

Full Length Research Paper

Effectiveness of a solution-based counseling on students' self-perception

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Received 07 June, 2015; Accepted 31 July, 2015

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of solution-based counseling to increase students' self-conception. Method of research was semi-experimental with pretest and posttest design with a control group. The study sample consisted of all high school students in Dashtestan city, Bushkan district for which 30 subjects were randomly selected and were replaced in the experimental and control groups. The experimental group received 30 sessions of solution-based group counseling. To collect data, the questionnaire of self-perception was used. Data were analyzed by covariance test. The results showed that solution-based group counseling increased students' self-perception and its components such as self-esteem and self-admission.

Key words: Solution-based group counseling, self-perception.

INTRODUCTION

In the history of human civilization, self and issues surrounding it have always been a question that has occupied human's thought (Eysenck and Wilson, 1975). Self and concept of the self are issues addressed throughout life from toddlers who look at similar faces in the mirror to philosophers who pay attention to issues of personal identity continuity through abstract issues (Damon and Hart, 1991). All of us feel something special about who we are and how we are similar to and distinct from others.

This feeling is the same as self which appears from infancy with care sense from others and becomes complex gradually, while psychologists face with people who have made wrong decisions. In people's opinion, looking at the issue from outside, wrong choice is evident, yet this mistake has been repeated due to wrong

image from self, that is one's perception to know oneself correctly. Thoughts and feeling about self which constitutes a system called self-concept can be of great importance. This field includes all the considerations a person uses to define and distinguishes himself from others, such as self-dependent physical features, estates and properties (activities and abilities), talents and arts (psycho-social features), tendencies, customs and traditions (philosophical ideas), moral values and political thoughts. Meanwhile, self-concept can be referred to as the past and future life path, persons' ideas remaining fixed or changed over time and the concepts about personal change and personal role in formation of these changes. Another task of self-conception is to make distinction from others. In this regard, self-conception interweaves persons' interests in that they become

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different from others' interest while depicting the relationship between these two. In general, self-conception is regarded as a cognitive representation of a person from his own interest and personal identity. Self-conception organizes cognitive experiences of life and individual which brings about the feeling of continuity in time, ground and text complexity. This necessary feeling of personal continuity is the very action which has been referred to as public thought of self by philosophers and psychologists (Damon and Hart, 1991).

Self-recognition and self-conception, defined as what a person considers for his own self, are the ways which make human familiar with hidden parts of his own self, ending up to recognition (Mohseni, 1996). Secord et al. (2007), in a research about the changes of self-conception, announced that one way to change self-conception is to know personal features and familiarity with personal type. Azimi (2009), in the research on "efficacy of Anigram education on the increase of Alzahra students' self-conception", concluded that self-conception improved significantly after education of 9-fold personal types of Anigram. Also, Anigram education could increase the level of self-esteem and self-admission significantly at confidence level of $p < 0.01$. Self-conception has two scales of self-esteem and self-admission. The former is a person confirming his own self due to strength or deservedness and the latter is accepting personal weakness, the simultaneous interpretation of which can be seen to be a reflection of self-conception in public-realm. (Azimi, 2009). Solution-based counseling was proposed as a short-term counseling by Decharse et al. 20 years ago developing from Milton Ericson's work in hypnotism treatment and systemic theory in family in a short-term family counseling center in Millwakee, Wisconsin. The basis of this method is consultants' trust in referrals or students to make a constructive change in life and utilization of their internal resources. In this method, solutions are obtained through recognition and application of exceptional cases. The students' abilities and capabilities are nurtured and applied to implement accessible behavioral aims (O'Hanlon and Weiner-Davis, 1989). Solution-based approach is the most popular one in which the main focus is on non-pathologic attitude to people, limitation of therapeutic sessions, applied and practical nature and feasibility of techniques (Chang, 2005). Solution-based therapy is an approach to psychotherapy which is based on creating solutions, discovering the current resources and prospect hopes (Invesin, 2002). The main focus of this therapy is to help the therapy seekers to change their attitude and expression towards the solutions, so that therapy seekers find the ways to change the situation (Corey, 2005).

