



EFFECTS OF A CREATIVE DRAMA ASSISTED PSYCHOLOGY COURSE ON STUDENTS' SOCIAL ANXIETY, LEVEL OF EMPATHIC TENDENCY, COMMUNICATION AND ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS

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Abstract:

Some areas of education place students at the centre of learning; for example, creative drama is one of these active learning methods. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of a *creative drama-supported psychology course* on the levels of self-concept, social anxiety, empathic tendency, and communication/assertiveness skills of 2nd year AÇÜ Faculty of Health Sciences Nursing Department students. For this study, a quasi-experimental research model with a control group, pre-test, and post-test design was utilized. The teaching methods suggested by the current psychology curriculum were utilized with both the control and experimental groups, and for the experimental group the identical curriculum was also supported through the creative drama method. The study was conducted on sophomore students enrolled in sections A and B of the psychology course offered in the nursing department of Artvin Çoruh University. Also, the group which was enrolled to take the drama-supported psychology course was selected randomly. It was determined that students in the experimental and control groups were similar in terms of their age, gender, family type, place of residence, level of social anxiety, empathic tendency skills, communication skills, and level of assertiveness. At the outset of the study, the number of students constituting the research group totalled 63, with 28 in the experimental group considered Class A, and

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35 as a control group considered Class B; however, due to attrition from students quitting the university, transferring universities, and not completing the necessary data collection tools the number of participants decreased to a total of 47 with 19 in the experimental group and 28 students in the control group. The lessons planned for the research study were two hours a week over a period of ten weeks. The study data were collected via a "Personal Information Form", "Social Anxiety Scale", "Empathic Tendency Scale", "Communication Skills Evaluation Scale" and "Rathus Assertiveness Inventory". Data from the study were then analysed utilizing SPSS 17.0 through number, average, percentage, "Chi-square Compliance Test", "Mann-Whitney U test" and a "Willcoxon Signed Ranks Test". In addition, expert opinion was obtained regarding the validity and reliability of the study, as well as, the "Cronbach Alpha" was calculated. Furthermore, before beginning the study, an ethics committee approval from the university, written permission of the institution where the study was conducted, and informed consent of the participants were obtained. According to the findings from this study, it was determined that the creative drama-supported psychology course brought about positive increases in the levels of students' self-concept. It was also observed that the social anxiety scores of students in the experimental group who attended creative drama decreased. Also, the scores relating to empathic tendency, communication and assertiveness skill increased for students from the experimental group. Importantly, there was no statistically significant change in the variables in the control group. Finally, the results of this study are considered to contribute knowledge and understanding to the field of creative drama and psychology in terms use of active learning and teaching methods.

Keywords: creative drama, empathic tendency, social anxiety, communication, assertiveness skill

1. Introduction

When educational systems around the world are examined, a clear pattern emerges that education is focused on the accumulation of knowledge among individuals and students as well as improving learners' success both in the present and the future. According to Adigüzel (2007), creative drama is a useful form of learning which provides a variety of important aspects including; improving individuals' creativity, teaches ways of accessing information, can develop a healthy and harmonious personality, removes students from passive learning environments, and provides more effective active learning environments. In the process of creative drama, group members take a topic and/or thought and expand upon it based on their life experiences, through improvisation, role play, and other various techniques. Elements of creative drama include it being carried out in the presence of an experienced educator/leader, being a spontaneous form of learning, maintaining the principle of being in the present, as well as, being based on the idea of pretending. Through the creative drama process the individual start from their foundational core and over time

develop the ability to be ready for a variety of experiences and opportunities in learning and in life (Adıgüzel, 2015; Adıgüzel, 2006; Aytaş, 2013). It is seen through the creative drama process people are able to develop their creativity, imagination, and perceptive powers. Drama lessons focus on improvisation, creative movement, and creative speaking. To develop the skills utilized in creative drama a series of dramatic situations and plays are designed and utilized for the developmental process. As a result, during drama activities the focus is placed on learning general drama and theatre knowledge, as well as, developing the skills of role playing, and conveying feelings/thoughts through character creation, body movement, and dialogue formation (Sağlam, 2014).

