




# The Effectiveness of the Post-divorce Psychological Support Program (PDPSP) on Divorced Individual Adjustment Levels: A Pilot Study at Women\*

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## ABSTRACT

The study examines the effect of the Post-divorce Psychological Support Program (PDPSP) on the adjustment levels of divorced individuals. The program developed by the researchers was conducted with a group of 8 divorced women. This research was designed according to a quasi-experimental method with an unequalized control group model. 55 participants were called to pre-interview, and 16 of them were selected according to the eligibility criteria. The group was divided into two randomly, group A was assigned as experimental, and group B was noted as the control group. The 11-week program (PDPSP) was applied to the experimental group, at the end of the time, the Fisher's Divorce Adjustment Scale was given to the groups again. The study revealed that PDPSP was found to be effective on the individuals' level of adjustment to divorce. Professionals working with divorced individuals can benefit from this program.

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Divorce, adjustment to divorce, post- divorce psychological support program (PDPSP)

## 1. Introduction

While getting married, individuals think that they will be happy, their lives will be better, and their relationships will last forever. However, divorce statistics show that dreams of happiness do not last forever for many couples. According to the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics (2019), the divorce rates which was %4,0 in 2019 decrease to % 2, 7 in the USA. Although, the divorce rate tends to decrease, it is still considered to be high. The 28 member states of the Eurostat, the divorce rates increased from %0,08 in 1965 to %2,0 in 2013 (Eurostat Statistics Explained, 2020). Although the statistics in Turkey shows that the divorce rate is lower than it is in the European countries, but it tends to increase over years. The rough divorce rate, which was %1,41 in 2001, was determined as %1,90 in 2019. While the number of divorced couples was 91,994 in 2001, it increased to 156, 587 in 2019 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2020). With the increasing divorce rates, more individuals need post divorce support. Because it is known that divorce affects not only the spouses but also the families and the society.

Although divorce is perceived as a solution for couples who have problems, studies show that divorce is a traumatic life event, a stressful (Booth & Amato, 1991), a grieving (James & Friedman, 2009), a transition (Sakraida, 2005), and a crisis-transition process (Korkut, 2003; Uçan et al., 2005). When the literature was

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reviewed, it was seen that divorce was a painful and a stressful experience affecting the well-being of individuals in post-divorce period (Amato, 2000; Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006). Compared to married individuals, divorced individuals have more psychological (Bierman, et al., 2006) and physical health problems (Huges & Waite, 2009; Monden, et al., 2015), their feelings of loneliness (Van Tilburg, et al. 2015) and psychological stress increase (Booth & Amato, 1991), their well-being (Kalmijn, 2009; Shor et al., 2012) and economic welfare decrease (De Vaus, et al., 2014). Divorce increases individuals' parental stress as well (Tein, et al., 2000) and children who have divorced families suffer from this situation (Amato, 2010; Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). The literature reveals that the children whose parents are divorced or who are exposed to the negative effects of divorce are frequently studied (Eitle, 2006; Öngider, 2013; Paxton, et al., 2007; Strohschein, 2005; Troxel & Matthews, 2004). Well-being of these children is directly related to the well-being of their parents. Hence, an intervention program for divorced individuals to adjust their new status is thought to be crucial.

Researchers need to take many psychological variables associated with post-divorce adjustment into consideration while dealing with divorced individuals. Communication skills, empathy (Thiessen et al., 1981), rational thoughts about divorce (Graff, et al., 1986), coping skills (Lee & Hett, 1990), social support (Berman & Turk, 1981; Kramrei et al., 2007), forgiving ex-spouse (Aysta, 2010; Rohde-Brown & Rudestam, 2011; Rye et al., 2005), attachment style (Yárnoz, et al. 2008), psychological resilience (Quinney & Fouts, 2004), spiritual well being (Steiner, et al., 2015; Steiner, et al., 2011), and control over concerns about the child (Yılmaz & Fışıloğlu, 2005) can be listed as variables to consider. Among the variables having a positive effect on post-divorce adjustment process were included in the PDPSP by the researchers.

