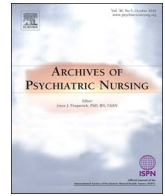


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## The effect of structured education on self-esteem and the suicide probability of male adolescents living in orphanages<sup>☆, ☆☆</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim:** This study aims to observe the effect of structured education provided to improve self-esteem and hope on the self-esteem and the suicide probability of male adolescents living in orphanages.

**Method:** The study was conducted as an intervention study with pretest-posttest follow-up design. The study sample consisted of 30 adolescents living in the Ağrı Orphanage for Boys. Sessions of group education were conducted twice a week for 8 weeks, giving a total of 16 sessions; each session lasted for 60 to 90 minutes. Data were collected using a Personal Information Form, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and the Suicide Probability Scale (SPS). A repeated measures analysis of variance was used for data analysis. Three measurements were performed: the first at the pretest stage; the second at the posttest stage, and the third six weeks after the completion of the program.

**Findings:** The SPS total scores and subscale scores of the study group were found to be statistically significantly lower in the second and the third measurements than in the first measurement. The RSES scores were found to be statistically significantly higher in the second and the third measurements than in the first measurement.

**Discussion:** Because this group of adolescents is deemed at risk, it was suggested that the self-esteem and the suicide probability of the adolescents living in orphanages should be analyzed in more detail, and that preventive approaches should be considered.

### Introduction and aim

Adolescence is defined as a turbulent period in the mental-social development of humans. It is an important period that starts when childhood ends, and prepares the adolescent for adulthood (Beck, Brown, Berchick, Stewart, & Steer, 2006; Richard & Laurence, 2004). Freud defines adolescence as “a period when a temporary role conflict is experienced, and various roles, thoughts, ideals and values are tried, adopted, then they are left and new ones are sought”. Erikson emphasized that the developmental duty of this period is identity development (Richard & Laurence, 2004). Anxiety that arises from some changes during adolescence may cause the adolescent to feel alone in some situations, and sometimes depressive situations may be observed (Mollamehmetoğlu, 2011).

The psychological health of adolescents is a challenging issue, insofar as adolescents tend to have a very sensitive nature due to the characteristic rapid developmental changes they experience during this period of their lives, which contribute in part to determining the

psychopathology of an individual in adulthood. In particular, the studies that have examined the external factors related to the psychological adaptation and psychological symptoms of adolescents have stressed the importance of the function and structure of the family, as well as the attitude of parents.

Adolescents are often striving for independence, but still need the support of parents who will be role models for them and who will protect them from danger when they experience feelings such as pessimism and anxiety (Aşık & Eker, 2014; Kutlu, 2003). However, the adolescents who live in orphanages do not have the family environment that will provide them with this kind of support. Feelings of worry, loneliness, fear etc. are more likely in the adolescents who lack parental support (Ergin, 2002; Haran, 2003; Kulaksızoğlu, 2002).

Studies conducted with the adolescents living in these institutions showed that they tend to more intensely experience problems with physical or social development, being sexually informed, mental development, and future expectation; and that they have lower self-esteem and higher levels of depression, loneliness, hopelessness, and

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continuous anxiety (Bedel & Ari, 2011; Cebe, 2005; Gürvardar, 2001).

The concept of “Self” is an organized pattern of thoughts, emotions and behaviors of all individuals about themselves, which they develop as a result of their interactions with family members and other people within their developmental process (Beck et al., 2006). Individuals develop a vision of their basic characteristics, competencies, and limitations. Social interaction is essential for adolescents and children at developmental ages; however, sometimes the social environment may have a negative effect on their social/mental development, which poses a risk for personality development (Babakhani, 2011; Kulaksızoğlu, 2002).

The message of respect coming from outside causes a mental organization in the children themselves. Adolescents who are respected generally show positive self-esteem, feel confident and can maintain an independent and autonomous stance in the future (Köroğlu & Terapi, 2010; Oğurlu, 2006). Those who are not approved and respected, and who are deprived of family support during their development, may show a lower self-esteem. This may lead to negative results such as less devotion to life, lack of confidence, anxious approaches to the social environment, and risk of failure in the future. The individuals who experience such situations may have various mental problems (Cebe, 2005). Individuals who have a healthy self-esteem can be more flexible when faced with the difficult situations in life, and thus develop effective solutions; they tend to have a lower probability of mental problems (Hiçdurmaz & Öz, 2011). Even if not clinically diagnosed, mental problems may make adolescence a problematic period for some; the worst possible outcome may be suicide (Intihar, 2012).

