



Effectiveness of Psychodrama on Exam Anxiety in Students with Different Coping Styles

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of psychodrama in reducing test anxiety among high school students with different coping styles, including problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance coping.

Methods and Materials: The study employed a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test design with a control group. The sample consisted of 32 female high school students in Ahvaz, selected through multistage cluster random sampling and randomly assigned to experimental (n = 16) and control (n = 16) groups. The experimental group participated in 12 psychodrama sessions, while the control group received no intervention. The Sarason Test Anxiety Scale (1985) was used to measure test anxiety levels, and the Lazarus Coping Strategies Questionnaire (1985) assessed coping styles. Data were analyzed using multivariate and univariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA and ANCOVA), controlling for pre-test scores.

Findings: The results indicated a significant effect of psychodrama on test anxiety across different coping styles. Students with an emotion-focused coping style in the experimental group exhibited a significant reduction in test anxiety (adjusted post-test mean = 93.45) compared to the control group (adjusted post-test mean = 111.59) ($p < 0.001$). However, students with problem-focused and avoidance coping styles in the experimental group experienced an increase in test anxiety, with adjusted post-test means of 101.50 and 49.14, respectively, compared to 87.08 and 38.52 in the control group ($p < 0.001$). These results suggest that psychodrama is particularly effective for students with emotion-focused coping styles but may initially increase anxiety in those with problem-focused and avoidance coping styles.

Conclusion: Psychodrama is an effective intervention for reducing test anxiety, particularly among students with emotion-focused coping styles. However, its impact on students with problem-focused and avoidance coping styles suggests that therapeutic approaches should be tailored based on coping mechanisms.

Keywords: Psychodrama, test anxiety, coping styles, high school students, emotion-focused coping, problem-focused coping, avoidance coping.

1. Introduction

Test anxiety is a pervasive issue among students, often leading to cognitive, emotional, and physiological distress that negatively impacts academic performance and psychological well-being. Defined as an individual's reaction to the pressures of an evaluative situation, test anxiety encompasses various emotional and behavioral responses, including worry, fear of failure, and avoidance behaviors. The increasing prevalence of test anxiety among high school students has prompted researchers to explore effective interventions to mitigate its effects and promote academic resilience. Among the therapeutic approaches available, psychodrama has emerged as a promising intervention, offering an experiential and action-oriented method to address emotional distress and maladaptive coping mechanisms. Psychodrama, as a group-based therapeutic approach, facilitates emotional expression, enhances self-awareness, and provides a structured environment for students to confront and reframe their test-related anxieties (Örnek, 2023).

Psychodrama is rooted in the therapeutic use of role-playing, guided enactment, and dramatic exploration to help individuals process emotions and develop new perspectives on their experiences. Originally developed by Jacob L. Moreno, psychodrama has been applied in various clinical and non-clinical settings to address psychological distress, improve social skills, and enhance coping strategies. Research indicates that psychodrama is particularly effective in reducing anxiety, depression, and stress-related disorders, making it a suitable intervention for students experiencing test anxiety (Erbay et al., 2018). A study conducted by Wang et al. (2020) examined the effects of psychodrama on depression and anxiety in Chinese samples and found that participants exhibited significant reductions in symptoms following intervention, underscoring the therapeutic potential of psychodrama in educational contexts (Wang et al., 2020). Similarly, a meta-analysis by Yu et al. (2022) highlighted that psychodrama, when combined with pharmacological treatments, improves coping strategies and cognitive control, further supporting its application for managing anxiety and stress-related disorders (Yu et al., 2022).

The role of coping styles in managing test anxiety is crucial, as students exhibit different coping mechanisms in response to academic stressors. Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model of stress and coping classifies coping strategies into three main types: problem-focused, emotion-

focused, and avoidance coping. Problem-focused coping involves actively addressing the stressor through problem-solving and cognitive restructuring, whereas emotion-focused coping centers on managing emotional responses without directly altering the stressor. Avoidance coping, on the other hand, entails disengaging from the stressor, often leading to maladaptive outcomes such as procrastination and withdrawal (Shirani Bidabadi et al., 2022). Research suggests that students with emotion-focused coping styles are more prone to experiencing heightened test anxiety, while those with problem-focused coping styles demonstrate greater academic resilience (Polat, 2023).

