



The Effect of Solution-Focused Group Counseling with Psychological Counselor Candidates on Solution-Focused Tendency and Satisfaction with Life

Rezzan Gündoğdu¹ 

¹Assoc. Prof, Faculty of Education, Aksaray University, Turkey

Email: gundogdurezzan@hotmail.com



Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of solution-focused brief group psychological counseling (SFBGC) on Guidance and Psychological Counseling students' solution-focused tendencies and satisfaction with life. The study employed a pretest posttest follow-up test design, a quasi-experimental design. The study sample consisted of students majoring in Guidance and Psychological Counseling in Aksaray University's Faculty of Education during the 2016-2017 academic years. "Solution-Focused Inventory (SFI)" developed by Grant *et al.* (2012) and translated into Turkish by Karahan-Şanal and Hamarta (2015) was used to measure the study's dependent variables. Afterwards, "Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)", developed by Diener *et al.* (1985) and adapted to Turkish by Köker (1991) was administered. The data were analyzed with SPSS 18 package program. Mann-Whitney U Test was used to reveal the difference between the pretest, posttest and follow-up test scores of the experimental and control groups, and Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was utilised to reveal the differences within the groups for repeated measurements. As a result, at the end of a six week (SFBGC), experimental group's Satisfaction with Life and Solution-Focused Inventory scores increased from pretest to posttest. At the end of the follow-up sessions, the change in the scores continued similarly. According to the results, the program is effective.

Keywords: Solution-focused brief group counseling, Psychological counseling candidates, Life satisfaction, Problem disengagement, Goal orientation, Resource activation.

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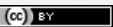
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Contribution of this paper to the literature

This study contributes to the existing literature by investigating the effects of solution-focused brief group psychological counseling (SFBGC) on Guidance and Psychological Counseling students' solution-focused tendencies and satisfaction with life.

1. Introduction

Satir (2001) stated that individuals need to find their own inner treasures that will activate their own values. Therefore, the one's current situation and his or her future are significant in solution-focused approach rather than his/her past (Hoyt, 1990). Based on people's resources and resilience, solution-focused approach is about how these can be used for purposeful and positive change. Although there has been an increasing interest in solution-focused approach, there are only a handful studies in which the approach is applied (Grant *et al.*, 2012).

Goal orientation, the first sub-dimension of solution-focused thinking, refers to the active use of self-regulation, and goal identification and application in order to construct solution (Grant, 2011). The second sub-dimension of solution-focused thinking, i.e., resource activation, emphasizes the capture of personal potential and the use of individual's existing strengths and resources (Grant, 2011). The third sub-dimension is problem disengagement. As an external disengagement from presenting problem, problem disengagement frees the individual and is a significant factor necessary for him/her to pursue goals (Grant, 2011).

Determining a positive and effective goal is a prerequisite for solving problems in solution-focused approach (Weiner-Davis, 1996). Well-formulated goals are the basis of solution-focused therapy. This approach has developed and used a number of techniques that make it easier for the client to "talk about the solution" rather than "talking about the problem" (Nichols and Schwartz, 1998). At the end of the sessions, the psychological counselor gives a series of praises to the client according to the outcome of the conversation. Various tasks can be given to the client. This is called "cheerleading". These assignments may be asking them what they want to continue in their lives or what is already working for them (Rothwell, 2005). In solution-focused brief group counseling (SFBGC), clients should determine what they want instead of what they do not want. In SFBGC theory, determining the goal is the most important turning point. Determining the goal is important in terms of determining the course of the psychological counseling. The theory emphasizes the client's resources and aims the clients to reach the desired results to solve their problems (O'Connell, 2001). Instead of diagnosing the client, it brings out functional behaviors that will lead the individual to a solution. It gives the courage to try different solutions instead of behaviors that will not be beneficial (Walter and Peller, 1992). Clients evaluate how far they have come to reach the solutions they want by using a scale. They are also asked what needs to be done to solve their problems and what the next step should be (Corey, 2005). Each session covers a period of approximately one hour. Consultation sessions are recorded similar to other consultations, and a mirrored room is used. What makes these sessions different than other consultations is that a break is given during the session and a message is given at the end (DeJong and Berg, 1998). The main purpose of SFBGC is to guide the client to talk more about solutions rather than focusing on problems in order to better understand and analyze their problems, and to help the client to focus as fast as he or she can on the solutions that work or may work (Doğan, 2000).

Many theories define life satisfaction differently. Neugarten (cited in Diener *et al.* (1985)) defined life satisfaction as a result arising from the comparison of the individual's wishes and what he or she has. It was also associated not with the individual's satisfaction with an event but with his or her life in general. In accordance with the cognitive theory, Diener *et al.* (1985) defined life satisfaction as the individual's cognitive judgment regarding his or her own life standards. In this respect, life satisfaction focuses on how much the individual can achieve his or her life-related goals. It is stated that life satisfaction will increase as the distance between what the individuals want and what they have decreases (Diener *et al.*, 2003). According to Shin and Johnson (1978) life satisfaction is the individual's ability to choose for his or her own life in line with his or her personal preferences and desires. When evaluating the life satisfaction of individuals, it is more accurate to evaluate according to the standards that each individual sets for himself or herself. According to Suldo *et al.* (2006) life satisfaction refers to cognitive evaluations of the individual regarding his or her family, social, business and academic life and life quality.

Life satisfaction consists of three dimensions: satisfaction regarding the individual's current life, satisfaction from his or her past and satisfaction regarding his or her expectations of future life (Diener *et al.*, 1999). Karataş (1988) listed the characteristics of individuals with high life satisfaction as having a positive sense of self, having a positive outlook on life, enjoying activities in daily life, having goals and having belief in achieving goals, and accepting responsibility of their past lives.

