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## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUP HOPE THERAPY ON HAPPINESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF ELDERLY PEOPLE

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### ABSTRACT

*The objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of group hope therapy on happiness and psychological well-being of elderly people. The research method is quasi-experimental with pre-test and post-test design with control group. The research population included all elderly people living in nursing homes of Tehran in 2018. Using convenient sampling method, 30 people (10 subjects from 3 centers). Then, they were randomly assigned into one of the experimental and control groups (each group contained 15 subjects). Then, the experimental group received eight training sessions, twice per week, 60 minutes per session, and they received hope therapy training, and the control group received an irrelevant training to prevent their bias. Finally, both groups were post-tested. To collect data, Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (1989) and Reef Psychological Well-being Questionnaire (1995) were used. The results revealed that the hypothesis of the research on the effect of group-based hope therapy approach on the happiness and psychological well-being of the elderly people was confirmed ( $P < 0.05$ ) and the elderly people of the experimental group, compared to the elderly people of the control group, showed an increase in happiness and psychological well-being in the post-test. Thus, it can be concluded that group-based hope therapy approach is effective in enhancing the happiness and psychological well-being of elderly people and it can be used as one of the psychological training methods by counselors in public and private nursing homes.*

**Keywords:** Hope Therapy, Happiness, Psychological Well-Being, Elderly People.

### INTRODUCTION

One of the events, occurring in human life, is the phenomenon of aging, and dealing with this phenomenon is one of the most important issues in each community. Elderly people include significant number of population in all human communities. Thus, any action to optimize their living conditions would reduce their social problems, leading to reduced family problems. Most of the problems faced by the elderly people are physical problems, motor disabilities, and mental and psychological problems. Some of the psychological problems faced by elderly people are hopelessness and depression. Psychologists have taken many steps to improve these symptoms, but after the advent of the positive psychology movement, theorists and researchers have examined structures such as happiness, optimism and hope rather than mere attention to negative experiences or perceptions (Snyder, McCullough, 2000). Research in the field of positive psychology has shown that people who have experienced more positive emotions and more optimism will have a longer life expectancy. Additionally, hopeful and happy people have stronger social relationships with their friends, spouses, neighbors and relatives (Frederickson, 2009; quoted by Giti Goreishi, 2009). Hope provides flexibility and exuberance, and increases



life satisfaction (Perikht, 2004 and translated by Angaei, 2005). Hope is considered as the basis of personality and is the source of human life. In addition, it enhances the well-being. It has also been revealed that hope is related to therapeutic efficacy and is primarily considered as an essential element for improvement of the patients (Werner, 2012). One of the practical approaches to solve the psychological problems is group counseling. One of the approaches, which seem to affect psychological well-being, is hope therapy. Hope therapy is one of the recent therapies in the field of positive psychology and it is a therapeutic program, derived from hope therapy theory of Snyder and ideas of cognitive behavioral therapy, solution-based therapy fiction or narrative therapy (Garcia and Sisin, 2012).

Recently, a group of researchers in the field of positivism psychology has considered psychological health as a positive psychological function. They have conceptualized in the term "psychological well-being" (Narimani et al., 2014). Diener, Oishi, & Lucas (2003) argue that psychological well-being is what people have sense of satisfaction with it. In fact, the sense of well-being or the satisfaction with life is important in several aspects: provision of mental and physical well-being and increased life expectancy, proving the value of happiness for human, measuring the quality of life index along with economic and social indicators. Psychological well-being is defined as the growth of the actual talents of each person (Vazquez et al., 2009). In addition, one of the most important positive emotions is happiness. This emotion is considered as one of the main emotions of human and is among the first emotions taking place in the course of transformation (Berk, 2000; Translated and published by Seyyed Mohammadi, 2017). In fact, happiness is characterized by positive and pleasant emotions, ranging from superficial satisfaction to deep feelings of happiness (Rajabi et al., 2013). Some experts argue that happy people feel more secure than others, make decisions more comfortably, have more sense of cooperation and participation, and are more satisfied with those who live with them (Shoaakazemi et al., 2013). Happiness is a measure of mental health and has numerous tangible benefits such as increasing physical health, reducing mental health problems and prolonging life. Experimental studies have shown that happy people experience positive outcomes in life. These outcomes include increased supporting relationships, improved financial status, mental health, physical health and, consequently, prolonging life. Increasing happiness is one of the goals of positive psychology (Lyubomirsky, & King, 2005). In the studies conducted by Lopez and Kerr (2006), Ong et al. (2006), Snyder and Tsukasa (2005), Parvaneh, Azizi and Karimi (2015), Movahedi et al. (2014) Ghasemi et al., (2009), Kanani et al. (2014), Parvaneh et al. (2017), it was found that group-based hope therapy can be effective in developing and increasing sense of optimism, happiness, well-being and hope in the elderly people. The results of this study show that the elderly people who participated in group-based hope therapy experienced more happiness than those who did not attend in the sessions. Given what was stated, the objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of group-based hope therapy on happiness and psychological well-being of elderly people.