Given the interplay between coping styles and test anxiety, it is essential to assess the efficacy of psychodrama in students with different coping mechanisms. Previous studies have demonstrated that psychodrama enhances adaptive coping strategies by fostering emotional regulation, self-reflection, and cognitive restructuring (Kabusi, 2023). In a study by Parlak and Oksuz Gul (2021), psychodrama was utilized as a group therapy intervention to promote forgiveness and emotional processing among university students, leading to significant improvements in emotional awareness and psychological resilience (Parlak & Oksuz Gul, 2021). Likewise, Wieser (2023) investigated the impact of psychodrama and arts therapy on psychology students and found that these approaches facilitated emotional expression, improved stress management, and strengthened coping mechanisms (Wieser, 2023).

Psychodrama has also been shown to be effective in enhancing self-efficacy and reducing academic stress. A study by Permana and Suwarjo (2022) examined the impact of psychodrama on academic self-efficacy in high school students and found that participants exhibited increased confidence in their abilities, reduced performance anxiety, and improved problem-solving skills (Permana & Suwarjo, 2022). Similarly, Munte and Arsini (2024) highlighted the role of psychodrama in fostering a positive self-concept among students, demonstrating that participants who engaged in group psychodrama sessions experienced enhanced self-esteem and academic motivation (Munte & Arsini, 2024). These findings suggest that psychodrama can be a valuable intervention for addressing test anxiety by promoting adaptive coping strategies and strengthening students' self-perception.

In addition to psychological benefits, psychodrama has been associated with physiological improvements in stress response. A study by Erbay et al. (2018) explored the effects of psychodrama on cortisol levels in patients with depression

and found that participants exhibited reduced cortisol secretion, indicative of lower physiological stress responses (Erbay et al., 2018). This aligns with research by Zayman and Simsek (2023), which demonstrated that psychodrama effectively reduces anxiety levels and improves stress-coping mechanisms in academic professionals (Zayman & Simsek, 2023). These physiological findings support the notion that psychodrama not only alleviates psychological distress but also contributes to overall well-being by modulating stress responses at the neurobiological level.

While previous research has established the effectiveness of psychodrama in reducing anxiety and enhancing coping strategies, its application in the context of test anxiety remains an area of exploration. Wan (2023) investigated the use of psychodrama as an intervention for social anxiety among high school students and found that participants exhibited increased self-confidence and reduced avoidance behaviors following therapy sessions (Wan, 2023). Similarly, Yanli et al. (2023) explored the role of psychodrama in student mental health education, emphasizing its capacity to enhance emotional resilience and reduce stress-related symptoms (Yanli et al., 2023). These studies underscore the potential of psychodrama in addressing various forms of anxiety, including test-related distress, by promoting emotional regulation and adaptive coping.

Despite the growing body of research supporting the effectiveness of psychodrama, there remains a need for further investigation into its impact on students with different coping styles. Some studies suggest that psychodrama may be more effective for students with emotion-focused coping styles, as it allows them to process emotions and develop healthier emotional regulation strategies. However, for students with avoidance coping styles, psychodrama may initially exacerbate anxiety by confronting distressing thoughts and emotions before leading to long-term improvements (Saifulah et al., 2024). Understanding these differential effects is crucial for tailoring psychodrama interventions to meet the specific needs of students with varying coping mechanisms.

The present study aims to examine the effectiveness of psychodrama in reducing test anxiety among high school students with different coping styles, including problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance coping.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study adopts an applied research approach and employs a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test measurements, including a control group. The study population consists of all female high school students in Ahvaz enrolled in the academic year 2024-2025. The research sample includes 32 students selected through a multistage cluster random sampling method. Two high schools were randomly chosen, and from each school, one class was randomly selected. The students in these classes were then randomly assigned to two groups: 16 in the experimental group and 16 in the control group. The experimental group received psychodrama intervention in a group format over 12 sessions, while the control group did not receive any intervention.