Adjustment to post-divorce life, which is the main target of this research, is a concept that is defined differently by many researchers. Adjustment to divorce is the result of complex processes that are affected by the individual's own characteristics, communication with people, and relationship variables (Wilder, 2016). According to definition by Kramrei et al., (2007), adjustment to post-divorce is the process of adapting to the life changes and well-being after divorce process. Sayhan-Karahan (2012) defines the concept of adjustment to post-divorce life as "the level of coping with the consequences of the individual's divorce and divorce status, rather than the individual's level of personal or social or general harmony, including adaptation to a new set of losses and a new role that accompanies the divorce situation". According to Kramrei et al. (2007) it will be insufficient to define post-divorce compliance as just the lack of negativity caused by divorce. Positive adjustment should also include elements such as psychological well-being, positive changes, being happy, coping and life satisfaction. In the scope of this research, post-divorce adjustment is described as to understand divorce and the effects of divorce, to notice negative emotions happening after divorce, to express and cope, to develop self-esteem and self-worth, to be emotionally and physically healthy, taking care of children and understanding their needs, if any, to develop individually and plan the future.

The first studies after divorce took place in both clinical and religious sources in the period after 1970. The pioneer of post divorce support groups were conducted by Kessler (1976) and Fisher (1976). Studies put forth that they were called the Divorce Recovery Group (Abondola, 1983; Fetch & Surdam, 1981; Kessler, 1976; Vukalovich, 2004). Divorce Support Group (Aysta, 2010; Øygard, Thuen & Solvang, 2000), Divorce Workshop (Davidoff, Mildred & Schiller, 1983), Divorced Parent Education Programs (Blaisure & Geasler, 2000; Becher, et al., 2015; Schmittel, 2013; Zimmerman et al., 2004). Although these groups had different goals from each other, their common goal was to meet the needs of individuals after divorce. The studies generally included communication skills, focused on the effects of divorce on individuals, the feelings experienced after divorce, relationship with the ex-spouse, romantic relationships, coping, the effect of divorce on children, and social support issues.

When post-divorce studies in Turkey were examined, it was seen that the assistance needed was provided to individuals in the divorce process in some health institutions and private consultancy organizations, and units affiliated with the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MFSP) (Family and Divorce Process Consultancy, 2015). It has been observed that the services provided under the MFSB have been mostly in the form of individual counseling (Assembly Research Commission Report, 2016). On the other hand, the experimental works carried out in Turkey seems to be more for children with divorced families (Arifoğlu-Çamkuşu, 2006; Serter-Öztürk & Balcı-Çelik, 2020; Şentürk-Aydın & Nazlı, 2014; Şimşek-Yüksel, 2006). Apart from them, a limited number of experimental studies (Bulut-Ateş, 2015; Canbulat, 2017; Öngider, 2013) were carried out

with the group for divorced women. One of them is about the assessment of the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) on divorced women (Öngider, 2013). The other study is about child-parent relationship therapy (Bulut-Ateş, 2015). There is no mandatory parent education program or divorce support program in Turkey. Unlike these studies, the PDPSP was designed in the form of interaction, sharing, training, and it is a psycho-educational study in which various information was provided to learn the necessary knowledge and skills for the post-divorce process and to support adjustment for post-divorce life.

With the newly developed program - PDPSP, the following hypotheses were tested.

RQ1. Posttest levels of adjustment to divorce of individuals in the experimental group who participated in the post-divorce psychological support program are significantly higher than pretest levels of adjustment to divorce.

RQ2. The posttest levels of adjustment to divorce of individuals in the experimental group who participated in the post-divorce psychological support program are significantly higher than the posttest level of adjustment to divorce of the individuals in the control group who did not participate in this program.