During *emerging adulthood*, which covers the ages between 18 and 25, individuals are neither adolescents nor adults (Arnett, 2000). It is a period different from adolescence and adulthood. Individuals in this period neither leave behind the addiction of their childhoods nor accept the adult responsibilities altogether. During emerging adulthood, individuals experience more stress and negative emotions than the individuals in other developmental periods because of instability, indecision, negativity, acting impulsively, identity seeking, being a transition to adulthood, and having too many of options (Schulenberg and Zarrett, 2006). Many young people go to university during this age period. The young individual during the emerging adulthood finds himself or herself having some challenging experiences and if these are not dealt, they may turn into important mental health problems in the long term (Akin, 2009). In the short term, they may affect life satisfaction negatively. University years are one of the critical time periods where many problems are experienced. During this period, also called emerging adulthood, university students encounter many negativities or problems in their daily lives. These emerging adults now have to solve their problems almost by themselves. With the start of university life, young people face new challenges. These challenging experiences might cause some damages to their ability to solve problems and to their life satisfaction. At this point, it is important to provide protective mental health services to young people to make them focus on solutions for the problems they face and to increase life satisfaction. For the preventive mental health services to work, it is necessary to know the problems and conduct preventive studies. Nowadays, mental

health research body on how the individuals deals with the problems they encounter has increased considerably (Hefferon and Boniwell, 2011).

The Solution-Focused Brief Psychological Counseling (SFBGC) aims to make the client aware of his or her potential. Relevant literature revealed that raising awareness contributes positively to the regulation of cognitive and emotional responses (Ramel *et al.*, 2004; Bowen *et al.*, 2007; Jain *et al.*, 2007). The lack of studies conducted with university students majoring in Guidance and Psychological Counseling is noteworthy. Therefore, this study will fill a gap in the field. Based on all these explanations, the purpose of SFBGC, a plan developed and carried out by the author, is to enable the participants to put the solution-focused thinking and behavior into effect and thus to increase their life satisfaction. In line with this purpose, the study hypotheses are:

1. There will be a significant increase in the solution-focused inventory scores of the individuals in the experimental group participating in the solution-focused brief psychological counseling compared to those in the control group.
2. There will be significant differences in the solution-focused inventory scores of those in the experimental group participating in the solution-focused brief psychological counseling when the post-test and follow-up measurements are compared.
3. There will be a significant increase in life satisfaction scores of the experimental group participating in the solution-focused brief psychological counseling compared to those in the control group.
4. There will be significant differences in the life satisfaction scores of those in the experimental group participating in the solution-focused brief psychological counseling when the post-test and follow-up measurements are compared.

2. Method

The study employed a pretest, posttest and follow-up design, a quasi-experimental design with the purpose of testing the effect of the solution-focused brief group psychological counseling on guidance and psychological counseling undergraduate students' development of life satisfaction and solution-focused tendencies. In social sciences and educational sciences, the quasi-experimental design differs from experimental design in that the experimental and control groups cannot be selected through random assignment. The need to conduct a study with participants of a certain age, gender or with some life experiences may hinder the selection of random assignment (Bulduk, 2003). Pretest, posttest and follow-up test control group design was used in the study. Pretest-posttest control group design is a widely used mixed design. Participants are measured before and after the experimental procedure regarding the dependent variable (Büyüköztürk, 2007).

3. Study Design

The study employed a pretest, posttest and follow-up design, a quasi-experimental design, in order to test the effect of SFBGC on guidance and psychological counseling undergraduate students' solution-focused tendencies and life satisfaction. Pretest-posttest control group design was used in the study. Participants are measured before and after the experimental procedure regarding the dependent variable (Büyüköztürk, 2007). In the study, control group was used to reveal the change in-between that took part in the SFBGC as the experimental one. The independent variable of the study is the SFBGC whereas the dependent variable of the study is life satisfaction and solution-focused tendencies.

4. Data Collection Tools

In the study, "Personal Information Form" was used first to obtain students' demographic information. In the form, students' age, gender and socio-economic status were asked. "Solution-Focused Inventory" and "Satisfaction with Life Scale" were used to measure the dependent variables of the study.

Solution-Focused Inventory (SFI): The scale developed by Grant *et al.* (2012) was translated into Turkish by Karahan-Şanal and Hamarta (2015). The scale aims to measure whether the individual has a tendency towards solution-focused thinking. The scholars utilized SPSS 16.00 and AMOS programs for the validity and reliability analysis of the SFI. As a result of the linguistic equivalence analysis of the Solution-Focused Inventory, the correlations between the Turkish and the original form scores were .92 for the *Problem Disengagement* subscale, .94 for the *Goal Orientation* subscale, and .91 for *Resource Activation* subscale. Test-retest reliability over 16 weeks was .84. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was .84. Unlike the sample determined for the construct validity of the study, the criterion-related validity was conducted on a total of 197 university students, 66 males and 137 females. For criterion-related validity, the Cronbach alpha value of the Satisfaction with Life Scale was .86, the Cronbach alpha value of Psychological Well-Being scales were .85, Cronbach alpha value of a scale measuring resilience was .78, and the Cronbach alpha value of Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 was .89. The fit index values were RMSEA=.072 CFI=.94, IFI=.94, TLI=.91, GFI=.93, AGFI=.87. These fit index values indicate that the model fits well. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were performed for the construct validity of the Solution-Focused Inventory. The inventory's reliability was examined using internal consistency methods. As a result of the Exploratory Factor Analysis used to examine the scale's construct validity, a three-factor structure consisting of 12 items explaining 61% of the total variance was obtained. All of the items under the factors exhibited a distribution consistent with the factors in the original form. Since the factor loadings of the 12 items under these three factors were above .50, no item was removed from the inventory after factor analysis. In addition, when the fit index limits for the confirmatory factor analysis is taken into consideration, the model has a good fit, and the original factor structure of the scale fits with the Turkish version's factor structure. The reliability study of the inventory is continuing, and the internal consistency coefficient of the scale is sufficient based on the data obtained from construct validity works. The internal consistency coefficients obtained from the sample applied for the construct validity are .77 for the problem Disengagement subscale, .84 for the Goal Orientation subscale, and .70 for the resource Activation subscale. When all the validity results are taken into consideration, similar values were found between the scale's original and Turkish version (Grant, 2011; Grant *et al.*, 2012; Karahan-Şanal