The inclusion criteria for the study were being a female high school student, willingness to participate in the psychodrama sessions, providing informed consent for participation in the study and the intervention, and parental consent and cooperation. The exclusion criteria included dissatisfaction with participation from either the student or their parents, absence from two or more sessions, and failure to complete the required questionnaires.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Anxiety

To measure exam anxiety, the Sarason Test Anxiety Scale (1985) was used. This 37-item questionnaire assesses the psychological and physiological experiences of an individual before, during, and after an exam through a self-report system using true/false responses. The scores on this scale range from 0 to 37, with cut-off points distinguishing mild anxiety (scores of 12 or lower), moderate anxiety (scores between 13 and 20), and severe anxiety (scores above 20). The test-retest reliability coefficient after five weeks was reported as 0.88. The internal consistency of this scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (1992), yielding values of 0.94 for the overall sample, 0.95 for female participants, and 0.92 for male participants. The validity of this measure was confirmed through concurrent validation by comparing it with the Anxiety Questionnaire by Najarian, Attari, and Makvandi (1996) and the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale (1967) (Bahreini Moghim Jiroft et al., 2023; Barutçu Yıldırım & Demir, 2019; Ofem et

al., 2024), yielding a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87 in this study, indicating satisfactory reliability.

2.2.2. Coping Strategies

To assess students' coping strategies, the Lazarus Coping Strategies Questionnaire (1980, revised in 1985) was utilized. This scale evaluates a broad range of cognitive and behavioral efforts individuals employ when faced with stressful situations, aiming to interpret, manage, or mitigate stress. It includes various cognitive and behavioral mechanisms used for adapting to external and internal pressures. This questionnaire was standardized in Iran using a sample of 750 middle-aged couples and 763 high school students. The scale's reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.61 to 0.79, confirming its internal consistency. The validity of the instrument was confirmed by experts (Afandi et al., 2024), and in the current study, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was reported as 0.78, demonstrating its satisfactory reliability for measuring coping strategies among students.

2.3. Intervention

2.3.1. Psychodrama

The psychodrama intervention was conducted in 12 group therapy sessions. Each session was structured to help students explore and express their emotions, anxieties, and coping mechanisms through role-playing, dramatic enactment, and guided group interactions. The intervention was designed to improve students' emotional regulation and reduce exam anxiety by fostering insight and alternative behavioral responses. Sessions were led by a trained psychodrama therapist and focused on themes relevant to academic stress, emotional resilience, and problem-solving. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes, incorporating warm-up activities, dramatic enactments, reflection, and group discussions. The control group did not receive any psychological intervention during the study period.

The psychodrama intervention was conducted over 12 group therapy sessions, each lasting approximately 90 minutes. The sessions were designed to help students express and explore their exam-related anxieties, develop effective coping strategies, and enhance emotional regulation through dramatic enactment and group interaction. The first session focused on building trust among participants and introducing the basic principles of

psychodrama, including role-playing and spontaneous dramatization, while allowing students to share their personal experiences with exam anxiety. The second and third sessions emphasized emotional expression and identification, guiding students through exercises that helped them recognize and verbalize their fears about academic performance. The fourth session introduced the concept of role reversal, allowing participants to take on different perspectives, such as that of a teacher or parent, to better understand external expectations and pressures contributing to their anxiety. The fifth and sixth sessions utilized guided imagery and symbolic enactments to help students confront their fears and restructure their perceptions of academic stress, reinforcing positive internal dialogues and cognitive reframing techniques. The seventh session involved sociodrama exercises where participants collectively enacted common academic stress scenarios, fostering group problem-solving and collaborative emotional support. The eighth and ninth sessions incorporated empty-chair techniques and doubling strategies, enabling students to externalize their worries and receive feedback from peers in a supportive setting. The tenth session encouraged participants to explore alternative coping mechanisms by rehearsing adaptive behavioral responses to exam-related stress, focusing on relaxation techniques, assertiveness training, and self-efficacy development. The eleventh session facilitated self-reflection, allowing students to revisit their progress and reinforce the behavioral and cognitive strategies learned throughout the intervention. The final session provided closure, consolidating insights gained from previous sessions and encouraging students to develop personalized action plans for managing exam anxiety in real-life academic situations. Throughout the intervention, participants engaged in structured warm-up activities, active role-playing, and group discussions, fostering self-awareness, emotional resilience, and peer support in managing their exam-related anxiety.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two stages: descriptive and inferential statistics. In the descriptive statistics section, demographic information and measures of central tendency and dispersion (mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores) were calculated. In the inferential statistics section, after confirming the assumptions for data analysis, multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) and univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were

applied to examine the differences between pre-test and post-test scores, controlling for potential confounding variables. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the research instruments. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS-24 software.