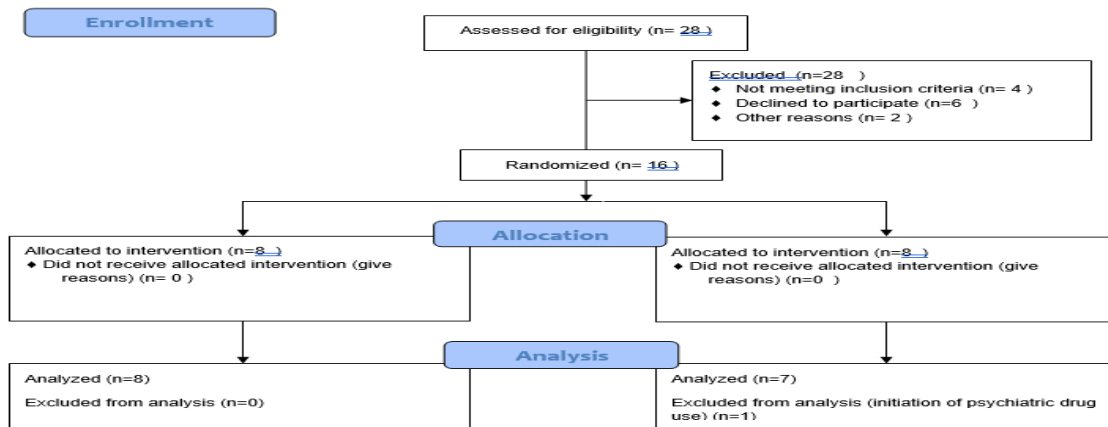
## **2.Method**

### **2.1. Model of the study**

This research was designed in accordance with a quasi-experimental method with unequalized control group model. Groups were randomly assigned in the research. FDAS was applied to 16 participants as a pretest and posttest (One of the participants did not take the posttest because of not meeting one of the criteria). After the pretest, the group was randomly divided into control ( $n=8$ ) and experimental group ( $n=8$ ).

### **2.2.Participants**

Primarily, the program's announcement to call for participants was done through leaflets and social media. At the end of the first three months there were not enough applications, so the start of the implementation of the program was delayed another three months than planned. The second method chosen to reach the sample group is the method of interviewing the authorities who can reach the divorced people. The researcher conducted interviews with School Guidance Services, Public and Private Pre-School Education Institutions, Giresun Bar Association, Giresun Public Education Center, Family Health Centers, Guidance Research Center, Family Counseling Centers, associations, women's centers, and lawyers. In these interviews, information was given about the program and its implementation, and contact information was left for the authorities. After these 3 months of announcements, the researcher reached 55 people and conducted an initial telephone interview.. Finally, the researcher conducted a face-to-face interview with 28 volunteer participants. 12 applicants were eliminated because they did not meet the criteria. The group was made up of volunteers 1) who divorced officially, 2) divorced for two years most, 3) experienced divorce for the first time, 4) did not have a psychiatric diagnosis, 5) did not use drugs, 6) had high self-expression skills, 7) have at least primary level education. 2 male applicants were excluded as their work schedule was too strict to follow the program, even if it was designed for regardless of gender differences. After losing participants to get a job in another city and get married again, the total number of participants decreased to 16. The experimental group was gathered in a private Psychological Counseling Center on Tuesday evenings between 18:00 - 21:00 from March to June in 2018. In the following part, the selection of participants, the steps for program development, Fisher's Divorce Adjustment Scale, information on the implementation of the scale and the PDPSP was explained elaborately. Figure 1 shows the enrollment of the participants.



**Figure 1.** Consort Flow Diagram

Descriptive information of group members is given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Information of Individuals Participating in the Study Group

Characteristics of Individuals	f
<b>Age</b>	
25-30	4
31-35	1
36-40	6
41-45	3
46-50	1
<b>Marriage Age</b>	
18-22	11
23-27	3
28-33	1
<b>Education level</b>	
Middle school	2
High school	6
Pre-bachelor	2
Bachelor	4
Master	2
<b>Perceived socio-economic level</b>	
Low	2
Middle	12
High	1
<b>Number of children</b>	
One	10
Two	5
<b>The place spent most of life</b>	
Small City	15
<b>Duration of marriage</b>	
1-5	1
6-10	6
11-15	5
16 -20	2
21-25	1
<b>The reason for ending the marriage</b> (Multiple options marked).	

A) Infidelity	8
B) Attempt against life and mistreatment	2
C) Crime and dishonor	1
D) Abandonment	3
E) Mental illness	1
F) Severe conflict	9
G) Parental intervention	7
H) Indifference	10
I) Personal disharmony	5
J) Financial problems	6
K) Jealousy	4
L) End of love	7
M) Other.....	
Alcohol addiction	1
Irresponsibility	1
<b>Who made the decision to divorce?</b>	
I decided	10
My partner has decided	1
We decided together	4
<b>Time spent together before marriage</b>	
Less than one year	5
1-2	4
2-3	3
More than 3 years	3
<b>Presence of people who have experienced divorce in the family</b>	
None	7
My parents	1
Sister/brother	5
My close relatives (aunt, uncle, cousin, etc.)	2

