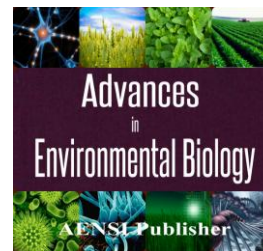




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Efficacy of Narrative Group Therapy on the Adjustment and Self- Efficacy of Adolescent Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this study is to examine the effect of "group narrative therapy" on the adjustment and its factors including emotional, social and educational and self-efficacy among adolescents. This is an experimental study with a pre-test, post-test design and a control group. Statistical population is comprised of second grade students in District 2 of Shiraz's high school in 2011- 2012 academic year. Among them, by cluster sampling method, three high schools and then randomly 30 persons were selected and assigned in the two groups of experimental and control. Having administered the adjustment questionnaire (AISS) to all students, and the self - efficacy questionnaires were distributed among them. After the intervention (8 sessions of 90 minutes) of experimental group, the post-tests were administered to both groups. In addition to data analysis using descriptive statistics, independent T was used. **Results:** T-test results showed that the mean difference between the two groups were significant ($p < 0.01$). **Conclusion:** The results showed that "narrative therapy" can be helpful in enhancing adjustment and self- efficacy of Adolescents. It is recommended that school counselors use narrative group therapy for adolescent students.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is considered as a sensitive time of any person's life, accompanied by severe emotions, lack of trust feeling, incompatibility and aggression. Adolescents face significant number of transitional events in terms of biology, education and society [1]; meanwhile, they are striving to establish relationships beyond their family and among their friends. Such issue may be in conflict with the expectations and values of the family as well as what belong to the friends' group [2]. These types of changes, mentally and emotionally speaking, are considered as the factors of appearance of crisis, stresses and certain problems within such period of life, in a way that the lack of self-consciousness and required skilled in this field may result in harmful consequences, including but not limited to disorders, feeling of being unsafe, personality and emotional problems, behavioral disorders and law breaking [3]. This is in a way that adolescents require adjustment to the extensive internal changes and social conditions more than all other age groups [4]. According to Sinha and Singh (1993), adjustment within adolescence might mean emotional stabilization and bravery in social relationships as well as interest in studying and school. Therefore, adjustment among the adolescents may require further study and investigation in three emotional, social and educational aspects [5]. Emotional adjustment includes recognition the positive and negative feelings and sentiments in one's self and controlling feelings regarding one's self of others [6]; meanwhile, social adjustment might mean adjustment to the social needs, observation of the social rules and principles and efficiency in social contacts, and in this regard, it includes educational adjustment, interest in studying and school [7]. Generally speaking, adjustment requires changing and being changed. Continuous changing includes a set of cognitive and behavioral strives to control certain fatiguing- or those

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assessed to be out of one's powers- internal or external pressures, therefore, adjustment is considered as an effort to control the stresses in an effective manner [1].

According to Holmes and Rahe (1967), what is considerable in adjustment is the individual system of beliefs [8]. Among the beliefs of people about themselves, self-efficacy is the most important and considerable one; in fact, self-efficacy is one of the most important components of acquiring success and being adjusted and is placed within the scope of positive psychology. It refers to the feeling of efficacy, competence and capability in coping with the life, and more clearly, emphasizes on one's beliefs or judgments on his/her own capability in fulfillment of certain task under certain conditions. The self-efficacy structure- i.e. the believing in *I can*- affects choosing behavior, efforts, endeavor and pursuing purposes, and also determines the method of facing the obstacles and challenge; and eventually, it plays a major role in psychological adjustment, mental problems, physical health as well as behavioral changing strategies [9].

Several studies indicate that self-efficacy has meaningful relationship with the level of one's adjustment; meanwhile, increase in both variables affects the components of mental health of the adolescents and the manner of choosing an approach with respect to the critical conditions under which (s) he lives [10]. Hamm and *et al.* (2013) emphasis that because of the importance of adjustment and its components on academic and social life, it's recommended to reinforce these variables in adolescents in acceptable ways [11].