Although the rate of death from suicide is lower in Turkey than other countries, the fact that 45% of the deaths from suicide are for people between the ages of 15 and 24 indicates the seriousness of the problem. The rate of suicidal ideation, and actual attempts, is at a significant level among our youth (Eskin, 1999; Sayıl, Canat, & Tuğcu, 2003). Many studies have shown that low self-esteem and hopelessness are closely related to depression and suicide (Beck et al., 2006; Gürvardar, 2001; Heisel, Flett, & Hewitt, 2003; Hung Kuo, Gallo, & Eaton, 2004; Neufeld & O'Rourke, 2009; Quatman & Watson, 2001).

The number of children in need of protection in Turkey increases each year; the causes of this include poverty, migration, unemployment, family separation, physical and mental diseases, negligence, and abuse. Unfortunately, treatments are usually provided only after the problem emerges, and the effectiveness, accessibility, and scope of the preventive services are insufficient. Conducting scientific studies to determine and plan the protective and preventive works are of great importance (Dolgun, İnal, & Uğurlu, 2011; Hawton, Salkovskis, Kirk, & Clark, 1989).

The researcher believes that group practices based on the cognitive behavioral approach can be effective in helping adolescents to get to know themselves and to recognize cognitive distortions and negative loading that may lead to problems, and replace them with realistic alternatives. With the information obtained from studies, including the present one, adolescents will gain a more positive perception of self, acquire skills to cope with their problems effectively, and have fewer negative automatic thoughts, all of which will serve to raise a generation of healthy, professional and successful individuals that are at peace with themselves (Dolgun et al., 2011).

The most effective method to reduce the problems caused by mental disorders is “prevention.” Therefore, most developed countries prioritize the protection and improvement of mental health, and the provision of community-based services rather than hospital-based services in their mental health policies (Doğan & Sabancıoğulları, 2011; Magyary, 2002; McBride, 2007). The nursing discipline focuses on health promotion and creating healthy communities. It has been emphasized that nurses can carry out practices to reduce substance abuse or prevent suicides, particularly in schools within the scope of health promotion programs in mental health promotion and prevention of diseases (O'Brien, Huphas, & Kidd, 2006; Townsend, 2005).

Studies have found that community psychiatric nurses form the largest group working in the field of mental health in primary care environments (De Rubies, Tang, & Beck, 2001). Crawford, Jonge, Freeman, and Weaver (2004) stated that community mental health nurses are at more advanced levels than other professionals in their delivery of primary care services for the community; however, the effect of these services should be better documented (Crawford et al., 2004; Demiralp & Oflaz, 2007; Stuart & Laraia, 2001).

This study, conducted in line with these findings, aimed to observe the effectiveness of structured education provided to improve self-esteem and hope on the self-esteem and suicide probability of male adolescents living in orphanages.

## Method

### Sampling

The study population consisted of 36 male adolescents living in Ağrı Orphanage for Boys in November 2012. All of the forms were administered to all adolescents.

The study sample consisted of 30 adolescents who volunteered to participate in this study, scored between 10 and 40 on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, scored between 36 and 144 on the Suicide Probability Scale, and could speak and understand the Turkish language (there were also foreign students in the orphanage). All of the adolescents living in the institution showed great interest in the present study. All of them were included in the study group because they were living in the same environment and could affect each other in terms of the education content. No control group was used in this study.

### Stages of the study

The approval and required permissions to conduct this study were obtained from the Ethics Committee of Atatürk University, Institute of Health Sciences.

The adolescents included in this study were informed about the aims and context of the study through a pre-interview during data collection; and the Personal Information Form was administered to them. The RSES and SPS were administered to 30 adolescents who agreed to participate in this study as a pretest (first measurement) before the intervention. Two groups of 15 adolescents were formed. Then the theoretically trained researcher provided these groups with cognitive behavioral therapy education sessions consecutively twice a week for eight weeks. This structured education program consisting of 16 sessions was aimed at improving hope and self-esteem using cognitive behavioral techniques and was applied following the order:

- reading
- the subjects of discussion
- developing skills
- weekly homework
- revision before progressing to the next section.

The structured education for improving hope and self-esteem was developed through combining many education programs available for adolescents, based on the cognitive behavioral theory to help individuals improve their hope and self-esteem, which have important effects on their relationships with themselves and their environment, as well as their attitudes towards future. Prior to the practice, a preliminary practice was performed with another group, and its results were assessed. Approvals were received from three field experts in terms of the education content, and the program having the following session titles was developed:

1st Session: Introduction, determination of the group rules, information about the process provided to the participants.

2nd Session: Discussion of “emotional traffic congestion” in

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