### 2.3. Developing Post-Divorce Psychological Support Program

In preparing the group sessions for the PDPSP to be implemented in the research, the relevant literature was reviewed, the topics that would support the adaptation process were examined, and the appropriate content and exercises were prepared or adapted the existing exercises from the works of Abondola (1983), Acun-Kapıkıran (2013), Altınay (2009), Bingöel-Çağlayan (2013), Coates & LaCrosse (2003), Fisher (1998), Fıfılođlu (2014), Güven (2013), Kararımak & Gülođlu (2012), Kessler (1976), Terzi-Işık & Tekinalp-Ergüne (2013), Tesler & Thompson (2006), Wagner (2002), Wolfelt (2008), Rich (2001), Zara (2013), Zat (2014) by the researchers. The first draft of the program included the following topics for each week respectively: introduction and understanding the effects of divorce, noticing and expressing negative emotions, coping with negative emotions, disentanglement from relationship with the ex-spouse and defining the need of new relationship, developing self-esteem, coping and living healthy, developing social support divorce and its effects on children, personal development and planning for the future, and evaluating the program and exchanging farewells. The second step of developing the program was to present it to two professors from the field of psychology to assess the appropriateness. In the light of the suggestions and corrections of the experts, "communication skills" were added in the first session and the program was ready to use. The related literature found out that the group sessions conducted in the post-divorce studies generally changed between 6-8 weeks. (Asanjarani et al., 2017; Fetch & Surdam, 1981; Vukalovich, 2004). In the PDPSP, there were a total of 11 sessions where the first session included a meeting, reviewing the communication skills, the last session had an evaluation of the program and farewells, and the other sessions had discussions about the post-divorce process. Each session was planned to last approximately 2-2.5 hours. The main purpose of this program was defined to support the divorce adjustment process of divorced individuals, 1) to assist to participants share their experience 2) to gain the knowledge and skills needed in this process, 3) to recognize and express emotions, 4) to deal with problems, 5) to help provide the necessary motivation for a new beginning. The summary and the objectives of the PDPSP are given in Figure 2.

**Table 2.** Summary of Post Divorce Psychological Support Program Sessions

Summary of PDPSP sessions		
1	Meeting and review of communication skills	Meeting group members, to give information about the group process, to share group rules and to develop a common understanding of these rules, increase the motivation to join the group, and review communication skills.
2	Divorce and understanding the divorce	Sharing the feelings, thoughts and sufferings experienced after divorce, to identify unrealistic thoughts about divorce and to organize these thoughts.
3	Noticing and expressing negative emotions	Noticing and expressing negative feelings experienced after divorce.
4	Coping with negative emotions	Making the group members realize their post-divorce negative feelings and helping them cope with the negative emotions.
5	Divorce and its effects on children	Helping participants notice how their children were affected by divorce, understand how they were affected by their child's reactions and
6	Disentanglement from a relationship with the ex-spouse and defining the need of new relationship	Helping group members understand their feelings and thoughts about their past relationships, review their relationship with their ex-spouses to develop new relationships, identify the need of new relationships, and move forward from their ex-spouses.
7	Developing self-esteem	Examining the effects of divorce on self-esteem and self-worth and to develop self-esteem.
8	Coping and living healthy	Realizing that emotional health and physical health are related, that coping skills affect their physical and mental health positively or negatively and make them gain new coping skills.
9	Developing social support	Ensuring that they are not alone after divorce, not hesitate to say that they are divorced, and focus on support needs after divorce.
10	Personal development and planning for the future	Planning the future for personal development and to make them prepare an action plan.
11	Evaluating the program and exchanging farewells	Evaluating the group process and to exchange farewells.

The program summarized in Figure 2 was applied to the participants for eleven weeks. A- post-test was applied at the end of the time, and the group was dismissed.

## 2.4. Data collection tools

### 2.4.1. Personal Information Form

The form prepared by the researcher contains questions aimed at obtaining information about the marriage and divorce process, as well as the demographic characteristics of the individuals.

### 2.4.2. Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale

The Scale (FDAS) is a 100-item scale developed by Fisher (1976). Items are in the range of "1-Always, 5- Never". The higher scores obtained from the measurement tool, used for individuals separated from the relationship or divorced, indicate the low level of adjustment to divorce. The original scale has six subscales. 1) *self worth* 2) *disentanglement* 3) *anger* 4) *grief* 5) *trust and intimacy* 6) *social self worth*. The research was conducted with 129 divorced individuals and Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and General Life Satisfaction (GLS) were used for adjustment studies. In the Turkish version of the scale there are five subscales as 1) *Grief reaction (37 items)* 2) *Disentanglement from relationship (20 items)* 3) *Self worth (21 items)* 4) *Anger (11 items)* 5) *Trust and intimacy (7 items)*. The reliability of the scale was determined by using the internal consistency coefficient and split-half methods. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was found .97 for all items in the scale. According to the split-half method, Cronbach

Alpha coefficient of the first part is .94 and of the second part is .95. The first of the validity studies of the scale is to examine the relationship between FDAS and 3 scales selected as simultaneous validity. A high level of positive correlation was found between the BSI and FDAS ( $r = .72, p < .001$ ). There is a moderate negative correlation between FDAS and MSPSS ( $r = -.47, p < .001$ ) and GLS ( $r = -.59, p < .001$ ). The criterion validity study of the scale was evaluated based on the BSI method using the extreme groups method. Two groups were determined as low stress group (N = 32 people) and high stress group (N = 32). It was determined that the post-divorce adjustment levels (M = 3.06) of the high stress group were significantly lower than the low stress group (M = 1.81). According to the validity and reliability study findings of the scale, the use of FDAS in Turkish form is seen as appropriate (Yılmaz & Fıçiloğlu, 2006).