One useful and unique aspect of creative drama is that it can be practiced by almost anyone of any age in any space. Also interesting is that the application of drama is not contingent on the required use of any specific types of equipment, materials, and/or texts. What is necessary to carry out creative drama activities are a **group of actors**, an **educator/leader** experienced and knowledgeable in the field and methods of creative drama, a *space* where the group can comfortably carry out their activities, and an **idea** from which the group can dramatically create and improvise. According to Adıgüzel (2015), these four elements – a group of actors, an experienced educator/leader, an available space, and the idea to build upon – are what constitute the fundamental components of creative drama.

Potentially the most important feature of creative drama is the active nature of learning it employs, for example, through the use of improvisation and dramatic play the educational process allows the participants to "learn by doing and living". The use of creative drama in education should not be limited by the use of a specific curriculum, nor be pigeon holed into one discipline or another, as well as, follow solely one form of methodology. Instead, creative drama is versatile and can be utilized in a variety of ways including literacy instruction, for developing self-care skills, and to acquire new social values.

2. Literature Review

Creative drama can be adapted to a variety of content areas and disciplines, such as, mathematics, psychology, social science, and the hard sciences. In Akoğuz (2016), it was pointed out that through role playing, creative drama has been utilized at all levels of education from early childhood classrooms to university level courses, as well as, from special education to adult education.

Past research has also pointed out that creative drama not only enhances the academic achievement of students (Aktepe & Bulut, 2014; Ulubey & Toraman, 2015) but also increases individuals' skills in assertiveness, communication, conflict resolution, empathic tendency, critical thinking, decision making, imagination, and problem solving. Also, the acceptance of differences between individuals, having tolerance, the development of aesthetics, improving self-confidence and developing emotions, thoughts and behaviours are all beneficial effects of creative drama (Gündoğdu & Izgar, 2010; Kempe, 2003; Mages, 2006; Öztürk, 2001; Üstündağ, 1998; Üstündağ, 1995). In

addition, while the extensive use of creative drama in the sensory, behavioural and cognitive domains is well known, there continues to be a need for detailed research regarding the effects of creative drama as it relates to topics in the psychological realm. Based on a review of the past research literature, as well as, with the goal of contributing to future research regarding creative drama, this research investigated the use of creative drama education and its effect on the social skills of students.

3. Material and Method

3.1 Research Type

In this study, researchers utilized a quasi-experimental research model with both a pre-test and post-test.

3.2 Location and Time of the Study

This study was carried out at Artvin Çoruh University during the fall semester of the 2016-17 academic year.

3.3 Population and Sampling

The participants of the study consisted of sophomore level university students enrolled in either Section A or B of a "Psychology Course" within the nursing department of Artvin Çoruh University. The experimental group (e.g., Class A) and the control group (e.g., Class B) were randomly assigned. At the outset of the study the number of students constituting the experimental group was 28 and for the control group 35 students; however, due to student attrition from university drop outs, university transfer, and incomplete data collection information, the final total number of student participates had decreased to an experimental group total of $n=19$, and for the control group $n=28$.

3.4 Collecting Data

To begin, pre-tests were applied to both the experimental and control groups, and based on the comparison of these tests, the two groups of students were determined to be similar in terms of their demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, family structure – small, big or split family, and place of residence). Moreover, empathic tendency levels, social anxiety levels, assertiveness levels and communication skills of the experimental and control groups were measured by the pre-tests and it was determined that the groups were also similar in terms of these variables. Following the pre-test, the students attended the psychology course over a 10-week period, with the experimental group supported through creative drama education while the control group received classic instruction for the same time period. For the experimental group the course was conducted in the presence of two drama leaders. At the end of week 10-week instruction period, the same post-test measurement tool was applied to both the control group and experimental group in order to measure and evaluate their empathic tendency levels, social anxiety levels, assertiveness skills and communication skills.