For the time being, there are effective treatment approaches in order to increase adjustment and self-efficacy of the adolescents, among which the narrative therapy approach may be mentioned; this relatively new approach has been developed by White and Epston (1990) to face individual and familial problems. This approach has highly been affected by Foucault's socio-cultural philosophy (1989) [12]. In fact, according to the concepts of this approach, each of the humans narrates the stories relevant to the life to him/herself; i.e. on who they are, and what is important for them [13]. Some of these narrations are formed consciously by one's self and due to personal experiences, while some other are made due to the effects of the common and powerful social culture. People's identities are formed through the effects of their narrations [14]. Nichols and Schwartz (1998) express that narrative therapy focus on understanding the manner of formation the experiences, and then organize the same through stories [15].

The major hypotheses of this approach include: (a) feelings and behaviors are determined by one's stories and narrations, (b) emotional disorders resulted from common narrations are problematic, (c) usually by changing these stories and narrations emotional disorders may be alleviated [16]. According to Michel White (2004), the purpose of interferences in this viewpoint is to assist the referrers to externalize a difficult and burdensome problem and establish a strong instruction for changes through breaking structures and renovating pessimistic narrations and trusting in their durable nature, and so change the broken identities to champion positions [17].

According to Morgan (2000), narrative therapy should be considered as a respectful method to psychologists who involve with adolescents, as it helps adolescents to recognize their skills, competencies, values, obligations and capabilities through establishing respectability without any reproach and externalizing the problems, by realizing of which they may change their relations with their own problems. Meanwhile, through revising their own life story in this sensitive time of their development, adolescents shall achieve better emotional adjustment with respect to the past events, and further try to choose proper solutions to solve the conflicts of the period of time [18]. Reviewing the prior studies indicates the effectiveness of this approach on decreasing the signs of mood disorders in adolescents [18-22]. However, there are a lot of studies which are indicate the effectiveness of narrative therapy, most of them not directly focus on emotional, social, academic performances. It is so highlighted in Iranian studies. So, by considering the importance of development and reinforce of emotional, social, academic performances in adolescents period, for coming to this periods challenges, conducting a research based on narrative group therapy, is so necessary and urgent. Therefore, the main goal of this study is considered as effectiveness of narrative group therapy on emotional, social, academic performances in adolescents.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study plan follows an experimental pattern with pretest- posttest and control group, which was studied efficacy of independent variable means narrative group therapy on dependent variable means adjustment and Self-efficacy in adolescents.

The statistical group of this study included first grade girls' students of 2 district High School of Shiraz within 2011-2012 academic year. In this study, for selecting subjects, cluster multi-level randomized sampling method was used. Because of that, among high schools of this distinct, 3 high schools were randomly assigned and among that, 7 classes were selected, which contain 198 students. Then, by using Adjustment questionnaire (AISS), all of selected students were tested. Based on this questioner, subjects who obtained adjustment grades less than average were selected and 30 students were selected randomly and classified into two experimental and control groups, each containing 15 members.

Adjustment (AISS) questionnaire: this questionnaire (including 60 questions) has been created by Sinha and Singh (1993). It separates high school students (14-18 years of age) with good adjustment from students suffering from weak adjustment with general adjustment and three emotional, social and educational factors. This questionnaire was translated in Iran by Karami and its validity and reliability were obtained. Reliability of this test for the whole questionnaire and its sub scales, i.e. emotional, social and educational, through halving method included 0.95, 0.94, 0.93 and 0.96, respectively. Validity of this test has also been accredited by a group of psychologists. The correlation of moment factor resulted among the questionnaire points and managers grading has been obtained as 0.51 [23].