## METHODOLOGY

This is an experimental study was a pre-test and post-test design with control group. The research population included all elderly people living in nursing homes of Tehran in 2018. Using convenient sampling method, 30 subjects (10 subjects from 3 centers) were included into study. They participated in the study with their willingness and a mean age of 65 to 70 years.





Then, they were randomly assigned into two experimental and control groups (each group contained 15 subjects). Then, the experimental group received eight training sessions, twice a week and 60 minutes per session, and they received hope therapy training, and the control group received an irrelevant training course to prevent their bias.

### *Measurement tool*

In this research, Reef psychological well-being and Oxford happiness questionnaires were used.

#### *Reef psychological well-being questionnaire*

In the Reef psychological well-being questionnaire, the answer to each item (containing 84 items) is determined on a 6-point scale. As one's score in each of the components and the total score of the questionnaire are higher, the psychological well-being of the person would be higher. This tool has 6 components and each component has 14 questions (individual growth, autonomy, environmental domination, positive relationships with others, purposeful life and self-acceptance), and a total score, which measures psychological well-being. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each of six components of individual growth, autonomy, environmental domination, positive relationships with others, purposeful life and self-acceptance was found 0.72, 0.60, 0.77, 0.74, 0.75 and 0.77, respectively (Reef, 1995). In this study, Cronbach's alpha of the total score of this scale was obtained 0.78.

#### *Oxford Happiness Inventory*

The questionnaire was developed by Argyle, Martin and Grosssland in 1989 to measure happiness. It was developed based on Beck Depression Inventory, and Alipour and Nurbala (2008) translated it into Persian language. The questionnaire contains 29 four-option items scored from 0 to 3. The 21 items of this questionnaire were taken from the Beck Depression Inventory and reversed and eleven questions were added it to cover other aspects of mental health and to include the areas of satisfaction, positive mood, health, efficiency and self-esteem. The maximum score in this test is 87 and the minimum score is zero. In this questionnaire, high score indicates happiness and a low score indicates the person's depression. Argyle et al. (1989) reported the reliability of the Oxford questionnaire 0.9 by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and reported its test re-test reliability 0.77 with an interval of 7 weeks. In this study, its Cronbach's alpha was reported 0.80. To analyze the data in the descriptive statistics section, mean and standard deviation were used, and in inferential statistics, covariance analysis method was used and data were analyzed using SPSS-18 software.

#### *Intervention method*

The Hope Therapy training program included eight 90-minute sessions. The therapeutic program was developed and implemented based on Snyder's work (2000). The therapeutic program for the sessions was as follows:

**Table 1: Summary of group sessions of hope therapy**

Session	Goals of each session
Session 1	The structure of the sessions including the introduction of members, stating the rules of the group and the introduction of the goals of the training program on the theory of hope
Session 2	Explaining the growth of hope and its necessity
Session 3	Defining the life story of each participant their own words
Session 4	The explanation of each of these stories is based on the three main components of the theory of hope and the re-formatting of stories
Session 5	Introducing a list of current events and important dimensions of life, with the aim of enhancing the hope of participants





Session 6	Encouraging individuals to select appropriate goals and presenting the characteristics of appropriate goals with the aim of enhancing the hope of participants
Session 7	Introducing the characteristics of suitable passages and requesting members to select appropriate strategies for achieving the defined goals.
Session 8	The introduction of strategies for creating and maintaining an agent, such as requesting members to deal with positive self-beliefs and mental image to achieve their goals, as well as the use of hopeful thinking on a daily basis (2014)

## RESULTS

To compare the pre-test and post-test scores of happiness and psychological well-being, descriptive statistics indices were used in both experimental and control groups. Among central tendency indices, the mean was selected, and among the dispersion indices, standard deviation was used. These indices are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Descriptive indices of pre-test and post-test of happiness and psychological well-being in two groups**

Group		happiness		Psychological well-being	
		mean	SD	mean	SD
experimental group	Pre-test	38/13	7/62	30/49	0/43
	Post-test	41/67	11/24	37/81	7/27
Control group	Pre-test	36/22	6/74	34/90	0/28
	Post-test	36/01	6/43	34/68	0/04

Given the results of Table 2, the mean and standard deviation in the post-test of the experimental group and the control group are completely different. The multivariate analysis of covariance was used to prove these differences based on the training provided. The presumptions of normal distribution of scores and homogeneity of dependent variable variances, which are statistically based on parametric tests, were confirmed by Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests and Levine tests with values of  $p > 0.05$ . Additionally, the synchronous variable in this study was pre-test score and the pre-test scores were used as a synchronous variable to control their effect at the beginning of intervention.