3.5 Data Collection Tools

A "Personal Information Form", "Social Anxiety Scale", "Empathic Tendency Scale", "Communication Skills Evaluation Scale" and "Rathus Assertiveness Inventory" were utilized in the data collection phase of this study.

3.6 Personal Information Form

A form was utilized to collect various demographic characteristics of participants.

a. Social Anxiety Scale (SAS)

This scale was developed by Özbay-Palancı (2001) in order to determine issues regarding "social anxiety" that were experienced by university students. The scale was developed to measure their competences regarding social skills as well as the anxiety levels they experienced in social situations. The SAS scale consists of three sub-dimensions including; social avoidance (Items: 1, 2, 5, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30), concern for criticism (Items: 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 20, 29), and individual worthlessness (Items: 3, 7, 9, 12, 14, 15, 18, 23). The SAS test employed a Likert-type measurement scale with a range from 0 to 4. The Cronbach Alpha value for the previously developed test was 0.89; which was a change indicating the level of social anxiety had increased (Özbay-Palancı, 2001). In this study, the Cronbach Alpha value of the scale was determined to be 0.84.

b. Empathic Tendency Scale (ETS)

The Empathic Tendency Scale (ETS) was developed by Dökmen (1988) as a measure of the tendency for people to empathize in their daily lives. The ETS scale is comprised of 20 questions and utilizes a Likert-type measure with scores ranging from 1 to 5. Importantly, on the ETS measure the scores for items 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15 were scored in reverse with 1 being positive and 5 being on the negative range. For the ETS measure the minimum score possible was 20, and a maximum score of 100. The total score for the ETS expresses the empathic tendency for each individual participant, and the higher score indicates *higher empathic tendency* while a low score shows reveals a *lower the empathic tendency*. Dökmen (1988) applied the ETS measure to a group of 70 students over a three week period, once at the onset and once at the end of three weeks. In this current study, the Cronbach Alpha value was determined to be 0.82.

c. Communication Skills Evaluation Scale (CSES)

The Communication Skills Evaluation Scale (CSES) was developed in order to more fully understand how individuals evaluate their communication skills. The CSES measure in this study utilized a 5 point Likert-type scale including 25 expressions and scale items were scored from 1 to 5. For this CSES measure, 1 represented *never* and 5 represented *always*. As a result, higher scores on this CSES measure implied the individual evaluated his/her communication skills as positive (Korkut, 2005). After repeating the CSES measure, the reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated at 0.76 ($p < .001$) with the Cronbach alpha value of 0.80 ($p < .001$) for the internal consistency coefficient (Korkut, 1996). In this study, the Cronbach Alpha value for the scale was calculated at 0.74.

Rathus Assertiveness Inventory (RAI): This inventory measure was developed by Rathus as a way of measuring the level of assertiveness in people's relationships (Voltan, 1980). Voltan (1980) had adapted this inventory for Turkish as well as worked to improve upon the inventory's reliability and validity. The RAI measure was comprised of positive items (e.g., 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 18, 20, 21, 22, 25, 27, 28, 29) as well as negative items (e.g., 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 24, 26, 30). For the RAI measure the individual participants were required to answer an inventory which consisted of 6 items each ranging from a score of -3 to +3. In the RAI measure the negative expressions were scored in reverse, and by subtracting the negative points from the positive points a total score for the inventory was reached. The total number of points that could be obtained from the RAI measure varied between -90 to +90. To evaluate the RAI measure, the scores of individuals of +10 or below were considered to be shy, and the scores of +11 or above were considered to be assertive (Öner, 1997). In this study, the Cronbach Alpha value of the RAI measure was calculated at 0.78.

3.7 Analysing Data

The data for this study were analysed through the statistical program SPSS 17.0 with focus being placed on the number, average, percentage, "Chi-square Compliance Test", "Mann Whitney U test" and the "Willcoxon Signed Ranks Test".

