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Self-knowledge and Adolescence

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Abstract

In this study, self-knowledge of 9th grade students was examined. The study sample consisted of 30 (15 girls and 15 boys) 9th grade students from middle socio-economic level. The schools and students involved in the research were selected randomly; however students that were known to have suffered traumas or psychological problems were excluded from the study in consultation with the class teachers and school guidance counselors. The materials used were therapeutic cards (Mythos cards, Habitat cards, Persona and Personita cards - the cards were approved for use by adolescents by five field specialists), white A4 papers and pastel paints. The students were then asked to choose cards and afterwards create drawings and explain their stories that they draw. The drawings were evaluated by the researcher. It was seen that the adolescents identify themselves by using their future professions (their dreams), associate important events in their lives with their own birth dates and educational lives, describe happiness as spending more time with friends, anger as being alone more frequently, studying and being directed by others, trust as families and unity/solidarity and insecurity as loneliness and hypocrisy.

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1. Introduction

Adolescence is a period of life in which the sense of 'self' changes profoundly (Vazire & Wilson, 2012). This is because in this period, young person faces many biological, cognitive, psychological and social changes (Steinberg, 1987) as childhood is left behind and adulthood is initiated with new duties and responsibilities. In addition to the physical changes of puberty, along with the cognitive, emotional and sexual changes, social factors also affect the development of the adolescent. All of these situations often reveal coping difficulties within the adolescent's life (Plumber, 2005). The ability of an adolescent to fulfill his expected roles shows that he is growing as a healthy individual (Plumber, 2005); and another important area of development in this process is self-knowledge

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development of the adolescent (Cuahdaroglu, 1986). In this period, feelings related to self-knowledge gain importance (Steinberg, 1987).

Self-knowledge is knowledge or understanding of one's own nature, abilities, and limitations; insight into oneself (Wordnik,2014). The individual is obviously not a passive entity in the process of formation and development of self-knowledge. He is influenced by the feedback he receives from others, depending on the richness and the breadth of his experiences and his mental capacity, and interprets them accordingly. Self-knowledge has a major impact on daily behavior, success in school and even success at work .

The Self- knowledge is a depiction of the answers to such questions as “What can I do?”, “What are my judgment values?”, “What can I expect from life?”, “What are my wishes and desires?”. The person better answers about his/her expectations from the future, the conditions of trust-insecurity, happiness-anger and important events in their lives as the person gets to know himself/herself better (Genctan,1998). Better self-knowledge allows the adolescent to take better decisions and thus deciding on life quality and life changing issues can have an effect on future career(Vazire & Wilson,2012). The aim of this study is to provide descriptions of adolescents about self-knowledge.

2. Method

The study sample consisted of 30 (15 girls and 15 boys) 9th grade students from middle socio-economic level. The schools and students involved in the research were selected randomly; however students that were known to have suffered traumas or psychological problems were excluded from the study in consultation with the class teachers and school guidance counselors. The materials used were therapeutic cards (Mythos cards, Habitat cards, Persona and Personita cards), white A4 papers and pastel paints. The cards were approved for use by adolescents by five field specialists.

In this study, data were collected with open ending questions in 4 sessions with students. As data were gathered in 4 different sessions, the number of students can vary between sessions due to sickness of the student or for other reasons of absenteeism.

Session 1: Students reviewed the Mythos cards laid open on the table and selected each card representing happiness and anger for themselves. Then they drew why this card represented happiness or anger and explained verbally to the researcher. 26 students attended this session.

Session 2: Students reviewed the Habitat cards laid open on the table, selected one card for trust and completed their drawing. They selected one card for insecurity, placed it on the picture and completed the drawing by adding necessary details. Later, they explained why they choose these cards for trust and insecurity and described what they thought of. 20 students attended this session.

Session 3: Students selected from the Persona and Personita cards on the table for What I want to be. They made drawings and explained why. 30 students attended this session.

Session 4: In this session, each student received a card and was asked to draw his/her life line, to mark important events in their lives on this line and to write down their names.

Explanations of the students were subject to content analysis among qualitative data analysis method and they were construed by assigning themes according to the results. The content analysis is a coding and digitalization process of what people tell and write according to prescribed instructions (Balci, 2009: 189). This operation within the scope of the content analysis is based on combining similar data under certain themes and arranging and interpreting them in a way to be understood by the reader (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008: 227).

3. Results and Discussion

The explanations of the students to the questions in the sessions were analyzed. Explanations for each sessions were evaluated separately.

3.1. Descriptions About Happiness and Anger:

In this session, 26 students described happiness and anger for themselves. Considering the findings about happiness, it was observed that happiness was described by 9 students as spending time with friends, 3 students as acting freely with their friends, 3 students as small surprises and gifts, 2 students as being successful and 2 students as hope. Remaining 7 students described it as being rich, using time efficiently, everything not related with school, music, computer, science and justice. Considering the findings about anger, it was described by 10 students as being lonely, 9 students as studying, 5 students as being told what to do by others, 2 students as hypocrisy. The findings of the study by Ozdemir et al. (2005) emphasized that spending enjoyable time with friends and not being under stress are important for adolescents. Ozatca (2009) stated loneliness is a reason for unhappiness for adolescents.

