

Study of effect of group reality therapy on improvement of students' coping strategies

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ABSTRACT

The manner of coping the stressful conditions is one of important factors in the communication. Using the effective coping strategies helps the individuals to overcome the physical and mental problems in their interpersonal relationships. The present research aimed to study the effectiveness of group reality therapy on the improvement of M.S students' coping strategies in Gilan University. This research is a quasi-experimental study and of pretest- posttest kind which is done by a control group. The statistic population included 400 B.S students of Gilan University in the educational year 2016- 17. For collecting the data, Endler and Parker's (1990) Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS) was used in the stages before and after the training. The reality therapy training was presented in a cumulative form for 8 sessions (2 sessions per week and for 45 minutes) for the test group, but no education was presented for the control group. The results of variance analysis revealed that the influence of reality therapy training on the improvement of students' task-based and emotion- focused coping strategies was not meaningful ($P>0.001$), while this training had meaningful effect on the avoidance coping strategy ($P<0.001$). This result includes important implications about the planning, training and improvement of the students' mental health. With regard to meaninglessness of reality therapy training on the improvement of students' problem- focused and emotion- focused coping strategies, it is suggested to use the problem-solving training which educates the successful methods of problem solving and also the rational- emotional therapy, schema therapy and other cognitive therapies along with reality therapy in a synthetic form.

Key words: reality therapy, coping strategies, student

Introduction

The students are of groups that are exposed to the stressful factors due to the transformational nature of student life. Sometimes, the decision making becomes so difficult that the student encounters the anxiety and stress and even the most severe problems. Being in a stressful situation is somehow obtaining the coping intervention and flexibility. Making appropriate decisions against the stress can decrease its negative effect

on the individual's mental health and ultimately result in further consistency (cited in Me'mari, 2014). Therefore, it seems necessary to pay attention to the coping strategies in the stressful situations and the factors which can play significant role in the application of these strategies.

With regard to all the stress- related issues and its consequences, it can be said that the strategies of coping with the stress is important than the existence if stressful factors in life. The appropriate strategies should be applied to prevent the creation and continuity of stressful situations which cause the physical and mental disease and anxiety in the individuals.

The causes of stress and strategies of coping with that have been considerably attended and studied in recent years. It has been revealed that the use of effective coping strategies plays significant role in the reduction and continuity of stressful situations (Chen & Chang, 2011). The use of effective coping strategies paves the way for the individuals to solve the problems and get rid of emotional disorders and achieve their goals.

The new viewpoints existing about the stress, instead of concentrating on the nature of stress and its significance, emphasize on the individual's psychological resources in coping with the stressful factors or changing and improving the factors which can be effective on the selection of strategies; since, by this way, the appropriate therapeutic measures can be provided for the stressful individuals (Amiri et al., 2012).

Lazarus & Folkman consider the coping as the individual's mental, emotional and behavioral efforts applied by him to overcome, tolerate or minimize the effects of mental pressure when encountering this situation. According to them, there are two kinds of coping strategies: problem- focused coping and emotion- focused coping (cited in Karimizadeh, 2016).

The reality therapy is a method based on common sense and emotional involvement in which the reality, acceptance of responsibility and recognition of right and wrong affairs and their relationship with the individual's daily life are emphasized. The main purpose of reality therapy is to change the unsuccessful identity and to create a responsible behavior in the individual, since the human being's irresponsible behavior causes his stress and anxiety. Glosser's reality therapy is regarded one of the popular interventions in the description of human being, determination of behavioral rules and manner of access to satisfaction, happiness and success (Ghorbanalipour, 2014). The concepts such as control, responsibility and choice are emphasized in the reality therapy that can affect the individuals' coping strategies and locus of control (Amiri et al., 2012). In this therapy, the pragmatic methods such as the training, emphasize, humor, encountering, asking, role plays and feedback are used. The reality therapy is a cycle of counseling which includes the creation of an efficient counseling environment and execution of specific methods which lead to the change (Corey, 2013). The reality therapy puts emphasize on the referents' concentration on their behavior and prevents reproaching the referents (Bradley, 2014). The lack of comprehensive and controlled researches about the reality therapy method is the biggest weak point of this approach.