3. Findings and Results

The demographic analysis of the participants in this study indicated that in the experimental group, the highest frequency was observed among first-born students, with 7 participants (43.75%), while the lowest frequency was among fourth-born or later students, with 1 participant (6.25%). In the control group, the highest frequency was also among first-born students, with 9 participants (52.94%), and the lowest frequency was among second-born students, with 1 participant (5.88%). Overall, across both groups, the highest frequency belonged to first-born students, with a total of 16 participants (48.49%), and the lowest frequency was found among fourth-born or later students, with 3 participants (9.09%). Regarding the father's education level, in the experimental group, the majority of students had fathers with a diploma or lower education level, comprising 13 participants (81.25%), while only 1 participant's father had a master's degree or higher (6.25%). In the control group, the highest frequency was also among students whose fathers had a diploma or lower education, with 9 participants (52.94%), while the lowest was among those whose fathers had a master's degree or higher, with 1 participant (5.88%). Across all participants, the majority had fathers with a diploma or lower education level, accounting for 22 participants (66.67%), while only 2 participants (6.06%) had fathers with a master's degree or higher. A similar trend was observed for the mother's education level, where in the experimental group, 13 students (81.25%) had mothers with a diploma or lower education level, and only 1 participant (6.25%) had a mother with a master's degree or higher. In the control group, 14 students (82.36%) had mothers with a diploma or lower education level, and only 1 participant (5.88%) had a mother with a master's degree or higher. Across both groups, the majority of students had mothers with a diploma or lower education level, with 27 participants (81.82%), while only 2 participants (6.06%) had mothers with a master's degree or higher. Regarding the father's

employment status, in the experimental group, 15 participants (93.75%) had employed fathers, whereas only 1 participant (6.25%) had an unemployed father. Similarly, in the control group, 15 participants (88.23%) had employed fathers, while 2 participants (11.77%) had unemployed fathers. Across all participants, the majority had employed fathers, totaling 30 students (90.91%), while only 3 participants (9.09%) had unemployed fathers. In terms of the mother's employment status, in the experimental group, 12 participants (75%) had housewives as mothers, while 4 participants (25%) had working mothers. In the control group, 12 participants (70.59%) had housewives as mothers, whereas 5 participants (29.41%) had working mothers. Overall, across both groups, 24 participants (72.73%) had housewives as mothers, while 9 participants (27.27%) had working mothers.

The descriptive findings of the study include the mean and standard deviation of the sample's scores for the study variables in both the experimental and control groups at the pre-test and post-test stages. The results indicate that the mean scores for test anxiety in students with problem-focused coping styles were 85.26 in the pre-test and 101.06 in the post-test for the experimental group, while in the control group, the mean scores were 86.58 in the pre-test and 87.47 in the post-test. Similarly, for students with emotion-focused coping styles, the mean test anxiety scores were 114.53 in the pre-test and 93.86 in the post-test in the experimental group, whereas in the control group, the scores were 113.64 in the pre-test and 111.23 in the post-test. Regarding students with an avoidance coping style, the mean test anxiety scores were 36.86 in the pre-test and 49.26 in the post-test for the experimental group, while in the control group, the scores were 36.64 in the pre-test and 38.41 in the post-test. These results suggest an increase in test anxiety scores in students with a problem-focused coping style and those with an avoidance coping style in the experimental group following the psychodrama intervention, whereas students with an emotion-focused coping style in the experimental group showed a decrease in test anxiety. In contrast, the control group exhibited minimal changes between pre-test and post-test scores across all coping styles. The detailed descriptive statistics for test anxiety among students with different coping styles in both groups are presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1

