Investigation of the Impact of Group Narrative-Therapy on Increasing Old People's Happiness in Rasht City Nursery Homes

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ABSTRACT

The present research aims to investigate the influence of group narrative-therapy on increasing the elderly people's happiness in Rasht City nursing homes. Research methodology was semi-experimental and its design was of pretest-posttest type with control group. The statistical sample included 30 old people. They were selected by means of simple random sampling from among all old people aged 65 and above who were living in 5 nursing homes in Rasht City (Golden years, Maryam, the handicapped, rice field and eternal dawn). They were put into two groups: one control group and one experiment group. Oxford's happiness questionnaire (1989) was implemented for both groups in pretest and posttest stages. The experiment group members received 10 45-minute sessions of narrative therapy. In the end, both groups filled out the questionnaires again. The results showed that group narrative-therapy increases old people's happiness (p<0.01). This kind of therapy is proposed to be implemented in nursing homes in order to increase happiness in them.

KEYWORDS: happiness, old age, narrative-therapy

INTRODUCTION

Aging is an important phenomenon which takes place in human's life. Old people comprise a large number of populations in all societies. Therefore, any action taken to improve their lives conditions can reduce social problems and therefore family problems will be reduced (Ghasemi et al, 2009). Health and its relationship with increased lifelong has created a lot of challenges. Studies show that ageing is accompanied by hygienic problems and reduction in activities. When age increases, physical performance disorders will also increase and its negative impacts on ability to remain independent increases need for help. This in part can reduce the elderly's life quality, happiness, optimism and hopefullness (Maghsoudnia and Akbarpour, 2006). Alen (2008) defines happiness as a type of positive psychological state which is characterized by a high level of satisfaction with life and positive emotions and low level of negative emotions. Since ageing and absence of health disrupts the process of achieving targets, it has negative impacts on happiness (Eddington& Shuman, 2004). Alberktsen (2003) believes that stress reduces happiness. In other words, as stress experience increases, his or her happiness will be reduced and his or her psychological health will be threatened. Narrative therapy is a kind of training which can be implemented on old people. It tries to change mental frameworks of people to which an individual refers most usual. This is done via critical thinking and affects mental premises. Narrative therapists work on individuals who either have problems told by them or by society. These are negative stories in which individuals think they have lost their control over their lives and cannot change them (Shapiro and Ross, 2002). The fact that the story is immersed in problems allows the individual to pay attention to good results, happenings and moments which indicate the values of the individual (Abedi, 2006). The results of studies conducted by Neuner (2010), Katani (2009), Sarakinz (2007), as quoted from Boustani et al (2007) verified the influence of narrative therapy in improving psychological problems. Lopez&kerr (2006) showed that group therapy can influence development and increase of sense of optimism, happiness and hope in old people. Lopes et al (2014) investigated and compared narrative therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy influence on depression. The results of the research showed that impact size for both groups was higher in comparison with expectation and control group. Sarakins (2007, as quoted from Boustani et al, 2007) showed that narrative therapy reduces depression. The results showed that the old people were happier after taking part in sessions. This research is important because old people's health is very important for any society. This can be used for improving old people's health and many important steps have been taken for this means. The main question in this research is: whether group narrative therapy is effective on increasing happiness in old people who live in nursing homes of Rasht City?

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METHODOLOGY

Because the present research aims to investigate the influence of group narrative therapy on increasing happiness in old people, it is a semi-experimental research with pretest-posttest design and a control group.

Statistical population: the statistical population of the research included all old people aged above 65 who lived in 5 nursing homes in Rasht City (Golden years, Maryam, the Handicapped, rice field and eternal dawn). First, 100 old people responded to the questionnaire and 45 of them had low level of happiness. 30 of them were selected by means of simple random sampling and put into two groups: one experiment and one control group. Then, interventions were conducted on experiment group. Criteria for respondents' entering test included: 1. Women and men aged 65 and above, 2. Cooperation during treatment sessions. Narrative therapy sessions included 10 45-minute sessions as follows:

First session: introduction and increasing trust and conduction of pretest
Second session: use of examples for stating narrations and introduction of the next sessions and preparation of the individual for stating a narration about him or her and putting a name on the narration by the individual himself or herself.
Third session: recognition and definition of a problem and specifying its influence on the individual's life, the influence of individual's feelings on increasing problem considering society texture and culture of the person using words which are appropriate for his or her age
Fourth session: identification of unique consequences and implications of the narration and contribution to recognizing its exceptions and the role of the individual
Fifth session: reviewing life narration for better understanding of events and teaching of relaxation
Sixth session: change using a simpler language for better understanding of details and empathy with the individual
Seventh session: externalization considering the type of narration and its relationship with genetics and culture
Eighth session: helping the individual with changing the name of his or her narration and the fact that there is nothing called objective reality but his or her problem is usually his or her mental perceptions
Ninth session: writing a letter to the respondent for improvement when the narrative therapist is absent and emphasis on his or her strengths against problems
Tenth session: holding a meeting with one of his or her family members or a friend and review of the sessions and giving a reward for being successful at changing the name of the narrative