This approach has been studied in various researches. For example, Julia and Robert investigated the effects of this approach on scientific, motivational social and emotional needs of 14 youths having problems reading texts. The comparison of the effects of this method showed that it was very successful. Bannink (2008) showed that solution-based short-term therapy has a great effect on behavioral change of referrals with anxiety and stress post accidently. Fredrick (2008) studied the effect of solution-based short-term therapy and divine realm. The results showed the efficacy of the approach to encourage Christians to see the divine realm at present. Cook and Kaffenberger (2007) studied the efficacy of solution-based counseling workshop on non-white students' low learning and reported it as a key role for professional consultants in school reform. Guterman and Rudes (2005) showed that they could improve the behavioral change in referrals in a combined rational and solution-based method. Nelson (2001) investigated the efficacy of solution-based group counseling in reducing material conflicts. The results showed that it increased material satisfaction. Mudd (2000) studied the efficacy of solution-based therapy and the education of couples' communicative skills concluding an increase in self-admission and communication skills.

The present research seeks to answer this question: Does solution-based group counseling influence students' self-conception?

METHOD

The research was carried out semi-experimentally with pretest-posttest design with control group. The statistical population consisted of all high school students (boys and girls) of Dashtestan city, Bushkan district, in 2011-2012 academic year; they were 238 students, of 16 to 19 years old. 30 students were randomly chosen who had inclusion criteria and replaced in test and witness group. The test group underwent ten 90-min sessions of solution-based group counseling weekly. The inclusion criteria were lack of physical disability, getting the score lower than 20 in self-conception test, ability to participate in group counseling sessions and written agreement of parents. It is worth mentioning that solution-based group counseling sessions were held just after those of test group to consider ethics principles.

The research tool was self-conception questionnaire, developed by Agrawal (1991) and translated by Karami (2008). This questionnaire has two components of self-esteem and self-admission measuring the self-understanding with 40 questions. Knapp (1965) studied the validity of this test by EPI and POI. He made a research on 136 masters' degree students and divided them into high-nervous and low-nervous. Nervousness had a negative significant correlation with self-esteem and with extroversion. Self-admission had a negative correlation with nervousness and positive correlation with extroversion, at low level.

Both scales could distinguish the low-and high-nervous groups and the scores of both scales at high-nervous group were lower. Dandes used self-conception questionnaire with other tools such as teachers' attitude questionnaire of Minnesota, California, closed-mindedness questionnaire and open-mindedness questionnaire to show a positive significant correlation with the results. Agrawal (1978) found that the scores of self-esteem, self-admission and self-conception were consistent with those of personality diagnosis to assess self-conception. In a sample of 30 students, self-conception questionnaire was used to determine the reliability of retest in a month interval by author. The results showed that the questionnaire has a high reliability. Self-admission, self-esteem, and self-conception were at 0.74, 0.63, and 0.72. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.75, 0.72 and 0.82 for self-admission, self-admission, and self-respect, respectively.

Implementation

Having selected the sample group, we held the solution-based counseling sessions in ten 90-min sessions, weekly. The focus on solution at present and realistic approach about accessible aim was explained to the participants. Each session consisted of three sections; in the first section, the homework done was studied, in the second section, a technique, skill or idea was thought and finally, a homework related to education skill was presented. The group counseling sessions are as follows:

First session consisted of familiarity and communication with students, doing protest, statement of aims, session procedure and rules. Second session included stating basic principles of solution-based counseling, informing the group and familiarizing them with basic concepts of solution-focused approach. Third session was related to educating the aim precisely, determining the prices and tangible aims. Fourth session covered considering the changes through concentration on present time and time, speaking in clients' language, making the abilities and talents outstanding and praising the abilities. Fifth session had concentration on students and application of students' skills and attention to shortcomings against abilities. Sixth session contained educating optimistic techniques, externalizing the problem and presupposition issue of help to members to learn to externalize the problem.

In the seventh session ,changing the mentality and thinking style, and conversation about change of mentality change to problem were taught. Eighth session had making the exceptional cases outstanding and using the miracle questions and important vocabulary. In ninth session applying graded communicative questions and Domino game (snowball), and familiarizing the students with question types were carried out. Tenth session consisted of summarizing the subject, replying the questions at the end of tenth session, self-conception questionnaire was performed. Pretest and post test data were analyzed with single variable covariance test by SPSS-19.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Descriptive data including statistical indexes of mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum score of research variables related to research aims.

As seen in Table 1, the mean of self-conception and its

components in pretest of both groups are similar. Also, the mean score of self-conception and its components in post-test shows that there is not any remarkable change in post-test mean score of witness group and pretest mean score, but the mean score of self-conception and its components in post-test differed from that of pretest. To determine the efficacy of intervention on dependent variable, covariance analysis was used, the results of which are mentioned in the following (It is worth mentioning that before the use of covariance, pre-suppositions of using this test were studied. Then, the test was performed).