### 2.5. Data analysis

Mann Whitney U Test, which is frequently used in experimental studies with fewer subjects involving unrelated measurements, and Wilcoxon signed-rank test used for related measurements were used in the analysis

Firstly, it was examined whether there is a difference between the pre-test scores of the individuals constituting the experimental and control groups. Mann Whitney U test was used for these analyzes and the findings related to the analysis are given in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Mann Whitney U Test Results Regarding Pretest Scores

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	S	Rank Average	Ranks Total	U	p
Total Post-Divorce Adjustment	Experiment	8	229,25	8,00	64,00	28,000	1,000*
	Control	7	229,85	8,00	56,00		
	Total	15					
Grief Reaction	Experiment	8	84,12	7,38	59,00	23,000	,563*
	Control	7	91,00	8,71	61,00		
	Total	15					
Disentanglement from Relationship	Experiment	8	39,37	9,44	75,50	16,500	,181*
	Control	7	25,28	6,36	44,50		
	Total	15					
Self Worth	Experiment	8	39,75	6,88	55,00	19,000	,298*
	Control	7	15,16	9,29	65,00		
	Total	15					
Anger	Experiment	8	39,37	9,25	74,00	18,000	,246*
	Control	7	35,71	6,57	46,00		
	Total	15					
Trust and Intimacy	Experiment	8	18,50	6,94	55,50	19,500	,323*
	Control	7	7,44	9,21	64,50		
	Total	15					

\*p>.05

As shown in Table 2, there is no significant difference between the adjustment to divorce pre-test scores of the divorced individuals who constitute the experimental and control groups according to the results of Mann Whitney U test ( $U=28.00, p>.05$ ).

### 2.6. Ethical

In this study, all rules stated to be followed within the scope of “Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive” were followed. Permission was obtained from the Ondokuz Mayıs University Ethics Committee for the study.

### 3. Results

#### Findings regarding divorce adjustment levels of divorced individuals

The arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the pre-test and post-test scores, calculated in line with the responses to the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale of the divorced individuals in the experimental and control groups, are given in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Experimental and Control Group Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation Values

Groups	Pretest				Posttest			
	Experiment (n=8)		Control (n=7)		Experiment (n=8)		Control (n=7)	
	$\bar{X}$	S	$\bar{X}$	S	$\bar{X}$	S	$\bar{X}$	S
Total	229,25	54,92	229,85	35,74	176,12	34,57	210,42	36,54
Grief Reaction	84,12	16,40	91,00	22,18	60,37	11,40	80,71	20,66
Disentanglement from Relationship	39,37	20,84	25,28	4,80	28,87	11,40	24,00	3,51
Self-Worth	39,75	15,16	48,14	15,71	31,50	8,92	45,71	19,10
Anger	39,37	6,71	35,71	6,15	30,87	8,88	34,14	7,73
Trust and Intimacy	18,50	7,44	22,71	8,26	16,50	7,48	19,42	6,52

Note. The high score obtained from Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale shows that the level of adjustment to divorce is low.

As seen in Table 4, the average of total pre-test adjustment to divorce scores of the experimental and control groups participants are close to each other. After the program, it was determined that the total scores of the experimental group decreased more than the control group.

The Wilcoxon signed rank test results regarding the divorce adjustment levels of the individuals who participated in the experimental group and whether they differ before and after the experiment are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results of the Experimental Group