and Hamarta, 2015). In the study, the measurement tool was administered to 125 students, and the SPSS 18 package program took 119 students' scores into consideration. The internal consistency coefficient was .79 for the overall total score, .68 for the Problem Disengagement subscale, .80 for the Goal Orientation subscale and .69 for the Resource Activation subscale. The Solution-Focused Inventory is a 12-item paper pencil scale filled by the individual. The inventory is a 6-point Likert scale with items ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (6). The subscales and items of the Solution-Focused Inventory are as follows: 1. Problem Disengagement: 1., 2., 4., 5., 2. Goal Orientation: 9., 10., 11., 12., 3. Resource Activation: 3., 6., 7., 8. There are reverse scored items in the scale. These are items 1,2,4, and 5. The subscales can be scored separately but also the total score can be calculated. The minimum score that can be obtained from the scale is 12, and the highest score is 72. The high score indicates that the individual's change towards solution-focused thinking increases.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS): Developed by Diener *et al.* (1985) the scale was translated into Turkish by Köker (1991) and Yetim (1993). The scale was developed to determine the satisfaction of individuals from their lives. In the original study, Diener *et al.* determined the reliability of the scale as Cronbach Alpha .87 and criterion-related validity as .82. In the Turkish version of the scale, Köker (1991) found that the item-test correlations ranged from .71 to 0.80. Test-retest consistency coefficient was .85 as a result of the administration of the scale again after three weeks. After the item analysis, the correlation between the scores obtained from each item of the scale and total scores was sufficient. Test-retest reliability coefficient of the scale was .85. Yetim (1993) found the Cronbach's Alpha value to be .86 for the reliability of the scale and test-retest reliability to be .73. In this present study, measurement tool was administered to 125 students, and the SPSS 18 package program took 119 students' scores into consideration. Internal consistency coefficient was found .82. The 5-item scale developed to measure life satisfaction is a 7-point Likert type scale. The items range from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). The minimum score that can be obtained from the scale is seven, and the highest score is 35. The high score indicates that the individual's satisfaction with life is high.

5. Study Group

"Personal Information Form" was used to form the study's experimental and control groups, and "Solution-Focused Inventory" and "Satisfaction with Life Scale" were used to measure the dependent variables of the study. The study participants consisted of students who were studying at the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling of Aksaray University's Faculty of Education during the academic year of 2016-2017. The scales were administered to a total of 125 volunteer undergraduate students, 83 (67.5%) females and 40 (32.5%) males during the academic year of 2016-2017. The number of female students majoring in Guidance and Psychological Counseling undergraduate programs is generally more than the number of male students. This was taken into account during the formation of the experimental and control groups. While the experimental group was formed, the students were asked whether they wanted to participate in the SFBGC. The students who wanted to participate voluntarily in the procedure were included in the experimental group. According to the scores of the Solution-Focused Inventory, 38 students appropriate to participate in the study were selected. Afterwards, among these 38 students, 12 (six females, 50.0%; six males, 50.0%) volunteer students who had free times were determined as the control group. The experimental group equally consisted of 12 students (six females, 50.0%; six males, 50.0%). The age range of the students was between 20 and 26 while the age average was 21. All of the students came from middle class families. The experimental and control groups met one week before the start of the SFBGC. In this meeting, information on SFBGC's procedure and the consent forms for the study were provided. The students in the control group were not given any information because they were not exposed to any implementation.

6. Data Analysis

For the statistical analysis of the study data, nonparametric techniques were used since the number of participants constituting the experimental group participating in the SFBGC and the control group which did not undergo any procedure was 12. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test and Mann-Whitney U Test was used to compare the experimental and control students' scores of the Satisfaction with Life Scale and the Solution-Focused Inventory. The data was analyzed with SPSS 18 package program.

7. Experimental Procedure

SFBGC developed by the author in line with the purpose of this present study is a plan based on the solution-focused therapy theory. SFBGC was planned as six sessions; each session lasted between 90 to 120 minutes. The purpose of the program was to raise the participants' awareness towards their feelings, thinking and behaviors, to enable them to achieve the behavioral goals they set in the first session, and to help them achieve their goals by doing works towards their change and development. No work was carried out with the control group.

The content of the program prepared by the author was as follows:

Week 1. Meeting, building adaptation and trust, determining the behavioral goals. Asking the participants to think about their behavioral goals for a week as an assignment.

Week 2. Review of the determined behavioral goals (asking the participants to determine their goals during this session if they have not determined yet). Revising the behavioral goals again if the participants want to change them. Revealing the present situation of the participants and what they want in the future using a rating scale.

Week 3. Revealing the exception times/situations regarding the participants' goals. Asking the miracle question. Giving assignments according to the answers.

Week 4. Reviewing the miracle question and assignments. Repeating and/or updating the assignments for the scale to change.

Week 5. Cheerleading for the effort shown to do the assignments for the scale to change and writing messages and notes to the participants.

