateness for the objectives for which it was created. The arbitrators determined that the program is appropriate, but with some changes. The program was adopted after the necessary changes were made, and it included a counseling program (stories, drawing, cooperative and sports games psychodrama, role-playing, folk games).

Table 1 describes the goals of the counseling program sessions, games, and the period of time in which they were used:

session number	session goal	games	period of time
first	,acquaintance construction, and problem description	Roulette for number	first week
second	,Thinking, feeling and behavior	weights and ballons	=
third	forming connections with others	family drawing	second week
fourth	changes in home and school	Cooperative and sports games	=
fifth	self-talk	video show (the story)	third week
sixth	expression of emotions	role-play (collecting pictures)	=

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seventh	changes in home and school	Cooperative and sports games	fourth week
eighth	emotional discharge	Ball collecting game	=
ninth	social problem solving	Reverse Role Game Modeling -	fifth week
tenth	,Collaboration sharing, and friendship	movement games	=
eleventh	Training on approval when flattery and compliment	folk games	sixth week
twelfth	training on using the word (I)	Broad Cast News	=
thirteenth	Caring for others and asking about them	Psychodrama	seventh week
fourteenth	Finishing and summarizing	Finishing and summarizing of the story	=

Research variables

The study included the following variables:

- independent variable: play-based group counseling program.
- dependent variable: The level of self-assertiveness of the study members, which is represented by the degrees of the sample members on the selfassertiveness scale.

Study design

In this study, the quasi-experimental approach was used to design groups with pre-and post-measurements, for two experimental and control groups.

The statistical treatment used in this study:

The study relied on the use of descriptive statistics, arithmetic means, standard deviations, and analytical statistics represented by the MANCOVA test.

Research findings

To answer the research question: What is the effect of a play-based group counseling program in increasing the self-assertiveness of Syrian refugee students in Jordan?.

Table (2) illustrates the arithmetic means, standard deviations, and adjusted means of the study sample scores on the self-assertiveness scale according to the group variable (experimental and control)

Table 2 Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and adjusted means of the study sample scores on the self-assertiveness scale:

variable	group	pre		post		Average
		arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	
total self-assertiveness	experimental	-15.36	12.49	13.49	25.70	9.84
		-20.10	17.18	-21.22	17.20	17.6
verbal fluency	experimental	-5.86	3.59	.44	6.36	-.69
		-6.30	3.11	5.93	4.62	-5.84
self-expression without sensitivity	experimental	-4.21	4.11	0.49	5.75	-0.51
		-5.47	4.15	-5.91	6.08	-7.01
avoidance of confrontation public places	experimental	-2.51	3.71	1.82	3.28	1.53
		-2.25	3.44	-1.64	4.81	-1.27
dealing with others	experimental	-4.11	2.92	-.19	5.41	-.39
		-5.22	3.95	-2.23	4.32	-5.94
spontaneity	experimental	1.44	2.76	3.58	4.55	4.23
		.68	3.50	1.19	3.27	1.49
grumbling to alleviate injustice	experimental	-2.54	5.26	14.16	5.15	-1.1
		-1.46	5.06	-2.33	-4.48	-2.74
argument general discussion	experimental	1.41	1.68	3.72	2.72	4.13
		2.45	3.22	3.53	4.06	2.07

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price controversy	experimental	-0.71	1.77	0.14	1.90	-0.18
	controlling	-1.72	1.48	-1.48	1.69	-1.01

Table 3

effect	Htelling Trace	F value	hypothetical freedom	degrees of	Statistical significance
group	1.84	3.21	7	15	0.01

Interpretation of table 3

Table(3) illustrates that differences in the arithmetic means of the self-assertiveness scale between the experimental and control groups are possible. A one-way analysis of variance test was used to examine the effect of the counseling program and the sub-dimensions of the self-assertiveness scale depending on the group variable, and the results are shown in Table(4).