3.8 Ethics of the Research

Prior to the study the researchers received ethical committee approval as well as written permission from the institutions where the research was conducted. In addition, informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Comparison of experimental and control groups' demographic characteristics

Socio-demographic Features	Experimental Group		Control Group		Total		Significance
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Age							
20 or less	14	73.7	22	78.6	36	76.6	X ² =0.151
More than 20	5	26.3	6	21.4	11	23.4	P=0.480
Gender							
Male	8	42.1	13	46.4	21	44.7	X ² =0.086
Female	11	57.9	15	53.6	26	55.3	P=0.770
Family Type							
Small	14	73.7	23	82.1	37	78.7	X ² =0.484
Large	5	26.3	5	17.9	10	21.3	P=0.366
Residence Type							
Rural	6	31.6	8	28.6	14	29.8	X ² =0.049
Urban	13	68.4	20	71.4	33	70.2	P=0.538

In the experimental group, the proportion of individuals aged 20 years old or younger was 73.7%, while in the control group it was 78.6%, and for the entire sample as a whole, 76.6% of the participants were aged 20 years old or younger. In the experimental group, the proportion of individuals over 20 years old was 26.3%, while it was 21.4% for the control group and 23.4% in the whole participant sample. Overall, the experimental and control groups both showed similar characteristics in terms of age ($p=0.480$). Other were group demographic characteristic were; the number of male students in the experimental group was 42.1%, and for the control group 46.4%, and as an overall sample the percentage of male students was 44.7%. While the proportion of female students in the experimental group was 57.9%, and 53.6% in the control group as well as an overall participant sample 55.3% of the participants were female. In addition, it is important to point out that in terms of gender the experimental and control groups showed statistically similar characteristics ($p=0.770$). According to the demographic characteristics information gathered, 73.7% of the participants from the experimental group had a small family, while the percentage was 82.1% for the control group, and for the sample overall 78.7% of the participants had a small family. The demographic characteristics reporting the proportion of participants coming from big families revealed 26.3% of the experimental group participants came from big families, while this percentage was 17.9% of control group participants, and for the sample overall the percentage of participants from big families was 21.3%. Once again the demographic characteristics between the experimental and control groups showed statistically similar characteristics; this time in terms of family type ($p=0.366$). As for the residence type determined from the participant demographic characteristics, the percentage of the experimental group living in a rural area was 31.6%, while for the control group it was 28.6%, and for a the participant sample as whole it was 29.8%. Furthermore, the percentage of participants responding that they lived in an urban setting was 68.4% for the experimental group, and 71.4% for the control group, and as a whole for the entire sample the percentage living an urban setting was 70.2%. Finally, both the experimental and control groups exhibited similar characteristics in terms of their residence type; rural or urban ($p=0.538$).

Table 2: Comparison of experimental and control groups' scores on pre-tests

Variable	Experimental Group		Control Group		Total		Significance
	X	Ss	X	Ss	X	Ss	
Social Anxiety Score	40.421	3.490	48.650	2.826	45.319	2.252	U=177.00 p=0.054
Empathic Tendency Score	66.526	1.952	62.821	1.353	64.319	1.147	U=196.00 p=0.129
Communication Skill Score	98.211	3.118	93.821	1.762	95.596	1.650	U=205.00 p=0.185
Rathus Assertiveness Score	-24.368	2.419	-26.893	1.788	-25.872	1.441	U=232.50 p=0.467