Week 6. Questioning whether or not they have reached their behavioral goals and ending the program.

The Mann Whitney -U test was used to determine the differences between the experimental and control groups before starting the experimental study for the Solution-Focused Inventory total and subscale scores (problem disengagement, goal orientation, resource activation) and life satisfaction. There was a statistically significant difference between the pretest scores of the experimental and control groups in terms of the problem disengagement subscale ($U= 39.500, p>.05, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experiment)}= 14.42 \pm 2.68, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}= 16.58 \pm 2.15$), goal orientation subscale ($U= 62.000, p>.05, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experiment)}= 17.23 \pm 2.77, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}= 15.58 \pm 4.05$), resource activation subscale ($U= 54.000, p>.05, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experiment)}= 16.66 \pm 2.74, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}= 18.25 \pm 3.82$) and the overall total ($U= 58.500, p>.05, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experiment)}= 48.33 \pm 6.71, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}= 50.42 \pm 7.77$). Based on this, the groups were considered equal to each other before starting experimental procedure in terms of dependent variable. There was not a statistically difference between the SWLS pretest scores of the experimental and control groups ($U= 39.500, p>.05, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experiment)}= 17.25 \pm 6.16, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}= 18.83 \pm 6.98$). Based on this, the groups were considered equal to each other before starting experimental procedure in terms of dependent variable.

8. Findings

The arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the experimental and control groups' solution-focused tendencies and life satisfaction before the experiment, after the experiment and in the follow-up measurements are presented in Table 1 below.

Table-1. The arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the experimental and control groups.

Experimental	n	\bar{X}	sd	Control	n	\bar{X}	sd
Premeas1problem disengagement	12	14.42	2.68	Premeas1problem disengagement	12	16.58	2.15
Premeas2goal orientation	12	17.25	2.77	Premeas2goal orientation	12	15.58	4.05
Premeas3resource activation	12	16.66	2.74	Premeas3resource activation	12	18.25	3.82
Premeas Total	12	48.33	6.71	Premeas Total	12	50.42	7.77
Postmeas1problem disengagement	12	16.41	1.78	Postmeas1problem disengagement	12	14.25	2.96
Postmeas2goal orientation	12	18.66	1.82	Postmeas2goal orientation	12	15.50	3.65
Postmeas3resource activation	12	19.58	2.84	Postmeas3resource activation	12	16.92	3.99
Postmeas Total	12	54.66	5.80	Postmeas Total	12	47.17	10.09
Followmeas1problem disengagement	12	16.83	3.56	Followmeas1problem disengagement	12	13.67	4.06
Followmeas2goal orientation	12	17.75	2.30	Followmeas2goal orientation	12	15.16	3.43
Follow3resource activation	12	19.58	2.39	Follow3resource activation	12	16.68	3.63
Followmeas Total	12	54.16	7.01	Followmeas Total	12	49.92	10.39
Pre lifesat	12	17.25	6.16	Pre lifesat	12	18.83	6.98
Postlifesat	12	24.91	4.25	Postlifesat	12	16.75	6.41
Followlifesat	12	24.00	4.22	Followlifesat	12	18.80	6.96

Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was used to determine whether the experimental group's and control group's solution-focused tendencies and life satisfaction showed significant difference before the experiment, after the experiment and in the follow-up measurements. Mann-Whitney U test was also used to determine whether the means were statistically significant. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test and the Mann-Whitney U test are presented in Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 below.

Hypothesis 1. The findings regarding the hypothesis 1 of "There will be a significant increase in the solution-focused inventory scores of the individuals in the experimental group participating in the solution-focused brief psychological counseling compared to those in the control group." are presented in Table 2.

Table-2. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test results of the experimental and control group students' pre-post-follow-up test scores of Solution-Focused Inventory total and subscales.

1.Problem disengagement	Posttest-pretest	N	Rank mean	Rank total	Z	p
Experimental	Negative rank	2	4.25	8.50	-2.429*	0.015
	Positive rank	10	6.95	69.50		
	Equal	0				
Control	Negative rank	8	7.06	56.50	-2.097*	0.036
	Positive rank	3	3.17	9.50		
	Equal	1				
1.Problem disengagement	Follow-up test-posttest	N	Rank mean	Rank total	Z	p
Experimental	Negative rank	3	5.00	15.00	-.895	0.371
	Positive rank	6	5.00	30.00		
	Equal	3				
Control	Negative rank	5	6.00	30.00	-.892	0.372
	Positive rank	4	3.75	15.00		
	Equal	3				
2.Goal orientation	Posttest-pretest	N	Rank mean	Rank total	Z	p
Experimental	Negative rank	2	4.25	8.50	-1.949*	0.051
	Positive rank	8	5.81	48.50		
	Equal	2				
Control	Negative rank	6	4.75	28.50	-.103	0.918
	Positive rank	4	6.63	26.50		
	Equal	2				