	$\bar{X}$	S		N	Rank Average	Ranks Total	Z	p
Total Posttest- Total Pre-test	176,12	34,57	Negative Ranks	8	4,50	36,00		
	229,25	54,92	Positive Ranks	0	,00	,00	-2,524	,012*
			Equal Ranks	0				
			Total	8				
Grief Posttest - Grief Pretest	60,37	11,40	Negative Ranks	8	4,50	36,00		
	84,12	16,40	Positive Ranks	0	,00	,00	-2,521	,012*
			Equal Ranks	0				
			Total	8				
Disentanglement from Relationship Posttest – Disentanglement from Relationship Pretest	28,87	11,40	Negative Ranks	8	4,50	36,00		
	39,37	20,84	Positive Ranks	0	,00	,00	-2,521	,012*
			Equal Ranks	0				
			Total	8				
Self-Worth Post-test – Self-Worth Pretest	31,50	8,92	Negative Ranks	6	4,50	27,00		
	39,75	15,16	Positive Ranks	1	1,00	1,00	-2,197	,028*
			Equal Ranks	1				
			Total	8				
Anger Posttest – Anger Pretest	30,87	8,88	Negative Ranks	7	4,71	33,00		
	39,37	6,71	Positive Ranks	1	3,00	3,00	-2,103	,035*
			Equal Ranks	0				
			Total	8				
Trust and Intimacy Posttest - Trust and Intimacy Pretest	16,50	7,48	Negative Ranks	4	5,00	20,00		
	18,50	7,44	Positive Ranks	3	2,67	8,00	-1,018	,309
			Equal Ranks	1				
			Total	8				

\*p < .05



Table 5 show that there is a significant difference between the scores of the individuals, participating in the research, obtained from the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale before and after the experiment ( $Z = -2,524, p <.05$ ). According to these results, the post-divorce support program is effective in the grief response ( $Z = -2,521, p <.05$ ), disentanglement from relationship ( $Z = -2,521, p <.05$ ), self-worth ( $Z = -2,524, p <.05$ ) and anger ( $Z = -2,103, p <.05$ ) subscales. It did not significantly differ in the trust and intimacy subscale ( $Z = -1,018, p >.05$ ). These findings support the first hypothesis of the research.

The test results are shown in Table 5 using the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test to determine whether there is a significant difference between the -control group's pre-test and post-test scores.

The results of the analysis of whether the divorce adjustment levels of individuals who participated in the control group differ during process showed that there was a significant difference between the scores of the individuals who participated in the study and completed the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale ( $Z = -2, 023, p <.05$ ). This difference is significant in pre-test and post-test mean scores and grief subscale ( $Z = -2, 023, p <.05$ ). The change in the grief subscale has affected the overall mean score. However, there is no significant difference between pre-test and post-test in other subscales.

**Table 6.** Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results of the Control Group

	$\bar{X}$	S		N	Rank Average	Rank Total	Z	p
Total Posttest – Total Pretest	210,42	36,54	Negative Ranks	5	3,00	15,00		
	229,85	35,74	Positive Ranks	0	,00	,00	-2,023	,043*
			Equal Ranks	2				
			Total	7				
Grief Posttest - Grief Pretest	80,71	20,66	Negative Ranks	5	3,00	15,00		
	91,00	22,18	Positive Ranks	0	,00	,00	-2,023	,043*
			Equal Ranks	2				
			Total	7				
Disentanglement from Relationship Posttest – Disentanglement from Relationship Pretest	24,00	3,51	Negative Ranks	3	3,00	9,00		
	25,28	4,80	Positive Ranks	1	1,00	1,00	-1,473	,141
			Equal Ranks	3				
			Total	7				
Self-Worth Posttest – Self-Worth Pretest	45,71	19,10	Negative Ranks	3	2,83	8,50		
	48,14	15,71	Positive Ranks	1	1,50	1,50	-1,289	,197
			Equal Ranks	3				
			Total	7				
Anger Posttest - Anger Pretest	34,14	7,73	Negative Ranks	4	2,75	11,00		
	35,71	6,15	Positive Ranks	1	4,00	4,00	-,944	,345
			Equal Ranks	2				
			Total	7				
Trust and Intimacy Posttest - Trust and Intimacy Pretest	19,42	6,52	Positive Ranks	3	3,00	9,00		
	22,71	8,26	Pozitif Sıralar	1	1,00	1,00	-1,461	,144
			Equal Ranks	3				
			Total	7				

\*p <.05

To understand if there is a significant difference between the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups, which is another question of the study, the difference between the means of the pretest-posttest difference scores of the two groups was examined. The Mann Whitney U test was used to determine this difference. The results are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Significance of Pretest-Posttest Score Difference for the experimental and control groups