In review of the comparison of pre-test scores for both the experimental and control groups, the mean score from the pre-test social anxiety scale for the experimental group was 40.42 ± 3.49 , and for the control group the pre-test SAS score was 48.65 ± 2.83 , while for the sample in general the score was 45.32 ± 2.52 . It was revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups regarding their pre-test social anxiety scale average scores ($p= 0.054$). The scores for the pre-test empathic tendency scale were 66.53 ± 1.95 for the experimental group, 62.82 ± 1.35 for the control group, and for the participant sample in general the score was 64.32 ± 1.15 . In addition, the results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of their mean scores from the pre-test empathic tendency scale ($p= 0.129$). For the pre-test communication skills the mean score for the experimental group was 98.21 ± 3.12 , and for the control group 93.82 ± 1.76 , while the scores for the overall participant sample was calculated at 95.60 ± 1.65 . Also, there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups' mean scores for the pre-test communication skills scale ($p= 0.185$). To continue, the scores for the pre-test Rathus assertiveness inventory score were 24.37 ± 2.42 for the experimental group, 26.89 ± 1.79 for the control group, and for the overall sample group 25.87 ± 1.44 . Again, there appeared to be no statistically significant difference between mean scores on pre-test Rathus assertiveness inventory ($p= 0.467$) for the experimental and control groups. Based on the pre-test results gathered and evaluated for this study, the experimental and control group exhibited similar characteristics in all of the areas investigated including their scores regarding social anxiety, empathic tendency, communication skills and assertiveness skills.

Table 3: Comparison of experimental and control groups' pre and post-test average point differences

Variable		Experimental Group		Control Group		Significance
		X	Ss	X	Ss	
Social Anxiety Score	Pre-Test	40.421	3.490	48.650	2.826	U=129.00 p=0.003
	Post-Test	21.211	2.598	45.286	2.577	
	Z	3.595		1.402		
	P	0.000		0.292		
	Effect	19.211	4.030	3.357	3.126	
Empathic Tendency Score	Pre-Test	66.526	1.952	62.821	1.353	U=130.50 p=0.003
	Post-Test	78.263	2.626	64.429	1.372	
	Z	3.312		1.606		
	P	0.001		0.108		
	Effect	11.736	2.806	1.607	0.922	
Communication Skill Score	Pre-Test	98.211	3.118	93.821	1.762	U=129.00
	Post-Test	111.579	1.503	94.964	1.947	
	Z	3.102		0.674		
	P	0.002		0.500		
	Effect	13.368	3.468	1.143	1.683	

						p=0.003
	Pre-Test	-24.368	2.419	-26.893	1.788	
	Post-Test	-11.211	1.817	-24.214	1.853	
Rathus	Z		3.140		1.436	
Assertiveness	P		0.002		0.151	
Score	Effect	13.158	3.304	2.679	1.821	U=149.00 p=0.011

The comparisons of the experimental and control groups' pre-test and post-test average point differences revealed a wealth of information which led to a better understanding of the effects of creative drama assisted psychology courses on students' social anxiety, emphatic tendency levels as well as their communication and assertiveness skills. To begin, the comparison results revealed that the mean pre-test score for the experimental group regarding their social anxiety scale level was 40.42 ± 3.49 . Importantly, in the post-test the mean score for the experimental group regarding their SAS levels decreased to 21.21 ± 2.60 . Also, the difference between the pre and post-test scores from the experimental group's SAS results was statistically significant ($p= 0.000$). On the other hand, the mean pre-test score for the control group's SAS level was 48.65 ± 2.83 . In addition, control group's mean score for the post-test decreased to 45.29 ± 2.58 ; however, the difference between pre and post-test SAS score was statistically insignificant at ($p= 0.292$). To continue, it is important to consider the social anxiety score for the experimental group (e.g., arithmetic mean of pre-test/post-test difference) was 19.21 ± 4.03 . Furthermore, the effect score for the control group was 3.36 ± 3.13 , and as a result, the difference was determined to be statistically significant in favour of the experimental group ($U= 129.00$; $p= 0.003$). According to the findings from the comparison of the experimental and control groups' pre-test and post-test average point differences, it was recognized that the social anxiety of students who participated in the creative drama supported psychology course significantly decreased, but it was also recognized that this same decrease in social anxiety levels were not observed in the students who were instructed in the classical method.

