

## **EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUP COUNSELING BASED ON ALTHOUGH APPROACH ON ELDERLY DEPRESSION**

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**ABSTRACT.** Seniors are an asset to society and investment in their health that will benefit each community. This study examined the effectiveness of group counseling based on although approach on reduction of depression in elderly. The population consisted of all elderly residents of nursing homes in the city of Amol, of which twenty were selected according to depression scores. Those who had higher scores were randomly divided into two control and experimental groups (ten in each group). The method of testing was pretest-posttest with control group. A depression test instruments used in this research to measure elderly depression of both group before and after the tests, the subjects in both groups responded to it. An organized set of activities executed based on experimental techniques, although the intervention was implemental. Using analysis of covariance and t-test, the main findings of this study indicated that the group consulting has significant impact on improving depression. This approach is based on the use of group counseling for elderly depression treatment as an appropriate model for seniors offered counseling.

**Keywords:** *Although the approach – Group counseling – Elderly – Depression scale.*

### **Introduction**

Aging is a process comes after deep physiological, psychological and sociological transformations [1]. According to the Census Bureau of Iran, the population of seniors of the world has been estimated approximately 590 million peoples and it is predicted that till 2050 this number increases about 2 billion elderly. In Iran like other countries the number of aged peoples is increasingly growing. In 2006 over than 7.27 per cent of Iranian population were above 65 years old. Considering the current population structure of Iran, this number will increase in future (Census Bureau of Iran).

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Aging is the period of change and loss and few seniors are able to adapt with occurred transformations. Most of elderly when face with specific events or a commutation of events exceed their tolerance, ability or coping skilled levels, experience a sense of hopelessness which ultimately leads to depression [2]. Depression is described as a emotional reflection certain individuals may experience in elderly. About 12 to 16 per cent of seniors suffer from depression, though 20 to 30 per cent of them sometimes report a symptom of depression [3]. Generally speaking, this rate is higher in care homes which is about 35 percent [4].

In fact, seniors living in nursing homes are more exposed to depression. In these homes, depression can be experienced temporary and due to chronic disease and seeing others' disabilities as well as high rate of death ( DSM-IV). To recognize an individual depressed, 5 symptoms out of 9 in a two-week period should be taken into consideration. The total 9 symptoms of depression are as: 1) depressed mood, 2) disinterested in doing works, 3) insomnia and oversleep, 4) lose weight or gain weight, 5) reduced energy, 6) psychomotor slowing, 7) inability to concentrate, 8) feeling guilty and 9) suicide thoughts [5].

Additionally, the organizational characteristics of nursing home are counted as fundamental factors. Seniors expect that as they took care of their children, they take care of them in elders as well. But when they continue their life in nursing home, and they are not satisfied with their children then they are ready to suffer depression [6]. It seems that more different studies on this subject would be beneficial in providing appropriate solutions for coping with aging and its related problems.

### **Review of literature**

Depression in seniors correlates more with suffering from different diseases, reduced recovery from illness, increased disability and pain, dysfunction, increased suicide and greater use of health services [7]. A broad range of effective treatments like medication and social- psychological treatments were used about the depression. All of treatments are applied for curing depression are used for normal people will be useful for curing elders' depression. These treatments as mentioned above are consisted of psychosocial treatments, psychotherapy, psychosomatic treatments involving psychotropic drug treatments and electric shock treatment. Therefore, based on age, degree of using these treatments may vary [8].

As Pour Ibrahim [9] mentioned, improving depression in elderly is highly dependent upon type and severity of depression symptoms, depression backgrounds like physical diseases, family conflicts, situational stresses, patient' s attitudes toward depression, and condition that refers to the socio-cultural impacts as well as applicability in treatment method.

### **Significance of research**

There are few studies on through approach treatment and researches that directly have addressed this topic in Iran. However, some of the existing researchers are referred to. It seems that greater studies on this subject will be influential in recommending proper solutions to enable elderly adapt with their new condition and its relevant problem.

According to what have been mentioned so far about the seniors' problems and needs, one of important challenges for elders in today's life is depression and lack of meaning and goal in life. Considering the increasing growth of elders population in Iran and significance of concerning and satisfying this population group as much as possible, the present research is dealt with this research question that whether group –based counseling approach is effective on reducing depression symptoms in elderly residents of nursing home in Amol or not.