3.2. Descriptions About Trust and Insecurity:

In this session, 20 students described trust and insecurity for themselves. Descriptions of the students are provided in Table 1:

Table 1. Descriptions About Trust and Insecurity

Student	What is being told with the drawing	Reason for selecting the card for trust	Reason for selecting the card for insecurity	What comes to mind with trust	What comes to mind with insecurity
1	Ability to overcome insecurity (trust)	Representing unity and support	Dislike fighting	Family	Negative situations
2	Obstacles cannot ruin happiness (trust)	Representing what he/she knows	Disappointment	Family	What he/she does not know
3	Those giving and not giving trust	Representing unity and solidarity	Representing what he/she does not know	Family	What he/she does not know
4	Forest offers peace (trust)	Nature	There is an old and sick man on the card	Happiness	Worry
5	Desire to know himself/herself	Associated with freedom	Associated with worry	Freedom	Worry
6	Desire to know himself/herself	Stars	Bad things ruining good things	Nature	Nightmares
7	Desire to know himself/herself	Representing trust despite danger	No reason	Self	Physical obstacles
8	Desire to know himself/herself	Representing what he/she knows	Associated with conditions threatening health	Confidentiality principle	Hypocrisy
9	Those giving and not giving trust	Clean environment and silence being represented on the card	Urban life and environmental pollution represented on the card	Being successful	Not being able to do anything for a bad event
10	Being peaceful at home while it rains and thunders (trust)	Like rain	Being uncomfortable with hot and fire	Family	Loneliness
11	Trust	Cars	Representing loneliness	Family	Loneliness
12	Concepts of trust and insecurity	Representing not being alone (unity)	Representing loneliness	Unity, solidarity	Loneliness
13	Ability to provide trust in all environments	Representing truth and honesty	Representing lies	Truth	Lie
14	Trust	Representing not being alone (unity)	Representing loneliness	Family	Unknown
15	Self knowledge	Representing conveying to future	Representing pessimism	Family	Loneliness
16	Self knowledge	Representing unity and solidarity	Representing obstacles	Family	Courses
17	Desperate life	Dolphins not being	Representing	Close friendship ties	Hypocrisy

18	conditions Self knowledge	harmful Representing unity and solidarity	loneliness Representing loneliness	Family	Hypocrisy
19	Concepts of trust and insecurity	Representing unity and solidarity	Representing loneliness	Family	Loneliness
20	Self knowledge	Representing unity and solidarity	Representing loneliness	Family	Hypocrisy

Considering the table, 8 students described in the drawing the desire for self knowledge, 7 drew themes based on trust, 4 considered trust and insecurity and 1 described insecurity. Considering reasons for choosing the card for trust, 8 students responded the card represented unity and solidarity and 2 students said the card described what they knew. All students gave negative conditions as reasons for selecting the card for insecurity. 7 of 20 students said the card described loneliness. 11 students responded my family to the question what comes to mind with trust and 2 students emphasized unity. For insecurity, 5 students said loneliness, 4 students hypocrisy and 3 students said they did not know. The adolescent not feeling alone is very important for family and friend affairs in adolescence (Ozatca, 2009). This period is very important in terms of social relations, the adolescent needs relationships filled with trust (Kulaksizoglu, 2001). Family maintains importance in adolescence and has an important effect on the personality of the adolescent. Research conclusions point out to the importance of trustable parent and friend affairs in positive development of the adolescent (Bayraktar, 2007).

3.3. *Me That I Want To Be:*

30 students attended this session. All students drew about their future professions. It is important that students described themselves with possible future professions. Family expectations have a shaping role on the ideals of adolescents (Patrikakou, 2005). Families want their children to have a good profession (Patrikakou, 2005). Social cues from the environment (e.g. expectations of the family) are efficient of self assessment of the adolescent (Sebastian et al., 2008).

3.4. *Life Line:*

In this session, each student received a paper and was asked to draw his/her life line, to mark important events in their lives on this line and to write down their names. All of 26 students in this session marked their birth dates and start of school life (elementary, high school etc.). 8 of the students marked the birth date of their sibling, 8 central examination dates, 2 meeting dates and 1 starting to do sports. According to research results of Tapa, primary expectations of families from adolescents are about school life (Tapa, 2013). The main concern of the parent is that their children study, graduate from a good school, "save himself/herself", "stand on their own feet" (Tapa, 2013). It is believed that this condition puts an effect on what students care for in life and cause students to give priority to school in their life cycle.

4. Conclusion

As a result of the study, it was seen that adolescents identify themselves by using their future professions (their dreams), associate important events on their life line with their birth date and school lives, describe happiness as spending more time with friends, anger as being alone, studying and being guided by others, trust mostly as their families and unity/solidarity and insecurity as loneliness and hypocrisy.

This is a rather preliminary study. It is possible to obtain larger scale findings about self knowledge of adolescents based on the results of this study. Studies can be extended to cover different age groups.

It is interesting that adolescents emphasized starting school life and exam dates as important events for themselves. It is believed that students should be reminded that life is not only about school and examinations and it should be emphasized that there are different opportunities to develop their personalities and important events are not only limited with school life. If we do not want to live in a society made up of both socially and emotionally alone individuals who do not think of anything but their own future, ignore social values and be afraid of being

alone, it is recommended to offer students life styles to be intertwined with the society, to contribute to others and to feel valuable, and to give importance to social values.

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