When the researchers conducted comparisons regarding the pre and post-test scores from the experimental and control groups' empathic tendency scale the following results were revealed. To begin, the mean pre-test score for the experimental group from the empathic tendency scale was 66.53 ± 1.95 . For students from the experimental group, their scores from ETS post-test measure increased to 78.26 ± 2.63 , and as a result, the difference between the pre and post-test ETS scores was determined to be statistically significant ($p= 0.001$). Also, for the control group the pre-test mean score for the empathic tendency scale was 62.82 ± 1.35 . In addition, the comparison revealed that the control group's post-test ETS scores increased to 64.43 ± 1.37 . Although there was an increase in the control group's post-test scores the difference was determined to be statistically insignificant ($p= 0.108$). Further information from the pre and post-test scores revealed that the empathic tendency skills effect score for the experimental group was 11.74 ± 2.81 , and the effect score of the control group was 1.61 ± 0.92 . This comparison information was of importance because the difference between

the two groups was determined to be statistically significant in favour of the experimental group ($U= 130.50$; $p= 0.003$). Again, the comparison revealed vital information in pursuit of better understanding the effects of creative drama assisted psychology courses on students' social anxiety, emphatic tendency levels as well as their communication and assertiveness skills. According to the findings from the ETS measure it was revealed that while the empathic tendency skills of students who received the creative drama-supported psychology course rose significantly (e.g., pre-test 66.53 ± 1.95 to post-test 78.26 ± 2.63), yet there was no significant change in the empathic tendency skill scores of students (e.g., pre-test 62.82 ± 1.35 to post-test 64.43 ± 1.37) who had received the classical-style of instruction.

Researchers continued to evaluate the comparisons of a variety of measures including the scores of the participants' communication skills. For the communication skills scores of the experimental group, the mean pre-test score was 98.21 ± 3.12 , and for the same group the post-test communication skills score was 111.58 ± 1.50 which revealed that the difference in the pre and post-test scores was statistically significant ($p= 0.002$). When evaluating the comparison of the communication skills scores for the pre and post-test scores for control group the researchers determined the were a mean pre-test communication skill score of 93.82 ± 1.76 and the same score for the post-test was 94.96 ± 1.95 , yet the difference between the pre and post-test scores for the control group was statistically insignificant ($p= 0.500$). When reviewing the communication skill effect score for the experimental group it was found to be 13.37 ± 3.47 , and for the control group the effect score was determined at 1.14 ± 1.68 . Importantly, the difference between the effect score for the communication skills measure was statistically significant in favour of the experimental group ($U= 129.50$, $p= 0.003$). Again, the usefulness of providing creative drama assisted psychology courses to students appeared to be revealed when these findings are considered; for example, the communication skills of the experimental group students who attended the psychology course supported by creative drama increased significantly (e.g., pre-test 98.21 ± 3.12 versus post-test 111.58 ± 1.50), yet the same cannot be said for the control group students. The results revealed that the control group students who had been instructed through classical-style methods exhibited no significant change in their communication skill scores (e.g., 93.82 ± 1.76 versus post-test 94.96 ± 1.95).

The final measure which the researchers made pre and post-test score comparisons for was the Rathus Assertiveness Inventory (RAI) score. Comparison results from the RAI score revealed that the pre-test score for the experimental group was -24.37 ± 2.42 while the post-test score for the same group increased to -11.21 ± 1.82 which was a statistically significant difference ($p= 0.002$) in scores. On the other hand the results of the mean pre-test Rathus assertiveness score for the control group was -26.89 ± 1.79 which increased to -24.21 ± 1.85 for the control groups' RAI post-test score; however, the difference between these pre and post-test scores was found to be statistically insignificant ($p= 0.151$). When the RAI effect scores for both the experimental and control groups were compared, the results revealed that the RAI effect score for the experimental group was 13.16 ± 3.30 , and the same score for the

control group was 2.68 ± 1.82 . For these RAI scores the difference between the two groups was found to be statistically significant in favour of the experimental group ($U=149.00$; $p=0.011$). Again, these findings are important because they reveal the effectiveness and utility of providing creative drama assisted psychology courses to students; for example, according to these findings the assertiveness skills of students who attended the creative drama-supported psychology courses increased significantly, yet there was no such increase observed in the assertiveness scores of the control group students who had been instructed through more classical methods.