Research instrument
1. Oxford's happiness questionnaire: this questionnaire was prepared in 1989 by Argeil& Lu and its final form has 29 items. Each of the questions has 4 choices scored from zero to 3. Therefore, the maximum score was 87. Means core was 43.5 and it was considered as cut-point. Argeil& Lu (1990) measured the reliability of this questionnaire by means of Cronbach's alpha (0.90) on 347 respondents. Furthermore, Nourbula and Alipour (1999) calculated the reliability coefficient by means of Cronbach's alpha to be equal to 0.93 for 132 respondents. In a research conducted by Alipour and AgahHaris (2007) in order to investigate the reliability and validity of the Oxford Happiness Index of Argeil (2000), a sample comprised of 227 women and 142 men was selected from among all employees and students who lived in Tehran province with an age average equal to 24 and 11 months and an age range between 18 to 35 years from districts 5, 11, 18 and 2, from west, center, south and north of Karaj, Islam Shahr and Shahryar. The results showed that all 29 items had high correlation with total score. Cronbach's alpha for total list was equal to 0.91. The results of factor analysis revealed five factors: satisfaction with life, self-respect, well-being, satisfaction of mind, and positive temperament. These five factors can predict 49.7% of total variance and had eigen values above 1. Previous results showed that Oxford's happiness index is an appropriate instrument for measuring happiness in Iranian society. The reliability coefficient was equal to 0.80 in this research.

Findings
In this section, we deal with the influence of group narrative therapy on increasing happiness in the elderly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Experiment group</th>
<th>Control group</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pretest M SD</td>
<td>posttest M SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happiness</td>
<td>38.49 3.08</td>
<td>43.62 1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 indicates that after adjustment, the scores of experiment and control groups in the posttest of the old people happiness are different. In order to investigate the fact that this difference is statistically significant or not, and it can be attributed to the training sessions, MANCOVA analysis by means of Bon Ferroni's correction was conducted.

Table 2: the results of group narrative therapy on increasing the old happiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of changes</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Mean of squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
<th>Impact size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>happiness</td>
<td>201.23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>201.23</td>
<td>8.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>error</td>
<td>652.69</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

considering the results of table 2, it can be concluded that group narrative therapy is effective on increasing the old happiness based on Bon Ferroni's corrected alpha (0.025) with F(1, 26)=8.02 (p<0.01). Therefore, it can be concluded that the research hypothesis i.e. group narrative therapy can increase the elderly's happiness, was supported. Eta square shows the intensity of this impact (0.24). This number indicates a high impact size.

DISCUSSION

The present research studied the influence of group narrative therapy on increasing old people's happiness. The results showed that group narrative therapy increases the elderly's happiness (p<0.01). This result is consistent with studies conducted by Lopez and Kerr (2006) and Sarakiins (2007, as quoted from Boustani et al, 2007). It can be said that old people become isolated due to retirement and restriction of social activities and this affects adversely their happiness reduction. They even might experience depression. Investigations have shown that social support is very important in happiness increase and its absence may cause depression. Furthermore, researchers have concluded that individuals who live in nursery homes suffer from depression more than those old people who live at home. According to estimates, 3% of old people who live in their homes suffer from serious depression. This is while 15 to 25 percent of old people who live in nursery homes suffer from minor depression. A high level of depression may cause suicide especially in old men (Mishara, 1996). In fact, one of the causes for depression is a sense of being valueless towards oneself and situations. This is because a depressed person believes that individuals' values correspond to their situations. Therefore, depressed individuals consider themselves weaker than others (Boronz, 2007).

In this research, respondents were asked to explain their narratives in new forms and create new meanings for problematic behaviors, feelings and thoughts. Therefore, asking question from members based on their answers results in propounding more questions so that the individual does not see himself or herself the same as the problem. Therefore, problematic questions were eliminated and new emotions are formed. White and Epston (1990) believe that abnormal feelings are interpreted into new meanings. Emotions can be acquired and learnt in order to deal with different situations. On the other hand, Payne (2004) showed that narrative therapy can facilitate identification of abilities of individuals towards them and their problems and can increase individuals' power and therefore increases sense of valubleness. Narrative therapy can be effective on increasing old people's happiness because it helps externalize and deactivate problems, it helps believe that the individual is not the same as the problem and it helps view the problems from outside and helps narrate life story in a different manner. This research had also some restrictions like other studies. This research lacked follow-up stage. Further, the results are limited to the old people who lived in nursery homes and it is difficult to generalize the results to all old people. Because group narrative therapy increased happiness in the old people who lived in nursery homes, group narrative therapy is proposed to be used as one of the therapy and training interventions in nursery homes besides other advisory services.

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