	Group	N	$\bar{x}$	S	Rank Average	Ranks Total	U	p
Total Posttest - Total Pretest Difference	Experiment	8	53,12	38,28	10,25	82,00	10,000	,037*
	Control	7	19,42	24,09	5,43	38,00		
	Total	15						
Grief Posttest - Pretest Difference	Experiment	8	23,25	14,12	10,31	82,50	9,500	,032*
	Control	7	10,28	14,53	5,36	37,50		
	Total	15						
Disentanglement from Relationship Post-test – Pretest Difference	Experiment	8	10,50	9,84	10,75	86,00	6,000	,011*
	Control	7	1,28	2,36	4,86	34,00		
	Total	15						
Self-Worth Post-test – Pretest Difference	Experiment	8	8,25	9,48	9,25	74,00	18,000	,242
	Control	7	2,42	4,75	6,57	46,00		
	Total	15						
Anger Posttest – Pretest Difference	Experiment	8	8,50	7,91	10,13	81,00	11,000	,048*
	Control	7	1,57	5,06	5,57	39,00		
	Toplam	15						
Trust and Intimacy Posttest – Pretest Difference	Experiment	8	2,0	5,01	7,63	61,00	25,000	,726
	Control	7	3,28	6,36	8,43	59,00		
	Total	15						

\*p &lt;.05

As shown in Table 5, there is a significant difference between the mean difference scores of the experiment and control groups ( $U= 10.00$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The adjustment to divorce levels of the members who participated in the experimental group increased more from the control group. When subscales are checked, it could be seen that this difference is in grief ( $U= 10.00$ ,  $p<.05$ ), disentanglement from a relationship ( $U= 9.50$ ,  $p<.05$ ), anger ( $U= 11.00$ ,  $p<.05$ ). no significant difference was found in the self-worth ( $U= 10.00$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and trust and intimacy ( $U= 10.00$ ,  $p<.05$ ) subscales. These findings partially support the second hypothesis of the research.

#### 4. Discussion

This research has investigated whether the PDPSP effectively increases the individuals' level of adjustment to divorce. Research findings show that the applied program creates a significant difference on the experimental group's level of adjustment to divorce. In other words, participants' level of adjustment in the experimental group and the subscales of the scale, Grief, Disentanglement from Relationship, Self-Esteem, and Anger, differed significantly after the program and the program contributed to individuals' level of adjustment to divorce, with the exception of the Trust and Intimacy subscales. These results partially support the study's first hypothesis. The second research question is to investigate the adjustment level of the control group, which is not intervened, to the divorce. The result of the analysis shows that there is a small but significant difference between the pre- and post-tests of the control group compared to the experimental group. This difference is significant only for the Grief Reaction scale. The improvement in grief reaction also contributed to the overall adjustment score. In other words, the individuals who participated in both the experimental and control groups were able to improve their adjustment performance to divorce in terms of total scores and grief reaction. The last process is examining the difference between the post-tests of the experimental and control groups. For this purpose, it was examined whether the difference was significant by comparing the mean difference scores between the pre-test and post-tests. Significant differences were found out between experimental and control post-tests. This difference was in the total scores of adjustment to divorce, grief response, disentanglement from relationship and anger subscales. There was no significant difference between groups in the self-worth, trust, and intimacy subscales. This finding partially supports the second hypothesis of the research.

This program was tested in a small study group because of the problems of reaching divorced individuals, and its generalizability depends only on the results of this study. However, in reviewing the relevant literature, it was found that support programs conducted with divorced individuals help them to better adjust and increase their psychological well-being, increase their self-esteem, create catharsis, enable interpersonal learning, improve their emotional awareness and psychological resilience, although there are differences in

subject, method and techniques. (Asanjarani et al., 2017; Avery & Thiessen, 1981; Canbulat, 2017; Kessler, 1976; Øygard, Thuen & Solvang, 2000; Quinney & Fouts, 2004; Vera, 1993; Öngider, 2013). The positive contributions of this study on the participants were determined as a result of both the pre-test and post-test analysis of the answers they gave to the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale and the answers they gave to the questions in the session evaluation forms. It is seen that the only subscale that the program does not contribute to is trust and intimacy.

In contrast to this study, Abandolo (1983) found that total divorce adjustment scores increased significantly in the groups that improved divorce adjustment for 10 weeks compared with the control group, according to the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale. When the question items in the trust and intimacy subscale are examined, it is seen that there are mostly items related to sexual life and trust to a new relationship. It has been found that the most important problem divorced women in Turkey experience in a new relationship is to build trust (Uğur, 2014).