With regard to the issues to which the students encounter, it seems necessary to improve the students' mental health level by training the skills and methods which reduce the influence of mental pressures. With regard to the importance of variable of coping strategies and the role of these two variables in the individuals' life and their coping with the difficulties, the use of educational programs seems to be a necessary matter. Accordingly, the present research aims to study the influence of reality therapy training on the coping strategies in the students.

Research Methodology

The present research is an applied quasi-experimental study and of pretest- posttest kind which is done by a control group. The statistic population included 14000 B.S male and female students of Gilan University in the educational year 2016- 17. Then, 370 students were selected as the sample by using the Morgan table and accomplished calculations.

Research tools

Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS): Endler and Parker (1990) designed this questionnaire for the purpose of evaluating different coping strategies in the stressful situations. This test includes 48 questions based on 5-option likert scale (from never to so much). Every 16 questions is related to one of

coping dimensions and ultimately, the prevalent style of every individual is determined based on the score s/he gets in the test. In other words, every behavior which obtains higher score in the scale is regarded as the individual's preferential coping style. Therefore, all the questions of test are divided into three problem-focused, emotion- focused and avoidance coping strategies based on three coping behaviors.

The reliability of this test based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient in Endler and Parker's (1990) study in the case of problem- focused strategy was obtained 0.90 and 0.92 respectively for the female and male students. In the case of emotion- focused strategy, it was obtained 0.85 and 0.82 respectively for the female and male students. And in the case of avoidance strategy, it was obtained 0.82 and 0.85 respectively for the female and male students.

Procedure

After selecting the sample and attracting the individuals' participation, their selection was done randomly in the form of two control and test groups. The reality therapy curriculum was trained to the test group during 8 sessions (2 sessions per week for 45 minutes). This training was accomplished in one of classes of human sciences faculty in Gilan University for one month. No training was represented for the control group. The homework was specified for the testees at the end of every session and the testees did them every session and a number of the testees talked voluntarily about their homework and explained them to the other members of group. After 8 sessions, the posttest was done on control and test groups and the obtained data were analyzed by using the statistical methods.

Table 1: Training sessions explanation

| Session | Content of session |
|-----------------|---|
| First session | 1- To develop emotional connection: to show intimacy, kindness, interest and acceptance toward he referents, determination of sharing and involvement level, prevention from unpractical promises |
| Second session | 2- To emphasize the behavior not the emotion: awareness of behavior, learning the reciprocal relationship between emotions and behavior |
| Third session | 3- To emphasize the present time: To train this matter that the past is past and changing that is impossible and only the present and future times can be changed, connection of past to the present and future, recognition of positive and effective points of personality, recognition of barriers of right works, recognition of the past successful methods and behaviors and oneself encouragement to repeat them. |
| Fourth session | 4- judgement of behavior: To guide the referents to judge their behavior and acts which lead to the failure, critical viewpoint toward behavior and evaluation of its beneficence in connection with the others, acceptance of responsibility for the behavior. |
| Fifth session | 5- To prepare the plan and curriculum: To help the referents to change their unsuccessful behavior to a successful one by designing the useful and practical curriculums, to enact the contract, lack of rapprochement, study of work barriers. |
| Sixth session | 6- Commitment to performance of curriculum: To reject the excuses and to omit the punishment, recognition of commitment importance, commitment to execution of curriculum, expression of feeling about the execution of curriculum, non- acceptance of every excuse. |
| Seventh session | 7- Perseverance and review of curriculum: to avoid any negative and scornful opinion expressed by the consultant, recommitment and or rethinking and reviewing the former curriculum. |
| Eighth session | 8- Review of sessions: Conclusion |

Statistical method

For analyzing the collected data in the descriptive section, the mean and standard deviation were used. In the inferential section, the single- variate and multivariate variance analyses were used for evaluating the meaningfulness of effect of independent variable on the dependent one in the tests.