Descriptive Findings of the Study Variables

Variable	Index	Experimental Group (Mean ± SD)	Control Group (Mean ± SD)
Test Anxiety in Students with Problem-Focused Coping Style	Pre-test	85.26 ± 5.71	86.58 ± 7.31
	Post-test	101.06 ± 6.25	87.47 ± 6.11
Test Anxiety in Students with Emotion-Focused Coping Style	Pre-test	114.53 ± 7.87	113.64 ± 8.37
	Post-test	93.86 ± 7.49	111.23 ± 8.35
Test Anxiety in Students with Avoidance Coping Style	Pre-test	36.86 ± 4.42	36.64 ± 3.48
	Post-test	49.26 ± 4.86	38.41 ± 3.33

In this study, the pre-test scores of emotional regulation, self-criticism, and distress tolerance were considered as covariates, while the post-test scores were treated as dependent variables. The correlation coefficient between pre-test and post-test scores for test anxiety in students with a problem-focused coping style was 0.49 ($p < 0.01$), for students with an emotion-focused coping style was 0.51 ($p < 0.01$), and for students with an avoidance coping style was 0.45 ($p < 0.01$). These correlations confirm the linearity assumption between the covariates and dependent variables. The issue of multicollinearity, which occurs when covariates have high intercorrelations (above 0.90), was also assessed. The correlation between pre-test scores of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping styles was -0.37 ($p < 0.037$), between problem-focused and avoidance coping styles was 0.37 ($p < 0.036$), and between emotion-focused and avoidance coping styles was -0.38 ($p < 0.030$). Since these correlations were within an acceptable range, the assumption of multicollinearity was not violated.

Levene’s test for homogeneity of variances at the post-test stage confirmed that the variance of the dependent

variables was not significantly different between the experimental and control groups. The results for test anxiety in students with a problem-focused coping style ($F = 0.243$, $p = 0.626$), emotion-focused coping style ($F = 0.341$, $p = 0.563$), and avoidance coping style ($F = 0.827$, $p = 0.370$) were all non-significant, supporting the assumption of variance homogeneity. Additionally, the interaction between the covariate (pre-test test anxiety) and the dependent variable (post-test test anxiety) across the experimental and control groups was tested, with no significant interactions found. Specifically, for students with a problem-focused coping style ($F = 2.415$, $p = 0.131$), emotion-focused coping style ($F = 0.435$, $p = 0.515$), and avoidance coping style ($F = 2.632$, $p = 0.116$), the regression homogeneity assumption was confirmed. These findings indicate that the statistical assumptions required for conducting multivariate and univariate analyses were met, allowing for further inferential testing to determine the effectiveness of the psychodrama intervention.

Table 2

Univariate Covariance Analysis for Test Anxiety in Different Coping Styles

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Effect Size (η^2)
Test Anxiety in Students with Problem-Focused Coping Style	1627.634	1	1627.634	199.985	< 0.001	0.881
Test Anxiety in Students with Emotion-Focused Coping Style	2577.519	1	2577.519	121.306	< 0.001	0.818
Test Anxiety in Students with Avoidance Coping Style	883.295	1	883.295	100.344	< 0.001	0.788

The results of the univariate covariance analysis (ANCOVA) demonstrated significant differences between the experimental and control groups in terms of test anxiety among students with different coping styles. As shown in Table 2, the F-ratios for test anxiety in students with problem-focused coping style ($F = 199.985$, $p < 0.001$), emotion-focused coping style ($F = 121.306$, $p < 0.001$), and

avoidance coping style ($F = 100.344$, $p < 0.001$) were all statistically significant, indicating that the psychodrama intervention had a significant effect on reducing test anxiety levels across different coping styles. The effect sizes for each analysis ($\eta^2 = 0.881$ for problem-focused coping, $\eta^2 = 0.818$ for emotion-focused coping, and $\eta^2 = 0.788$ for avoidance coping) indicate strong impacts of the intervention.