### **Research background**

In a study, Sadeh Moghadam [4] showed that group treatment was effective on reducing elders' depression in Kahrizak nursing home.

Hasan Abadi [11] in a comparative study, investigated on rate of effectiveness of three group treatment methods( rational-emotional, although-humanistic, spiritual-religious) and showed that every three treatment methods increased self-esteem level of experimental group members compared to control group significantly.

According to Corey [12] we can use group counseling and psychotherapy as efficient as possible about although problems. This effectiveness has been appropriately approved in previous studies [13].

Of different treatments are identified for depression, the impact of although psychotherapy treatment on improving depression of last periods of life is noteworthy [9].

Concerning Shaafi Abadi [14], although treatment familiarizes individuals with their freedom in choice and responsibilities that have in choosing their actions, behaviors and ultimately their life and prohibit them from frivolity and nihilism.

As Visvari [5] said, group counseling in form of although method, illustrates a small replica of the real world within which participants experience way of living and action. Members of this group aim at exploring their own and interaction together about their although concerns.

Useful treatment, in addition to development of patient's skills [17], assists him/her to confirm the self by establishment and maintainance of supportive relations [15]. The although treatment of seniors requires therapist to be active and maintain the structure of treatment session since most of patients tend to flashback [16].

Margiotta [10] carried out a study on effectiveness of although treatment on depression of persons over 60 year-old and understood that training of although concepts has a outstanding impact on reducing depression after 60 years old. Margiotta also stated that though, the cognitive-behavioral and interpersonal psychotherapy approaches may be influential on decrease of depression, although treatment has a more paramount role in condition of life crisis.

According to Pour Ibrahim's study [9] on 90 peoples of seniors in Tehran nursing homes, it was confirmed that although group counseling and logo therapy lead to improving depression in elderly of private nursing homes. Other previously performed studies also approved the positive role of although psychotherapy such as logo therapy in mental health like depression and physical health like cancer [18,19,20,21,22].

### **Methodology**

The used plan in this research was an experimental one (pre-test, post-test with control group) which was selected according to research problem and research question. In this plan, both groups were measured twice. The first measurement was in pre-test and the second measurement happened in post-test stage. The statistical population consisted of all seniors living in nursing home of city Amol.

To select the sample, first the depression test GDS was administered among elders and 20 depressed seniors was identified. Then these 20 depressed subjects were divided into two 10 member group, control and experimental, randomly. However, participants needed to have the necessary requirements to enter the groups. These requirements included: 1) participants must aged 65-80 years old, 2) have no psychological disorders, 3) be able to participate in the research physically, 4) be interested in taking part in the research, 5) use no special medication for depression, and 7) had to receive score 15 or higher in GDS test.

### **Research instruments**

The used instrument in the present research was geriatric depression scale (GDS) contains 30 items which measure the influential measures in seniors' depression. GDS was developed by Besaviche to assess seniors. The answer have two choices, Yes and No, Yes is scored 1 and No is scored 0. Score from 0-9 means without depression, 10-19 average depression, and 20-30 severe depression. Compared to clinical recognition of depression, this questionnaire possesses a proper internal and external stability. Its reliability after retest method achieved 0.85 (Besaviche).

In Iran GDS was used by Pour Ibrahim [9] with 30 participants and after executing split half and Spearman Brown methods, its validity obtained as 96%.

### Data collection method

In the current study, GDS test and some although based group activities were held in eight 60 minute sessions in order to measure the degree of the training effectiveness through questionnaire and in two pre-test and post-test stages. This program includes organized activities based on the existential approach from May and Yalom's viewpoint. In this method, self-distancing processes were used to help a patient pull away from his/her problem and act more wisely. In process of changing attitude it is also attempted to encourage an individual to pull away and act more rationally.

In process of attitude change, it is aimed at encouraging patient to re-organize negative problems into positive possibilities. These processes will then be established through making a joyful environment in group, noting capabilities, achievements and members' values. The following table describes the objective and content of each session.