2.Goal orientation	Follow-up test-posttest	N	Rank mean	Rank total	Z	p
Experimental	Negative rank	8	6.44	51.50	-1.678	0.093
	Positive rank	3	4.83	14.50		
	Equal	1				
Control	Negative rank	3	4.50	31.50	-0.410	0.682
	Positive rank	7	7.83	23.50		
	Equal	2				
3.resource activation	Posttest-pretest	N	Rank mean	Rank total	Z	p
Experimental	Negative rank	0	0.00	0.00	-2.956*	0.003
	Positive rank	11	6.00	66.00		
	Equal	1				
Control	Negative rank	5	5.70	28.50	-1.491	0.136
	Positive rank	3	2.50	7.50		
	Equal	4				
3.resource activation	Follow-up test-posttest	N	Rank mean	Rank total	Z	p
Experimental	Negative rank	5	6.00	36.00	-272	0.786
	Positive rank	6	6.00	30.00		
	Equal	1				
Control	Negative rank	3	5.83	17.50	-070	0.944
	Positive rank	5	3.70	18.50		
	Equal	3				
4.SFI-overall total	Posttest-pretest	N	Rank mean	Rank total	Z	p
Experimental	Negative rank	0	0.00	0.00	-3.074*	0.002
	Positive rank	12	6.50	78.00		
	Equal	0				
Control	Negative rank	7	7.07	45.50	-1.471	0.141
	Positive rank	4	4.13	16.50		
	Equal	1				
4.SFI-overall total	Follow-up test-posttest	N	Rank mean	Rank total	Z	p
Experimental	Negative rank	6	6.25	37.50	-401	0.688
	Positive rank	5	5.70	28.50		
	Equal	1				
Control	Negative rank	4	8.75	35.00	-325	0.753
	Positive rank	8	5.38	43.00		
	Equal	0				

*based on negative rank.

Table 2 shows that there were significant differences between the solution-focused inventory pretest, posttest and follow-up test scores of the students in the experimental group. A significant difference was found when the pretest and posttest *problem disengagement* subscale scores were examined ($z=-2.429$, $p<.05$). When the rank mean and total of the difference scores are taken into consideration, the observed difference was in favor of the posttest score. These results indicate that SFBGC was effective in increasing the participant students' problem disengagement thinking styles. However, there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the students in the control group ($z=-2.20$, $p<.05$). The table shows that the control group showed a drop in the posttest rank mean scores in the problem disengagement subscale. According to Table 2, posttest rank means of the students in the experimental group was higher than the students in the control group. In addition, the table shows no significant difference between the solution-focused inventory posttest and follow-up test scores of the students in the experimental group ($z=-.895$, $p>.05$). The rank means of the follow-up test demonstrate that the scores were increasing. This indicates that the difference in the posttest continued. These results prove that problem disengagement thinking styles of the students participating in the SFBGC continued from the posttest to the follow-up test. However, no significant difference was found between the posttest and follow-up test scores of the students in the control group ($z=-.892$, $p>.05$). This demonstrates that there was no difference in the problem disengagement thinking styles of the students in the control group.

Table 2 presents that there were significant differences between the solution-focused inventory pretest, posttest and follow-up test scores of the students in the experimental group. A significant difference was found when the pretest, posttest and follow-up *goal orientation* subscale scores were examined ($z=-1.949$, $p<.05$). When the rank mean and total of the difference scores are taken into consideration, the observed difference was in favor of the posttest score. These results prove that SFBGC was effective in increasing the participant students' goal orientation thinking styles. However, there was not a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the students in the control group ($z=-.103$, $p<.05$). Table 2 shows that control group showed a drop in the posttest rank mean scores in the problem disengagement subscale. According to Table 2, posttest rank means of the students in the experimental group was higher than the students in the control group. Furthermore, Table 2 shows no significant difference between the solution-focused inventory posttest and follow-up test scores of the students in the experimental group ($z=-1.678$, $p>.05$). This indicates that the difference in the posttest continued. These results prove that goal orientation thinking styles of the students participating in the SFBGC continued from the posttest to the follow-up test (three months). However, no significant difference was found between the posttest and follow-up test scores of the students in the control group ($z=-.410$, $p>.05$). This demonstrates that there was no difference in the goal orientation thinking styles of the students in the control group.

Table 2 shows that there were significant differences between the solution-focused inventory pretest, posttest and follow-up test scores of the students in the experimental group. A significant difference was found when the pretest, posttest and follow-up *resource activation* subscale scores were examined ($z=-2.956$, $p<.05$). When the rank mean and total of the difference scores are taken into consideration, the observed difference was in favor of the

posttest score. These results prove that SFBGC was effective in increasing the participant students' resource activation thinking styles. However, there was not a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the students in the control group ($z=-1.491, p<.05$). Table 2 shows that control group showed a drop in the posttest rank mean scores in the goal orientation subscale. According to Table 2, posttest rank means of the students in the experimental group was higher than the students in the control group. Furthermore, Table 2 shows no significant difference between the solution-focused inventory posttest and follow-up test scores of the students in the experimental group ($z=-.272, p>.05$). The rank mean of the follow-up test demonstrates that the scores stayed constant. In other words, the difference in the posttest continued. These results prove that resource activation thinking styles of the students participating in the SFBGC continued from the posttest to the follow-up test (three months). However, no significant difference was found between the posttest and follow-up test scores of the students in the control group ($z=-.070, p>.05$). This demonstrates that there was no difference in the resource activation thinking styles of the students in the control group.

Table 2 shows that there were significant differences between the solution-focused inventory pretest, posttest and follow-up test scores of the students in the experimental group. A significant difference was found between the pretest and posttest total scores of the Solution-Focused Inventory ($z=-3.074, p<.05$). When the rank mean and total of the difference scores are taken into consideration, the observed difference was in favor of the posttest score. These results prove that SFBGC was effective in increasing the participant students' SFI total scores. However, there was not a significant difference between the pretest and posttest total scores of the students in the control group ($z=-1.471, p<.05$). Table 2 shows that rank means of the SFI total scores showed a drop from the pretest to the posttest. According to Table 2, posttest rank means of the students in the experimental group was higher than the students in the control group. Furthermore, Table 2 shows no significant difference between the solution-focused inventory posttest and follow-up test total scores of the students in the experimental group ($z=-.401, p>.05$). The rank mean of the follow-up test demonstrates that the scores nearly stayed constant. In other words, the difference in the posttest continued. These results prove that SFI total scores of the students participating in the SFBGC continued from the posttest to the follow-up test (three months). However, no significant difference was found between the SFI posttest and follow-up test total scores of the students in the control group ($z=-.315, p>.05$). This demonstrates that there was no difference in the SFI total scores of the students in the control group.