As seen in Table 2, there is a significant difference between corrected mean of self-conception scale in terms of group membership after the pretest scores were corrected. ($p < 0.01$). Therefore, solution-based group counseling increased the self-conception at 0.361 and statistical power showed that the sample volume was suitable to investigate the hypothesis. The results show that solution –focused group counseling influenced the components of self-conception such as self-respect and self-admission. The remarkable value of eta coefficient shows the effect of independent variable on the increase of the components, as seen in Table 2; the efficacy was 0.152 in self-respect with statistical power being 0.881 respecting the suitability of sample to investigate the hypothesis. The efficacy was 0.324 in self-admission with statistical power 0.999 representing the suitable sample for the hypothesis.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research aimed at investigating the efficacy of solution-based counseling on the increase of self-conception. The results showed that solution-based group counseling is effective on the increase of self-conception, self-respect and self-admission. This is in consistence with part of the results of Julia and Robert (2010), Bannink (2008), Secord et al. (2007), Guterman and Rudes (2005), Nelson (2001), Jalili (2009), and Barandeh (2009). Nelson (2001) concluded that solution –based therapy was useful in reducing conflicts of marital satisfaction. Cook and Kaffenberger (2007) showed that efficacy of solution-based counseling and the key role of professional consultants are very important in school reforms. Bannink (2008) showed that solution-based short-term therapy is effective in reducing symptoms of psychic patients. Also, Dibaian (2005) showed that solution-based method can increase marital status satisfaction.

Barandeh (2009) concluded that solution-based group

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of pretest and posttest of self-conception questionnaire and its sub-indexes in two test and witness group.

Questionnaire and its sub-scales	Group	No.	Pretest		Posttest	
			Mean/SD	Mean/SD	Mean/SD	Mean/SD
Self-esteem	control	15	7/13	1/76	7/40	1/63
	experimental	15	6/93	1/27	10/46	1/40
Self-admission	control	15	9/93	2/31	10/06	2/31
	experimental	15	10/40	2/06	16/60	1/59
Total score of self-conception	control	15	17/06	2/5	17/46	1/98
	experimental	15	17/33	2/54	27	2/92

Table 2. The results of single variable covariance analysis to investigate the posttest difference of self-conception questionnaire and its subscales in test and witness groups.

Variable	Test	mean square	Degree of freedom	F	Significance level	eta coefficient	test power
Pretest	Self-esteem	54/15	1	17/943	0/001**	0/239	0/986
	Self-admission	150/417	1	22/381	0/001**	0/282	0/996
	Self-conception	385/067	1	33/893	0/001**	0/373	1/000
Group membership	Self-esteem	30/817	1	10/212	0/001**	0/152	0/881
	Self-admission	183/75	1	27/341	0/001**	0/324	0/999
	Self-conception	365/06	1	32/132	0/001**	0/361	1/000
error	Self-esteem	3/018	28				
	Self-admission	6/721	28				
	Self-conception	11/361	28				

**P<0/01.

counseling reduced women staffs' job stress moderately. Mir Jalili (2009) showed that this method increased students' self-efficacy and sub-scales of talent and effort. Azimi found out that self-conception improved when the 9-fold personal types were educated. Anigram could increase the level of self-respect and self-admission. Dezhbakhsh (2010) showed that solution-based group education affects couple's self-efficacy and life satisfaction.

Solution-based counseling concentrates the individuals' capabilities to change and create hope with a focus on positive points. It is target-oriented, aiming at building solutions and responses for components and problems. It is based on the fact that positive constructive change is

inevitable. Therefore, the grounds which are likely to change are discussed in this method (O'Hanlon and Weiner-Davis, 1989). It starts from the point where the students or referral stand.

Initially, the consultant accepts what the student says. In fact, students' needs and hopes are located at the center of attention and consultation and the counseling process is adapted to students' needs individually. The mutual performance is focused on the abilities and strengths.

The solutions are sought for which can solve the problem (Brusher et al., 1993). The basis of solution-based approach is consultant's trust in students to make changes in life, and utilize their own internal resources.

This paper showed the techniques and method of solution-based approach could help the students to recognize their weakness and strength points. It is suggested that solution-based group consulting is studied on other psychological aspects of students in a long-term approach, especially in schools.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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