**Table 3: Results of multivariate covariance analysis (MANCOVA) on post-test scores of happiness and psychological well-being of experimental and control groups with pre-test control**

test	value	df of hypothesis	df of error	F	p-value
Pilay effect test	1/83	4	26	4/21	0/001
Lambda's Wikis test	2/20	4	26	4/21	0/001
Hotelling trace test	1/99	4	26	4/21	0/001
The largest root test	2/14	4	26	4/21	0/001

As shown in Table 3, the significance levels of all tests indicate that there is a significant difference between elderly people in the experimental group and those of control groups in the post-test, at least in one of the dependent variables (happiness and psychological well-being). Accordingly, it can be stated that two one-way analyses was performed in MANCOVA text, and the results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Results of one-way covariance analysis in the MANCOVA text of research variables**



Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Effect size
Pre-test	۲۴۹/۲۳	۱	۲۴۹/۲۳		
Happiness (independent variable)	۲۸۹/۰.۹	۱	۲۸۹/۰.۹	**۱.۰/۱۰	۰/۴۱
Error	۳۹/۸۶	۲۸	۰۴/۴۱		
Pre-test	۲۳۷/۱۲	۱	۲۳۷/۱۲		
Psychological well-being (independent variable)	۲۶۱/۷۴	۱	۲۶۱/۷۰	**۹/۳۳	۰/۳۶
error	۲۴/۶۲	۲۸	۳۹/۰۴		

The results of Table 4 show a significant difference between the post-test score of happiness in two experimental group and that of control group by controlling the effect of pre-test ( $P < 0.01$ ). It means that group training of group-based hope therapy is effective significantly in increasing the happiness of couples. The results of the table also show that the difference between the post-test score of psychological well-being of the experimental group and that of control group is significant by controlling the effect of pre-test ( $P < 0.01$ ). In other words, group training based on the group-based hope therapy is significantly effective in increasing the psychological well-being. Tukey post hoc test was used to determine the exact source of difference between the groups (Table 5).

**Table 5: Tukey test (Comparison of significance difference of means)**

	Studies groups	Difference of means	Standard error	p-value
happiness	Group training based on hope therapy approach - control	۳/۰۴	۳/۶۲	۰/۰.۳
psychological well-being	Group training based on hope therapy approach - control	۲/۳۲	۲/۱۶	۰/۰.۳

\*\* $P < 0.05$

As shown in Table 5, in the variable of happiness, group training of hope therapy ( $P = 0.03$ ) is more effective than irrelevant training in the control group. In addition, in the variable of psychological well-being, group training of hope therapy approach is more effective than irrelevant training in the control group ( $P = 0.03$ ).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of group-based hope therapy approach on happiness and psychological well-being in the elderly people. The results of this study were confirmed by the results of the studies conducted by Lopez & Kerr (2006), Ong et al. (2006), Snyder and Tsukasa (2005), Parvaneh, Azizi and Karimi (2015), Movahedi et al. (2014) Ghasemi, Abedi and Baghban (2009), Kanani et al. (2014), Parvaneh et al. (2017) and Owen, (1989). In explaining this result, it can be stated that group-based hope therapy training approach can increase the level of behavioral abilities, such as self-regulation, providence, humility and forgiveness. People who have higher self-regulation are more comfortable with other people and have better adaptation with others, and also have higher sense of satisfaction in interpersonal relationships. In addition, they report higher self-esteem. In his positive interventions on clients, Seligman (2003) showed that these interventions create a sense of ownership and trust in originality of his or her own capabilities. Adults, who have high levels of hope, see others as supportive resources and bases, which can be relied on (Marques et al., 2011). These people also believe that they can adapt to the challenges they may face in their





lives, to experience more happiness and more satisfied with their lives (King, 2006). In addition, hopeful people learn on adverse events rather than focusing on them and use it in the course of achieving their future goals (Kavradim et al., 2013). As a result, the hope therapy increases the happiness as it helps people define goals, to be motivated, consequently, create an interest in the activities of life and designing paths to achieve the goals. In addition, in explaining the effect of group-based hope therapy approach on psychological well-being, it can be stated that being hopeful is one of the effective coping strategies in dealing with stresses and tensions, so that these people have more paths to achieve their goals, and when faced with obstacles, they maintain their motivation and use alternative paths. However, hopeless people lose their motivation and experience negative emotions since they have fewer factors and paths in dealing with obstacles. In other words, it is a personal belief that makes a person feels that he can path through different paths to achieve his goals, and this will not be feasible jut in light of hope. In the hope therapy intervention, people are trained to define goals that are important, achievable, and measurable, and consider various paths to achieve them. Characteristics such as organization of goals in life, positive personal characteristics, purposeful life, peace of mind and energy are considered as characteristics of the hopeful people. Hopeful people will learn from adverse events rather than focusing them and they use these adverse events in the course of achieving their goals. In fact, hope is a positive force, which enhances motivation, advancement of goals, and adaptability (Raleigh, 1992), and the power of maintaining the energy of individuals in life and creating it is part of the nature of hope (Bays, 1995) and it is a new look at clients positive points (Bahaderi, 2014). People who have high hopes may have stronger drives and more energy to pursue their goals and this depends on their motivation for actively participating in the problem-solving process and the behaviors leading to growth and development. Given the results of this study, experts can use this therapeutic program to work with elderly people in the nursing homes. In order to generalize these results, it is recommended this type of studies to be conducted in other cities of Iran and on elderly people at different age.

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