Hypothesis 2. The findings regarding the hypothesis 2 of "There will be significant differences in the solution-focused inventory scores of those in the experimental group participating in the solution-focused brief psychological counseling when the post-test and follow-up measurements are compared." are presented in Table 3.

Table-3. Mann-Whitney U test results of the experimental and control group students' Solution-Focused Inventory posttest and follow-up test.

1.Problem Disengagement	Groups	N	Rank Mean	Rank Total	U	p
Posttest	Experimental	12	15.38	184.50	37.500	0.04*
	Control	12	9.63	115.50		
Follow-up test	Experimental	12	15.50	186.00	36.000	0.03*
	Control	12	9.50	114.00		
2.Goal Orientation	Groups	N	Rank Mean	Rank Total	U	p
Posttest	Experimental	12	15.75	189.00	33.000	0.02*
	Control	12	9.25	111.00		
Follow-up test	Control	12	15.00	180.00	42.000	0.08
		12	10.00	120.00		
3.Resource Activation	Groups	N	Rank Mean	Rank Total	U	p
Posttest	Experimental	12	15.38	184.50	37.500	0.04*
	Control	12	9.63	115.50		
Follow-up test	Control	12	15.67	188.00	34.000	0.02*
		12	9.33	112.00		
4.SFI Total	Groups	N	Rank Mean	Rank Total	U	p
Posttest	Experimental	12	15.25	183.00	39.000	0.05*
	Control	12	9.75	117.00		
Follow-up test	Control	12	15.17	182.00	40.000	0.06
		12	9.83	118.00		

According to Table 3, there were significant differences between SFI total and subscale scores of the experimental group students participating in the SFBGC and the control group students in favor of the experimental group at the end of a 6-week experimental procedure. First, a significant difference was found in the problem disengagement subscale in favor of the experimental group ($U=39.500, p>.05, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experimental)}=16.41 \pm 1.78, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}=14.25 \pm 2.96$). In addition, this significant difference continued in the follow-up test ($U=36.000, p>.05, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experimental)}=16.83 \pm 3.56, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}=13.67 \pm 4.06$). A significant difference was also found in favor of the experimental group in the second subscale, goal orientation ($U=3.000, p>.05, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experimental)}=18.66 \pm 1.82, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}=15.50 \pm 3.65$). This significant difference continued in the follow-up tests ($U=42.000, p>.05, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experimental)}=17.75 \pm 2.30, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}=15.16 \pm 3.43$). A significant difference was also found in favor of the experimental group in the third subscale, resource activation ($U=37.500, p>.05, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experimental)}=19.58 \pm 2.84, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}=16.92 \pm 3.99$). This significant difference continued in the follow-up tests ($U=34.000, p>.05, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experimental)}=19.58 \pm 2.39, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}=16.68 \pm 3.63$). Finally, analysis of the Solution-focused inventory total scores showed a significant difference in favor of the experimental group ($U=39.500, p>.05, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experimental)}=54.66 \pm 5.80, \bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}=47.17 \pm 10.09$). However, although SFI follow-up test total scores were

nearly constant, no statistically significant difference was found ($U=40.000$, $p>.05$, $\bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experiment)}=54.16 \pm 7.01$, $\bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}=49.92 \pm 10.39$). Since the total scores remained constant, it can be said that the effect of the experimental procedure continued. The findings show that the SFBGC was effective in increasing solution-focused attitude. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 3. The findings regarding the hypothesis 3 of "There will be a significant increase in life satisfaction scores of the experimental group participating in the solution-focused brief psychological counseling compared to those in the control group." are presented in Table 3.

Table-4. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test results of the experimental and control group students' Satisfaction with Life Scale pretest, posttest and follow-up tests.

Satisfaction with Life	Posttest-Pretest	N	Rank mean	Rank total	Z	p
Experimental	Negative rank	0	0.00	0.00	-3.07*	0.002
	Positive rank	12	6.50	78.00		
	Equal	0				
Control	Negative rank	11	6.05	67.00	-2.204**	0.031
	Positive rank	1	11.00	11.00		
	Equal	0				
Satisfaction with Life	Follow-up test-Posttest	N	Rank mean	Rank total	Z	p
Experimental	Negative rank	5	7.90	39.50	-.580	0.562
	Positive rank	6	4.42	26.50		
	Equal	1				
Control	Negative rank	3	6.00	18.00	-0.969	0.333
	Positive rank	7	5.29	37.00		
	Equal	2				

*Based on negative rank.

**Based on positive rank.

In Table 4 shows that there was a significant difference between Satisfaction with Life Scale pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group ($z=-3.07$, $p<.05$). When the rank mean and total of the difference scores are taken into consideration, the observed difference was in favor of the posttest score. These results indicate that SFBGC was effective in increasing the life satisfaction of the students who participated in the experimental procedure. However, there was a significant difference between the Satisfaction with Life Scale pretest and posttest scores of the control group students, too ($z=-2.20$, $p<.05$). When the arithmetic mean of the life satisfaction of the students in the control group were examined, it was determined that life satisfaction scores of the control group students decreased.