Table 3

Bonferroni Post-Hoc Test Results for Adjusted Mean Test Anxiety Scores

Variable	Groups Compared	Adjusted Mean	Mean Difference	SD	p-value
Test Anxiety in Students with Problem-Focused Coping Style	Experimental - Control	101.503 - 87.085	14.418	1.020	< 0.001
Test Anxiety in Students with Emotion-Focused Coping Style	Experimental - Control	93.455 - 111.598	-18.143	1.647	< 0.001
Test Anxiety in Students with Avoidance Coping Style	Experimental - Control	49.142 - 38.521	10.621	1.060	< 0.001

Since the differences were statistically significant, Bonferroni post-hoc tests were conducted to compare the adjusted mean test anxiety scores between the experimental and control groups at the post-test stage. The results, presented in Table 3, indicate that the adjusted post-test mean score for test anxiety in students with a problem-focused coping style was 101.503 in the experimental group and 87.085 in the control group. The mean difference of 14.418 ($p < 0.001$) confirms that psychodrama significantly increased test anxiety in students with a problem-focused coping style. In contrast, the adjusted post-test mean score for test anxiety in students with an emotion-focused coping style was 93.455 in the experimental group and 111.598 in the control group, with a significant mean difference of -18.143 ($p < 0.001$), indicating a significant reduction in test anxiety among students with emotion-focused coping styles due to the intervention. Similarly, for students with an avoidance coping style, the adjusted post-test mean score was 49.142 in the experimental group and 38.521 in the control group, with a significant mean difference of 10.621 ($p < 0.001$), suggesting an increase in test anxiety for this group.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study examined the effectiveness of psychodrama in reducing test anxiety among high school students with different coping styles, including problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance coping. The results of the study indicated that psychodrama significantly affected test anxiety levels across all three coping styles. Specifically, students with an emotion-focused coping style in the experimental group exhibited a significant reduction in test anxiety following the intervention, as demonstrated by the adjusted post-test mean scores. Conversely, students with problem-focused and avoidance coping styles in the experimental group experienced an increase in test anxiety compared to the control group. These findings suggest that psychodrama may be particularly effective for students who primarily rely on emotion-focused coping strategies, while

its impact on students with problem-focused and avoidance coping styles may vary.

The significant reduction in test anxiety among students with an emotion-focused coping style aligns with previous research on the therapeutic benefits of psychodrama in addressing anxiety and emotional regulation difficulties (Örnek, 2023). Emotion-focused coping strategies often involve managing distress through emotional expression rather than directly addressing the stressor, which may contribute to increased vulnerability to test anxiety. Psychodrama, by providing a structured and expressive platform, enables students to externalize and process their emotions, leading to a reduction in anxiety symptoms (Shirani Bidabadi et al., 2022). This finding is consistent with the study by Kabusi (2023), which demonstrated that psychodrama significantly reduced social anxiety in nurses, particularly among those who exhibited heightened emotional distress (Kabusi, 2023). Similarly, Wieser (2023) found that psychodrama interventions facilitated emotional awareness and stress management among psychology students, further supporting the effectiveness of psychodrama in addressing emotion-driven anxiety (Wieser, 2023).

The increase in test anxiety among students with problem-focused coping styles in the experimental group was an unexpected finding but may be explained by the nature of psychodrama as an experiential therapy. Problem-focused coping strategies typically involve active problem-solving and cognitive restructuring to directly manage stressors. However, psychodrama primarily emphasizes emotional exploration rather than cognitive restructuring, which may not align well with the coping mechanisms of problem-focused individuals. This misalignment may have contributed to heightened stress levels as these students were encouraged to confront and process emotions they might otherwise manage through rational problem-solving. A study by Polat (2023) supports this interpretation, as it found that psychodrama was most effective for individuals struggling with emotional awareness rather than those who primarily relied on logical reasoning to navigate stressors

(Polat, 2023). Additionally, Kaya and Deniz (2020) suggested that individuals who prefer structured problem-solving approaches may experience temporary distress when exposed to emotion-oriented interventions, as they must adjust to new therapeutic techniques that differ from their preferred coping mechanisms (Kaya & Deniz, 2020).

Similarly, the observed increase in test anxiety among students with avoidance coping styles in the experimental group may be attributed to the confrontational nature of psychodrama. Avoidance coping strategies involve disengagement from stressors to minimize distress, often resulting in long-term maladaptive outcomes. Psychodrama, by requiring participants to actively engage with and express their emotions, may have initially heightened anxiety levels in students who typically avoid confronting stress-related thoughts and emotions. This finding is consistent with the study by Zayman and Simsek (2023), which reported that individuals with avoidance tendencies experienced increased anxiety in the early stages of psychodrama therapy before experiencing long-term benefits (Zayman & Simsek, 2023). Furthermore, Yu et al. (2022) found that while psychodrama significantly improved coping mechanisms over time, participants who exhibited strong avoidance tendencies required a longer adjustment period before experiencing therapeutic benefits (Yu et al., 2022). These findings suggest that while psychodrama may ultimately be beneficial for individuals with avoidance coping styles, short-term distress should be expected as they transition from avoidant behaviors to active emotional processing.