Table (4) The results of the one-way analysis of variance of the effect of the group on the dimensions of the self-assertiveness scale:

source of variance	sum of squares	degree of freedom	mean sum of squares	Calculated F value	Statistical significance
post measurement of verbal fluency	128.81	1	128.18	7.24	014.
post measurement of self-expression without sensitivity	752.45	1	753.45	49.78	002.
avoidance of confrontation public places	69.76	1	69.76	11.39	002.
dealing with others	153.58		153.58	7.74	125.
spontaneity	42.5	1	43.5	5.36	001.
grumbling to alleviate injustice	121.52	1	121.02	3.98	021.
argument general discussion	69.76	1	69.76	12.39	015.

price controversy	5.30	1	5.30	3	84.
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Interpretation of table 4

Table (4) indicated that there were statistically significant differences in all dimensions due to the group effect at the significance level ($\alpha=.05$). Except for a price controversy, we can see this difference in favor of the experimental group by looking at the adjusted dimensional means.

9. Discussion

The study found the effectiveness of the counseling program in increasing self-assertiveness by its dimensions: Verbal fluency, self-expression without sensitivity, avoiding confrontation in a public place, dealing with others, spontaneity, grumbling to get rid of injustice, arguing, or general discussion; while there were no differences between the two groups in the dimension of price controversy, this could be due to the fact that this dimension is measured by one paragraph on the scale.

Also, it stipulates (avoiding price controversy with sellers) because it is one paragraph, and the sample of children did not show statistically significant differences in this dimension.

As for the overall scale and the other seven dimensions, the results were in favor of the experimental group. These results indicate that the group counseling program that was corrected by the two researchers has proven its effectiveness and its effect in increasing the assertive behavior of the experimental group members. This was accomplished by the researchers' observation of an improvement in the behavior of the Syrian children in the experimental group, as well as the results of the post-measurement of the group's members. Teachers and parents were asked about their students' behavior, and their responses revealed a qualitative and quantitative change in their children's behavior, as they appear more confident in themselves, socially proactive, and happy.

During the application, the researchers also noted the extent of the students' enjoyment of the games used, as well as their interaction through active participation in summarizing the events of the story presented in the fifth and fourteenth sessions, as well as their integration with the dramatic cooperative, sports, and popular games used.

The findings of the study are consistent with those of Miqdadi (2003) Al Hawamdeh (2019), Al Qaaima (2018) Elliott (2017) and Al Rifai (2020).

all of which found that play counseling is successful in lowering children's issues

This result is attributed to the efficiency of a play-based group program in enhancing the self-assertiveness of Syrian refugee students, according to the researchers. Play therapy is a technique for directing and controlling a child's behavior in order to enhance his whole physical, mental, social, and emotional development. And the chance to de-stress and re-establish equilibrium (Al-Ali, Ghaith 2013) This was the objective of the eighth session.

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,The program's success, according to the researchers, is due to the inclusion of various techniques activities, and games that appeal to this age group and allow them to express themselves(such as drawing, story, psychodrama, cooperative and sports games, video, and live modeling), which allowed group members to express their emotions. It also allowed students to see themselves and their .difficulties, as well as give an opportunity for social learning through the program's group games 'Individuals have opportunities for interaction and dialogue in group sessions, and students commitment to attend counseling program sessions on time contributed to their benefit from the program.

Playing is important in shaping a child's personality and changing his behavior since it allows him to develop social skills and establish himself. Additionally, during group play, the child is exposed to team spirit and is able to express himself.

10. Conclusion

In light of the results of the study, the researchers recommend the following:

- 1- Employing play-based counseling programs in Syrian students' schools to help students who suffer from a lack of self-assertiveness.
- 2- Improving the counseling services provided to Syrian refugee students in schools.
- 3- Conducting more studies using play-based group counseling programs for different variables that suit different age groups.
- 4- Integrating play-counseling within the counseling services provided by counselors to students in schools.

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