According to Table 4, posttest rank means of the students in the experimental group was higher than the posttest rank means of the students in the control group. Also, Table 4 shows that there was a significant difference between the Satisfaction with Life Scale posttest and follow-up test scores of the students in the control group ($z=-.580$, $p>.05$). According to the rank mean of the follow-up test, the difference determined in the posttest continued. These results prove that life satisfaction of the students participating in the SFBGC continued from the posttest to the follow-up test (three months). However, no significant difference was found between the SWLS posttest and follow-up test total scores of the students in the control group ($z=-.969$, $p>.05$). No difference in the increase of students' life satisfaction in the control group.

Hypothesis 4. The findings regarding the hypothesis of "There will be significant differences in the life satisfaction scores of those in the experimental group participating in the solution-focused brief psychological counseling when the post-test and follow-up measurements are compared." are presented in Table 3.

Table-5. Mann-Whitney U test results of the experimental and control group students' Satisfaction with Life Scale posttest and follow-up test results.

Satisfaction with Life	Groups	N	Rank Mean	Rank Total	U	p
Posttest	Experimental	12	16.67	200.00	22.000	0.04*
	Control	12	8.33	100.00		
Follow-up test	Experimental	12	15.08	181.00	41.000	0.07
	Control	12	9.92	114.00		

According to Table 5, there was a significant difference between the SWLS scores of the experimental group students participating in the SFBGC and the control group students in favor of the experimental group at the end of a 6-week experimental procedure ($U=22.000$, $p>.05$, $\bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experiment)}=24.91 \pm 4.25$, $\bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}=16.75 \pm 6.41$). This significant difference continued based on the follow-up test scores ($U=41.000$, $p>.05$, $\bar{X} \pm Sd_{(experiment)}=24.00 \pm 4.22$, $\bar{X} \pm Sd_{(control)}=18.80 \pm 6.96$). These findings demonstrate that SFBGC was effective in increasing life satisfaction. Thus, the hypothesis was accepted.

9. Discussion

When the study findings are examined, the following results are revealed from the pretest, posttest and follow-up test measurements of the students in the experimental and control groups: The experimental group students participating in the SFBGC are compared with to the students in the control group, and significant differences are found between the Satisfaction with life Scale pretest and posttest score means in favor of the experimental group. These findings show that the SFBGC was effective in increasing the life satisfaction scores of the students in the experimental group. The results also show that the SFBGC was effective in increasing the total scores of the Solution-Focused Inventory and the scores of its three subscales, problem disengagement, goal orientation and

resource activation. 10 weeks after the SFBGC, which has produced positive results in the study, follow-up measurements were conducted to determine the procedure's long-term effects on the increase of life satisfaction and solution-focused tendencies. Therefore, 10 weeks after the end of six-week experimental procedure, follow-up measurements were taken by administering the SWLS and SFI to the students again. According to the results, the positive effects of the SFBGC on the experimental group continued.

In their descriptive study on the use of solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT), [Gingerich and Peterson \(2013\)](#) discussed 43 studies conducted on the effectiveness of SFBT. These 43 studies they examined were on children's academic and behavioral problems (14 studies), adult mental health (10 studies), marriage and family (six studies), occupational rehabilitation (five studies), health and aging (five studies), and crime and delinquency (four studies). The number of studies in which SFBT had a positive effect on solving individuals' problems was 32. In other words, 74% of the studies ([Gingerich and Peterson, 2013](#)) examined found a positive effect. Likewise, [Kim \(2008\)](#) conducted a meta-analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of solution-focused brief psychological counseling. For this purpose, he examined 22 studies. The results supported that the solution-focused brief psychological counseling can be used as an effective approach to the treatment of behavioral problems. SFBGC is preferred because it is brief and effective in solving problems, which makes it a therapy model that provides important advantages. Solution-focused therapies have been used in family and couple therapy, sexual therapy, sexual abuse cases, mental health, substance abuse, eating disorders, treatment of schizophrenia, individual and group counseling, therapeutic fields, social care services, prisons and workplaces ([Smith, 2010](#)). [Iveson \(2002\)](#) stated that solution-focused brief psychological counseling has proven to be effective in all types of problems from its first use to the present. [Rothwell \(2005\)](#) expressed that a solution-focused brief therapy approach focuses on the strengths of clients and has a therapeutic effect in the shortest possible time.

Studies on solution-focused therapy reveal the following results: A university student who can set appropriate and realistic goals, apply the solutions he or she found and use his or her potential in the right way can display academic achievement, establish healthy interpersonal relationships and see the positive aspects of his or her life ([Perry, 2014](#)). [Hosseinpour et al. \(2016\)](#) determined that solution-focused thinking is effective in individuals adapting to various situations. [Neipp et al. \(2015\)](#) found an increase in university students' positive affection, self-efficacy, and ability to reach their goals after answering solution-focused questions.