As discussed earlier when introducing this research investigation it was highlighted that the more traditional role of education, instruction, and learning has been to have students focus solely on the accumulation and regurgitation of knowledge. Unfortunately, this more classical approach does not always provide opportunities for the learners to fully develop themselves into assertive, confident, and empathic people with well-advanced communication skills. This is where the use of creative drama assisted education can play a role in improving the education, instruction, and learning approach taken in the contemporary and future education system. The results of this study can help researchers better understand the applicability and effectiveness of utilizing creative drama assisted instruction for psychology course students in an attempt to not only educate the students regarding the course curriculum but also to provide an opportunity to improving student creativity, improve information accessing skills, develop a healthier and more harmonious personality, and in doing so in such a way that is an active and effective environment.

A discussion of the measure results may clarify not only the role but also the success creative drama assisted instruction and learning can provide to students. To begin, for the results of this study the average score of the post-test social anxiety scale for the experimental group was determined to be significantly lower than the average from the other pre-test scores, but no significant change was determined with the control group's scores. Also, when the effect scores for the experimental and control group were compared (e.g., the post-test score subtracted from the pre-test score), it was revealed that the difference of the pre-test and post-test score averages for the experimental group was significantly lower than the score difference for the control group. Importantly, according to this finding the social anxiety of students from the experimental group who had been instructed through creative drama exhibited a significant decline. This is important because social anxiety is defined as a state of discomfort and tension in which an individual expects to behave in an inappropriate manner, fall into a negative behavioural state, leave a negative impression on others, and be evaluated negatively by others (Eren Gümüş, 2006).

Clearly, social anxiety is the result of an individual's negative self-awareness and inadequate social functioning. In this study, it can be argued that the experimental group's social anxiety had decreased as a result of the positive impact creative drama on strengthening these students' self-perception and overall social skills. Findings from other past studies have also revealed similar results that creative drama strengthens the self-perception of individuals while also increasing their social skills (Altuntaş &

Altınova, 2015; Antepi & Ceylan, 2009). In addition, other studies have shown that as self-esteem increases then levels of social anxiety also decrease (Eriş & İkiz, 2013). This finding may be a result of creative drama being an instruction and learning method that requires active participation, ongoing communication, and problem solving. Creative drama is not a passive form of teaching and learning, instead an individual explores his/her talents, develops self-confidence and respect, acquires the ability to make independent decisions, prepares herself/himself for different situations in life, and develops social skills such as communication, empathy, assertiveness and problem solving. As a result, it appears from the results of this study that the individuals who successfully participate in creative drama courses should exhibit higher levels of social skills as well as experience less social anxiety.

In past research literature it has been determined that participation in creative drama activities, such as, education-type courses can lead to improvements in individuals' social skills development; for example, people can improve upon their empathic tendency through creative drama participation (Altınova & Adıgüzel, 2012; Çifci & Altınova, 2012; Freeman et al., 2003; Kara & Çam, 2007; Salmon, 2003). Importantly, similar findings from the empathic tendency scale were also determined for this study with the experimental groups' mean score for the post-test empathic tendency scale being significantly higher than the average for the pre-test score. In addition, when the effect values of the experimental and control groups were compared, it is observed that the effect value of the experimental group was higher at a statistically significant level than the effect value of the control group. As a result of this finding it can be stated that the utilization of creative drama assisted education does significantly influence the empathic tendency skills of participating students. These results also help researchers understand that the active and dynamic approach to creative drama learning through hands-on experiences is a key to success for this educational approach. Furthermore, the active process of creative drama allows the students to explore, observe, and understand their feelings as well as the feelings of others by placing themselves in someone else's position and situation through the acting and role-playing process. The creative drama process also allows participants to take fleeting moments in time and/or short periods of time to repeatedly explore, debate, criticize, experiment with and revive feelings and ideas through a didactic process that hopefully not only aids in their learning but also guides them to develop an improved understanding of themselves and others and ultimately be better prepared to take on real life events which transpire throughout their lives.