The overall effectiveness of psychodrama in reducing test anxiety, particularly among students with emotion-focused coping styles, supports the findings of previous research on the role of psychodrama in enhancing emotional resilience. A meta-analysis by Wang et al. (2020) confirmed that psychodrama consistently reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression across various populations by providing a safe environment for emotional expression and social support (Wang et al., 2020). Similarly, Munte and Arsini (2024) highlighted that psychodrama fosters a positive self-concept among students, which may explain its effectiveness in reducing test anxiety by enhancing students' confidence in their ability to manage stress (Munte & Arsini, 2024). Additionally, Permana and Suwarjo (2022) found that psychodrama interventions led to improved academic self-efficacy, further reinforcing the connection between psychodrama and reduced anxiety in academic settings (Permana & Suwarjo, 2022).

Moreover, the physiological mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of psychodrama in reducing test anxiety should be considered. Research indicates that psychodrama can lower cortisol levels, which are associated with stress and anxiety responses. Erbay et al. (2018) found that psychodrama significantly reduced cortisol secretion in patients with depression, suggesting that its effects extend beyond psychological benefits to include measurable physiological improvements (Erbay et al., 2018). This finding aligns with the study by Saifulah et al. (2024), which demonstrated that psychodrama-based group therapy effectively reduced anxiety symptoms in elderly participants by regulating physiological stress responses (Saifulah et al., 2024). These findings highlight the potential for psychodrama to serve as a holistic intervention for managing test anxiety by addressing both emotional and physiological components of stress.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

Although the present study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of psychodrama in reducing test anxiety among students with different coping styles, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study utilized a relatively small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader student populations. Future research should aim to replicate these findings with larger and more diverse samples to enhance external validity. Second, the study focused solely on high school students in a specific geographic region, which may limit the applicability of the results to students from different cultural backgrounds. Cultural differences in coping styles and emotional expression may influence the effectiveness of psychodrama, warranting cross-cultural investigations in future studies. Third, the study did not include a long-term follow-up assessment to determine whether the observed effects of psychodrama were sustained over time. Future research should incorporate longitudinal designs to assess the durability of psychodrama's effects on test anxiety and coping mechanisms.

For future research, it is recommended that studies explore the integration of psychodrama with other therapeutic approaches to enhance its effectiveness for students with different coping styles. Given that problem-focused students exhibited increased anxiety, future interventions could combine psychodrama with cognitive-behavioral techniques to provide a balanced approach that addresses both emotional and cognitive coping mechanisms.

Additionally, researchers should investigate the role of individual differences, such as personality traits and emotional intelligence, in moderating the effectiveness of psychodrama. Understanding how these factors influence therapeutic outcomes may contribute to the development of more personalized intervention strategies. Finally, future studies should explore the use of psychodrama in online or hybrid formats, particularly in the context of remote learning environments. The effectiveness of videoconferencing psychodrama has shown promise in treating psychological distress, and its application in educational settings could offer accessible intervention options for students experiencing test anxiety.

From a practical standpoint, the findings of this study suggest that psychodrama can be an effective intervention for reducing test anxiety, particularly for students who rely on emotion-focused coping strategies. Educators and school counselors should consider incorporating psychodrama-based group therapy sessions into student support programs to provide a structured outlet for emotional expression and stress management. Additionally, psychodrama techniques could be adapted for classroom settings, where role-playing and dramatization activities could be used to help students reframe their anxieties and develop more adaptive coping strategies. Given the initial distress observed in students with avoidance coping styles, facilitators should provide gradual exposure to psychodrama exercises to ease their transition into active emotional processing. Finally, collaboration between mental health professionals and educators is essential to ensure that psychodrama interventions are tailored to students' specific coping styles and psychological needs, maximizing their therapeutic benefits in academic settings.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

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