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Session 1 | Determining group purposes and rules and familiarization of group members with each other and with leader, describing the approach treatment and significance of meaning in life. |
| Session 2 | Believe in self and identifying own characteristics and concerning spiritual freedom as one of aspects of the universe.   |
| Session 3 | Awareness about taking responsibility and its role in success and presenting a task.  |
| Session 4 | Identifying depression and study of its related effective factors specially in elderly.   |
| Session 5 | Learning the ability of go beyond the self , mocking problems and rescue from nihilism.   |
| Session 6 | Training the intention contrast technique for dealing with hopelessness and depression in elderly.  |
| Session 7 | Recognizing creative values and creative activities that cause or are perceived to give life meaning.   |
| Session 8 | Reviewing previous sessions and a brief summary and overview of the theoretical and experimental sessions and administration of post-test stage.                                  |

### Findings

The present research aimed at study of group counseling based on although approach effectiveness on reducing depression of seniors living in nursing home in city Amol. The obtained results of descriptive and analytical analyses are presented below.

**Table 1:** Descriptive indexes of scores of elders’ depression test in experimental and control groups

| Variables          | age  |       | sex    |      | Pre-test depression |      | Post-test depression |       |
|--------------------|------|-------|--------|------|---------------------|------|----------------------|-------|
|                    | Sd.  | mean  | female | male | Sd.                 | mean | Sd.                  | mean  |
| Experimental group | 1.80 | 73.45 | 7      | 3    | 1.89                | 9.7  | 2.11                 | 7.40  |
| Control group      | 6.25 | 75.7  | 6      | 4    | 1.85                | 9.9  | 2.08                 | 10.10 |

**Table 2:** Results of covariance analysis of comparing post-test scores after improving pre-test scores of depression test of elders in experimental and control group

| Source of changes | Sum of squares | df | Mean of squares | F value | Sig. | Index of impact size |
|-------------------|----------------|----|-----------------|---------|------|----------------------|
| group             | 32.14          | 1  | 32.14           | 13.97   | .002 | .45                  |
| depression        | 40.16          | 1  | 40.16           | 17.44   | .001 | .51                  |
| error             | 39.14          | 17 |                 |         |      |                      |
| total             | 1647.00        |    |                 |         |      |                      |

Since value of computed F for the impact of groups is higher than critical F in level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis assuming equality of means of post-test scores of subjects in both control and experimental groups was rejected with 95 % level of confidence.

**Table 3:** Results of independent T-test between means of pre-test and post-test variance of depression test for both groups

| variable   | groups       | Mean of variance scores | Sd.  | T    | df | sig  |
|------------|--------------|-------------------------|------|------|----|------|
| depression | experimental | 2.30                    | 1.89 | 3.67 | 18 | .002 |
|            | control      | .20                     | 1.03 |      |    |      |

As the Table (3) shows, the obtained T value for comparison of mean of variance scores of pre-test and post-test in both group experimental and control group is ( $t = 3.67$ ) that is greater than critical t with degree of freedom 18. Therefore, with 95% level of confidence it can be concluded that the variance scores of depression pre-test and post-test in experimental group is more significantly higher than control group which indicates the effectiveness of group counseling based on although approach on reducing elders’ depression in experimental group.

## Conclusion and discussion

As it was mentioned before, the current research purpose was to measure the effectiveness of group counseling based on although approach on improving elders' depression. The achieved results showed that group although therapy greatly influences on reducing of elders' depression. This result therefore is in accordance with previous studies like Cho [18], Spek et al. [19], Fakhari et al. [20], and Yousefi et al. [21]. So, based on the previously performed studies in field of effectiveness of although approach and logo therapy it could be said that this method of treatment is an influential method in reducing elders' depression.

As Sadegh moghad [4] said, in fact elderly is a special period of life has found a special importance due to social and industrial development of the modern age. In the recent century, because of social, economic and medical advances, rate of mortality has been decreased and life expectancy has been increased, as a result number of elder population in different world's countries has been maximized. In future, we will encounter with crucial problems about elderly and solving them. Elderly depression is recognized as the second reason for seniors' inabilities in this period. It is the most prevalent mental problem of elders' that leave undesirable effect on their life quality [23].

Consequently, participating in group sessions of although therapy can work as a social activity is influential in reducing depression. Generally speaking, though participation in group sessions, seniors exchange their ideas, find meaning in life and take the responsibility of past experiences.

They will get aware that there is always a meaning in life and can search for a purpose in each event. Thus, it can be said that although approach has significantly aided signors and may play a noteworthy role in reducing their depression.

The current research also had a few limitations including the statistical population were among seniors living in nursing home which pose some limitations on generalization of the obtained results to other seniors are kept at home. It is therefore, recommended that an independent study perform to compare rate of elders' depression living in nursing home and those who are living at their home and family to measure the effectiveness of although approach on improvement of their condition.

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