Based on the finding that there is no improvement on the trust and intimacy scale, two possible explanations for this situation can be considered. The first possibility is that there may be cultural effects considering that all participants are women because the meaning attributed to sexuality is different in Turkish society. Another possibility is that the result could be related to the structure of the program. New relationships were discussed in the sessions, but no specific section on sexuality was prepared. Since the participants did not bring up the topic, sexuality was not focused on. The other finding of the study includes analysis for the control group. When the significance between the pre-test and post-test scores of the individuals participating in the control group is examined, it is seen that the level of adjustment of individuals in the control group increased in the grief subscale. The improvement in the grief subscale has increased the overall adjustment levels. Grief consists of emotional responses to a loss, and it is expected that the normal grief reactions that occur after the loss disappear over time (Gizir, 2006). Similarly, in the study conducted by Vukalovich (2004), it was found that the group waiting to be intervened recovered without any intervention. Fisher Divorce Adjustment Test pretest-posttest results were carried out with an interval of about three months and over a maximum of two years after the divorce period. It is stated that normal grief reactions usually last about six to twenty-four months and lose their effect over time (Bildik, 2013). Considering that the loss due to divorce was also grief (James & Friedman, 2009), it is seen that the improvement in the participants progressed in the normal process. When the control group was examined, it was found that there was no improvement in other subscales. Compared to the control group, the program's contribution in the experimental group is more significant in other subscales.

The final finding of the research was obtained by calculating the significance of the mean difference scores of groups. Accordingly, there is a significant improvement between the experimental group's pre-test and post-test difference scores compared to the control group's pretest-posttest difference scores in terms of general adjustment levels. When subscales are considered, it is seen that the difference is significant in grief reaction, disentanglement from relationship and anger scales, and it is not significant in trust and intimacy and self-worth scales. As the second finding of the study, it was found that adjustment scores of the control group increased in grief reaction depending on time and without intervention. There also is an improvement in grief reactions; however, the difference in score in the experimental group is higher than in the control group, and this difference is statistically significant. It is possible to link the significant difference improvement in the experimental group made compared to the control group to the contribution of the topics shared in the program. An interesting finding that emerges from comparing the posttests of the experimental and control groups is that there is no significant difference in self-esteem. Self-esteem making a significant difference according to the results of the pretest and the posttest of the experimental group, the first result of the study, made no significant difference when compared to the difference values of the posttest of the control group. Another subscale that does not make any significant difference is trust and intimacy. The applied program or elapsed time was not effective in this subscale. In the study conducted by Vukalovich (2004), when the answers the participants gave to the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale after 6 weeks of application were examined, an increase could be seen in trust and intimacy, grief reaction, separation anger, disentanglement from the relationship. Similar to the findings of this research, there was no increase in self-worth. Another study was conducted by Asanjarani et al. (2017) where there was no significant difference in self-worth after post-divorce support program even though there was a significant difference in all other subscales according to the Fisher

Divorce Adjustment Scale data. Research mention many factors that affect post-divorce adjustment. Some of these factors include the individuals' high level of education, the presence of a job and income (Wang & Amato, 2000), the perceived level of social support (Krumrei et al., 2007), how they perceive divorce, the personal strength they perceive, the strength of social support they perceive, whether they participate in meaningful activities, whether they receive professional help (Chan Lai Cheng & Pfeifer, 2015). Similarly, individuals' self-worth may be affected by these variables and post-divorce support studies.

## 5. Conclusion

The PDPSP is effective on the individuals' level of adjustment to divorce. Professionals working with divorced individuals can benefit from this program. The forms developed for the program can be used during the divorce process or in sessions with officially divorced individuals. This study was a pilot one and it had certain limitations. First, the pilot studies working group was all women, so it needs improving with a more diverse group. Second, all 16 participants had children, its effectiveness on divorced individuals without children need to be tested again. Third, the program can be applied to larger groups as well. Also, the criteria for the time passed after divorce was specified as two years in this paper. Regardless of the time passed after divorce, a new study can be conducted for further research. This can help to specify the levels of divorce and the psychological phases divorced people have experienced. Another topic to be included in the program is intimacy and sexuality, which will broaden the scope of the program. Finally, the most important phase of divorce is the pre-divorce period. Intervention programs for separated persons need to be developed and more sessions can be conducted. Follow-up studies need to be conducted to observe the long-term impact of the program. The PDPSP has an indirect positive effect on children. The studies conducted in Turkey are concerned about the support for the children of divorced parents. It is an undeniable fact that the most important side of a divorce is children; however, the most deeply affected parties are parents. Parents will have difficulty parenting in a healthy way before they feel adjusted to divorce. Therefore, supporting a divorced individual is the same thing as supporting a child. Within the perspective, the support programs for parents need generalizing.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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