In [Grant \(2013\)](#) study, university students described the real life problems they wanted to solve and were asked solution-focused questions. [Grant \(2013\)](#) revealed that solution-focused questions increased positive affection, self-efficacy and the ability to achieve goals. In another study, [Pakrosnis and Cepukiene \(2015\)](#) drew attention to the fact that university students might experience high levels of psychological distress and that this distress might lead to difficulties in psychological, social, or academic functioning at different levels. [Pakrosnis and Cepukiene \(2015\)](#) determined that solution-focused self-help caused positive changes in these university students' lives. [Meydan \(2013\)](#) put forth the positive effect of solution-focused approach on students where they experienced lower level depression and their levels of goal reaching increased. There is a body of literature with students on how solution-focused thinking positively affected anxiety, stress, depression, failure in solving problems ([Gingerich and Peterson, 2013](#); [Grant, 2013](#); [Valve et al., 2013](#); [Davies et al., 2014](#); [Reddy et al., 2015](#); [Bilge and Engin, 2016](#)) alcohol addiction ([Spilsbury, 2012](#)) aggression tendencies and overcoming the negative consequences of aggression ([Sarica-Bulut, 2008](#); [Atasayar et al., 2010](#)) anger control ([Tuna, 2012](#)) behavioral problems ([Corcoran, 2006](#); [Franklin et al., 2008](#)) exam anxiety ([Işlek, 2006](#); [Atasayar and Bilgin, 2010](#)) academic difficulties and increasing academic achievement ([Daki and Savage, 2010](#); [Utterback, 2011](#)) sense of self ([Grant and O'Connor, 2010](#)) looking at life with hope and decreased submissive behaviors ([Köktuna, 2007](#)) psychological well-being ([Seidel and Hedley, 2008](#)) interpersonal relationships ([Reimer and Chatwin, 2006](#)) coping with social phobia ([George, 2008](#); [Ateş, 2014](#)) increasing assertiveness ([Ateş, 2015](#)) increase in solving problems and decrease in exam anxiety ([Işlek, 2006](#); [Sarica-Bulut, 2008](#)) decrease in rumination levels ([Sarıçam, 2014](#)) decrease in burnout levels ([İlbay, 2014](#)). In a study, [Grant \(2008\)](#) revealed that while solution-focused therapy increased the participants' levels of determining and reaching goals, it did not change their levels of psychological well-being. Literature on solution-focused brief therapy/psychological counseling revealed that solution-focused brief group psychological counseling and psychoeducation programs produce positive results domestically and abroad.

Solution-focused life coaching was effective in people receiving help pursuing their goals, and in raising their levels of psychological well-being and hope ([Green et al., 2006](#)). The solution-focused program ([Grant, 2007](#)) implemented led to high levels of goal achievement, positive affection, hope and psychological well-being in participants. [Kabasakal and Baş \(2013\)](#) determined that higher life satisfaction is associated with the individual's ability to perceive himself or herself efficient in problem solving. In their study, while the teacher candidates' SWLS scores increased, their Problem Solving Scale scores decreased. Similarly, in this present study, SFBGC was effective in increasing and maintaining participants' life satisfaction. In addition, there was a positive increase in the solution-focused total score, problem disengagement, goal orientation and resource activation, and this continued similarly in the follow-up measurements. Therefore, findings of related literature support the findings of this study. The participants volunteering for the procedure, attending to all the sessions and not resisting the content of the procedure also contributed greatly to these findings.

[Ryff \(1989\)](#) stated that life satisfaction and happiness are composed of six subscales. These are positive self-assessment, personal development, having a life purpose, positive interpersonal relationships, regulating the environment to satisfy his desires and needs, and making your own decision. Although there are different definitions of life satisfaction, it is defined as the cognitive judgment of the individual about the standards of his or her life ([Diener et al., 1985](#)). This focuses on how the individual can reach his or her life goals. Life satisfaction will increase as the conflict decreases between what the individuals have and what they want to have ([Diener et al., 2003](#)). Life satisfaction does not cover only the individual, it includes the individual's experiences, the impressions of others about his or her experiences and the general view of his or her life ([Diener et al., 1999](#)). In their study, [Bailey and Snyder \(2007\)](#) examined the level of optimism, hope and life satisfaction of university students, and emphasized that life becomes more attractive for the students if they feel confident that they can achieve a goal. Another study conducted with university students found that life satisfaction of the people who approached life

more optimistic and evaluated the situations they encountered positively was higher (Gülcan and Nedim, 2014). At this point, it can be said that psychological counselor candidates will live their life more satisfyingly if they believe they can achieve their goals, focus on the problems and activate their resources.

Finally, psychological counselor candidates who graduate from Guidance and Psychological Counseling undergraduate programs in Turkey work as school psychological counselors. For this reason, an elective course that will teach the theoretical and practical part of the solution-focused brief counseling approach to the students can be added to the curriculum. In addition, it is seen that experimental studies regarding solution-focused therapy is not sufficient in Turkey.

10. Recommendations

According to the study results, the effects of group counseling programs based on different psychological counseling theories can be examined at different grade levels of guidance and psychological counseling undergraduate programs. Literature has revealed that long programs are much more effective than brief programs. In future studies, additional sessions can be implemented periodically to reinforce the results, and the long-term effects can be examined. Psychological Counselor (school psychologist-school counselor) candidates can be taught solution-focused psychological counseling in guidance and psychological counseling undergraduate programs to use in group procedures. For example, elective courses can be offered.

From a broader perspective, it is necessary to increase the number of studies conducted at different universities and at different grade levels. The implementation processes of many other psychological counseling theories such as the implementation process of the solution-focused psychological counseling theory, may be included in the psychological counseling undergraduate programs. Solution-focused counseling and other psychological counseling methods and techniques are the theories that psychological counselors need to practice on themselves before they start their career. It should be kept in mind that psychological counselor candidates should first undergo a psychological counseling process themselves. This is one of the most important weak points in psychological counseling education in our country. For this reason, it is believed that it would be beneficial for each counselor candidate to go through such a process (individual or group counseling). Thus, academics in the university and psychological counselors working in the field play an important role in the implementation of such similar psychological counseling theories.

11. Limitations

As in every study, this research also has its own limitations. This study is limited to the students studying at Aksaray University Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling. In the study, because the participants hold the belief that they were expected to work in group effectively during the experimental procedures carried out and therefore they knew that the researcher expected a positive behavior change in themselves, the participants might have an excessive effort to show it explicitly. Despite this fact the lack of a placebo group in order to control this effect is considered to be another limitation (Gümüş, 2002). Finally, not administering subsequent follow-up measurement is also a limitation of the study. This prevents the evaluation of the longer-term effects of the study results. It is believed that it would be more appropriate to take these limitations into consideration for future studies.

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