In other areas of this study, the various measures utilized to better determine the success and usefulness of creative drama assisted education also followed a similar trend in providing data which positively supported the use of creative drama assisted education. For example, in this study the experimental group's post-test communication skill score was significantly higher than the CSES pre-test score; which proved to be an important finding because no significant change was observed for the same measure in the control group. In addition, when the effect scores from the communication skills inventory scale (e.g., the post-test score subtracted from the pre-test score) were

examined, it was determined that the effect score of the experimental group was higher than the control groups' effect score which proved to be a statistically significant finding. As a result of this finding, it was observed that the utilization of creative drama assisted instruction in a university level nursing course significantly increased the communication skills of the participating students. This is a finding which is in agreement with past research of the same topic; for example, past studies have determined that creative drama does in fact aid in the development of communication skills (Çiftçi & Altınova, 2017; McNaughton, 2004; Mages, 2006; Öztürk, 2001). To continue, Arslan et al. (2010) reported that educational instruction integrated with creative drama increased the communication skills of university-level students studying in a department of child development program. In the end, the creative drama assisted learning process is considered to be effective in the development of students' communication skills because this active learning process provides opportunities for the students to freely express their feelings and thoughts through intense interaction with themselves as well as with their fellow group members.

Finally, the effectiveness and usefulness of creative drama assisted instruction has been clearly documented and there are a variety of measures which were utilized to better understand the viability of this educational approach including inventory scale measures, such as; social anxiety, empathic tendency skills, communication skills, and level of assertiveness. As a result, the more complete understanding of creative drama's effectiveness and usefulness can be transferred into further real-world applicable use; for example, creative drama has been recognized as a way of developing students' social skills which can improve upon their ability to cope with shyness and entrepreneurship skills. In past research literature, it has been stated that creative drama is a convenient method to increase the social skills of students who have weak social skills (Samancı & Diş, 2014; Kara & Çam, 2007; Tannıseven & Aykaç, 2013). This study supported the findings from past research literature through observations of improvements in the assertiveness skills of students who participated in the creative drama course. The RAI measure scores for this study were also insightful because the study results revealed that the Rathus assertiveness inventory post-test score for the experimental group was significantly lower than the pre-test score, yet no significant change was observed for the same measure scores in the control group. Furthermore, when the study results were analysed and comparisons were made between the assertiveness inventory scores of the experimental and control groups it was determined that the effect value of the experimental group was significantly lower than that of the control group which in effect means that the assertiveness skills of the students who had participated in the creative drama assisted learning course significantly increased meaning they had improved their assertiveness.

5. Conclusions

The following conclusions were provided based on the findings presented in this study regarding the implementation of a creative drama assisted psychology course for

university-level nursing students and the role of utilizing this alternative active form of educational learning and teaching had on the course participants social anxiety and empathic tendency levels as well as their communication and assertiveness skills. The over-riding conclusions of this current study were that while the social anxiety scores of the students in the experimental group who had participated in the creative drama assisted psychology course decreased; their scores for empathic tendency, communication skills, and overall assertiveness level increased. On the contrary, the course participants from the control group involved in the classical-type of educational instruction exhibited no significant change among the same aforementioned variables of social anxiety, empathic tendency, communication skills, and assertiveness.

5.1 Recommendations

The results from the current study clearly point to the effectiveness and usefulness of incorporating and sustaining the use of creative drama assisted instruction in this study course as well as in any variety of educational curriculum types and at any level of education. Along with here, it has also been previously suggested that a variety of course-types in higher education, such as, psychology should be carried out and supported through the use of creative drama instruction. Making changes in the curriculum and classroom environment as well as giving more credence, opportunity, and a place for creative drama applications in a variety of courses is not only recommended but should also be researched to a greater extent in the future. In doing so, the use of creative drama in educational settings can aid in the improvement of students social anxiety skills, empathic tendencies, and their communication and assertiveness skills all while continuing to provide the expected level of learning and instruction. In this respect, students will likely not be the passive audience of more classical-type instruction but instead will become active learners in the construction of their knowledge base all the while continuing to develop improvements in their personal and social selves.

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