Findings

Demographical findings

Table 2: demographical information of sample individuals

| Age range of test group | | | Age range of control group | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Mean | Standard deviation | | Mean | Standard deviation |
| 20.24 | 2.05 | | 19.93 | 1.90 |

| Sex | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Female | 8 | 1.57 | 11 | 6.78 |
| male | 6 | 9.42 | 3 | 4.21 |

Inferential findings

Kolmogorov- Smirnov test was used for evaluating the normality of distribution of coping strategies variable in the pretest and posttest. With regard to the results, Kolmogorov- Smirnov statistics is not meaningful for the coping strategies variable in two groups in pretest and posttest. Therefore, the distribution of coping strategies variable is pretest sand posttest is normal.

Before using the parametric test of multivariate variance analysis, the MBOX test was used to respect the homogeneity assumptions of variance- covariance matrixes. According to MBOX test and its meaninglessness for all the variables, there exists the presupposition of non- difference between the variances (MBOX= 14.28, F= 2.08, P= 0.052).

With regard to the obtained results of the statistic F, the homogeneity test of regression slope of pretest and posttest of coping strategies is meaningful in both two test and control groups (F= 56.880, 100.735, 36.940, P<0.05). Therefore, the regression slope of pretest and posttest is not the same in two groups.

For studying the coping strategies in which two test and control groups are different, the results of multivariate analysis of variance have been represented in the table 4-9.

Table 3: Results of multivariate analysis of variance for coping strategies

| Variable | Source | SS | df | MS | F | P | ETA | Statistical power |
|------------------|-----------|--------|----|--------|-------|-------|------|-------------------|
| Problem- focused | intercept | 95.43 | 1 | 95.43 | 7.005 | 0.01 | 0.21 | 0.72 |
| | Group | 51.59 | 1 | 51.59 | 3.81 | 0.06 | 0.13 | 0.47 |
| | Error | 354.22 | 26 | 624.13 | | | | |
| Emotion- focused | intercept | 863.15 | 1 | 863.15 | 30.94 | 0.000 | 0.54 | 1 |
| | Group | 26.33 | 1 | 26.33 | 0.94 | 0.34 | 0.03 | 0.15 |
| | Error | 725.25 | 26 | 27.89 | | | | |
| Avoidance | intercept | 8.78 | 1 | 8.87 | 0.90 | 0.35 | 0.03 | 0.15 |
| | Group | 40.32 | 1 | 40.33 | 4.16 | 0.05 | 0.14 | 0.50 |
| | Error | 251.98 | 26 | 9.69 | | | | |

With regard to the table 3, there is meaningful difference between two test and control group in terms of coping strategies (P<0.05, F= 16.4). Furthermore, there is no meaningful difference between two test and control groups in terms of problem- focused (P> 0.05, F= 3.81) and emotion- focused (P>0.05, F= 0.94) coping strategies. In other words, training the reality therapy curriculum has had no influence on improvement of students problem- focused and emotion- focused coping strategies; but it has been effective on the avoidance coping strategies. According to the aforesaid results, the first hypothesis about the problem- focused and emotion- focused coping strategies is rejected and it is confirmed in term of avoidance coping strategies.

It was evaluated that the mean of which group is more than the other one in the posttest of coping strategies after the moderation of pretest scores. The moderated means have been represented in the table 4.

Table 4: Moderated mean and standard deviation of coping strategies elements

| Variable | Group | Mean | Standard deviation | Confidence level %95 | |
|------------------|---------|--------|--------------------|----------------------|------------|
| | | | | Low level | High level |
| Problem- focused | Test | - 3.21 | 0.98 | -5.24 | -1.18 |
| | Control | -0.48 | 0.98 | - 2.51 | 1.54 |
| Emotion-focused | Test | 6.52 | 1.41 | 3.62 | 9.42 |
| | Control | 4.58 | 1.41 | 1.68 | 7.48 |
| Avoidance | Test | 0.64 | 0.83 | - 1.07 | 2.35 |
| | Control | - 1.76 | 0.83 | - 3.47 | - 0.50 |

With regard to the table 4 and result of means difference, the difference of moderated mean of test and control groups is meaningful for the avoidance coping strategies. It means that it can be said be %95 confidence that the reality therapy training has had effect on the avoidance coping strategies of these students, but it had no meaningful effect on the emotion- focused coping strategies.

Discussion

The results of present research revealed that the reality therapy training had no effect on the improvement of problem-focused and emotion- focused coping strategies of the students ($P > 0.001$), while thus therapeutic method had no effect on the improvement of students' avoidance strategies ($P < 0.001$). With regard to the results, the first hypothesis is rejected in the case of problem- focused and emotion-focused strategies; but it is confirmed in the case of avoidance strategies. This finding did not correspond to the findings of researches done by Ramzi and Sepehri (2014), Ramzi et al. (2014), E'temadi et al. (2012), Amiri et al. (2012), Khalegh Abbasabadi (2009), Ahmadi et al. (2009) in the case of problem- focused and emotion- focused elements, but they corresponded to this study in case of avoidance strategy.

Ramzi (2014) studied in a research the effectiveness of group reality therapy on the students' coping strategies. The results revealed that the total score of emotion- focused coping and avoidance sub- scale has been meaningfully reduced in the intervention group in comparison to the control group. Furthermore, the total score of problem- focused coping and the sub-scales of problem- solving, planning and positive reevaluation revealed a meaningful increase in the intervention group in comparison to the control group that these results do not correspond to the findings of present study in the case of problem- focused and emotion- focused strategies, but they correspond in the case of avoidance strategies.

Amiri and his colleagues (2012) studied in a research the effectiveness of group reality therapy on the locus of control and students' coping strategies. The results revealed that 8 sessions reality therapy training causes the increase of internal locus of control and reduction of external locus of control. In addition, it has had considerable effect on the reduction of application of emotion- focused coping strategies. Although there observed clinical changes in the case of problem-focused coping strategies, the difference between two groups was not statistically meaningful. The result of this research corresponds to the present one in the case of problem- focused strategies but not in the case of emotion- focused strategies.

The use of effective coping strategies paves the way for the individuals to solve the problem, get rid of emotional disorders and achieve their goals. The use of ineffective coping strategies may lead to the avoiding or repressed behaviors (Pericles, 2011).

With regard to the obtained results, it can be said that although the statistical meaningfulness of changes is a considerable point, it does not mean that the observed changes are not valuable. As the results revealed, the improvement of test group students' coping strategies in the pretest and posttest has been increased in comparison to the control group. Indeed, the improvements have been created in the test group' coping strategies in this research.

It seems that many of human being's problems root in the use of defensive mechanisms, non- acceptance of reality and individuals' avoidance from encountering the difficulties, since the individual experiences the short- term delight by escaping from the reality, but s/he encounters many problems in long term. Regarding what was mentioned, the reality therapy with technologies of individual's exposure to reality causes the individuals to use the avoidance strategy less. So. The confirmation of avoidance strategy is justifiable.

Although the reality therapy curriculum may sound simplistic at the first looking, it has indeed a wide application range; since, in most cases, the individual tries to escape from the reality and use the avoidance and emotion- focused coping strategies and use less the problem- focused strategy. Furthermore, with regard to this matter that this therapy had no effect on the problem- focused and emotion- focused coping strategies in this research, these results can be justified in such way that the reason of lack of reality therapy influence on the problem- focused and emotion- focused coping strategies is that the reality therapy is a main prerequisite for the improvement of problem- focused strategy which provides the condition for the recognition of problem and also planning for problem- solving; but as the successful problem solving skills have not been completely included in that, this therapy is not lonely able to improve the problem- focused and emotion- focused coping strategies.

Conclusion

With regard to the accomplished studies and their results which have been indicative of effectiveness of reality therapy on different variables and as the realities are emphasized in the reality therapy and the any individual tries escape from the realities in most of mental difficulties and uses the avoidance strategy, it seems to be better to use the reality therapy along with the other psychological therapies.

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