General self-efficacy scale: Sherer *et al.* (1982) have made the general self-efficacy scale to measure self-efficacy; this scale include 17 self-assessment items, while its answers are graded on 5 Likert grades, i.e. from totally disagreed to totally agreed; Cronbach's Alpha Reliability index, reported by Sherer *et al.* for general self-efficacy scale is equal to 0.86 [24]. In Iran, Asgharnejad (2003) obtains scale of Cronbach's Alpha as 0.78 in one study. In order to study the basis validity, internal correlation of this scale was calculated with Ruther Internal Control Source Scale ($r=0.34$ (1996)) [25]. In order to study the validity of the structure, Asgharnejad (2004) performed this scale together with another test, namely self-esteem, on 100 people, and reported its correlation as 0.61 [26].

Shearer General Self-efficacy Questionnaire was distributed among both group members. However, during the implementation of this plan, one of the control group members withdrew due to change, which resulted in making the number of control group as 14. After dedicating experimental group's subjects, suitable planning was accomplished for conducting intervention sessions to not interfere with main lessons of students.

The involvement plan compiled for the adolescents of experimental group in this study was based on the concepts of White and Epston's narrative therapy approach [16, 17]; which conducted within eight 90-minute sessions. The main goal of this method is to break adolescents' difficult stories and help them to make new narratives. During the 1st session, after expressing the objectives and rules of group counseling, it was tried to establish a safe environment for the group members to be able to express their thoughts and feelings. Then, during further sessions, the narrative therapy techniques were used as per the following stages: (1) helping the members to narrate stories full of one's problems, (2) defining the problem, (3) investigating the effect of the problem, (4) assessment and explanation of effect of the problem (5) externalizing (6) identifying the exclusive results, (7) reconstructing and meaning-finding of the life story [17]. However, within the implementation of this study none of the members of control group received any individual or group education or counseling.

After ending sessions and after one week, researcher conducted post-test in both of experimental and control groups. For data analyzing, descriptive (the average, standard deviation), and inferential (t test in the inferential level for the independent groups) by spss-19, were used. It should be mentioned that after completion of the task, optional therapy group sessions were also held for the control group.

Results:

The findings of this study have been expressed in two descriptive and inferential parts. In order to analyze the obtained data, the average, standard deviation indicators have been used in the descriptive statistics level, while t test has been applied in the inferential level for the independent groups.

Table 1: Average and standard deviation of grades of three groups of first grade high school students in adjustment questionnaire within the pretest, posttest and pretest- posttest difference phases (descriptive statistics).

SD	M	N	phases	groups
2.6	26.3	15	pretest	Narrative therapy
1.7	17.3	15	posttest	
1.9	-9.1	15	difference	
2.8	26.1	14	pretest	control
2	25.1	14	posttest	
2.1	-1	14	difference	

Table 2: Comparison between difference of average of pretest and posttest of experimental and control groups in terms of level of general adjustment

P	t	df	SE	SD	M	N	Group	adjustment
0.000*	-10.70	27	0.49	1.90	-9.06	14	narrative therapy	
			0.57	2.41	-1.00	14	control	

The results of Table 2 indicate that as the "t" calculated in adjustment questionnaire is equal to (-10.70), then it shall be meaningful in $P < 0.01$ level; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is hereby concluded that there is a meaningful difference between average grades of adolescents in the aforementioned questionnaire in the pretest and posttest phases.

Table 3: Comparison between difference of average of pretest and posttest of experimental and control groups in emotional, social and educational performance components

P	t	df	SE	SD	M	N	Group	
0.000*	-7.49	27	0.24 0.37	0.94 1.40	3.80 -0.500	15 14	narrative therapy control	emotional performance
0.000*	-4.87	27	0.46 0.42	1.80 1.60	-3.60 -0.50	15 14	narrative therapy control	social performance
0.000*	-5.84	27	0.21 0.23	0.84 0.86	-2.00 -0.14	15 14	narrative therapy control	educational performance

According to the results of Table 3, it indicates that as the “t” calculated in emotional performance is equal to (-7.49), then it should be meaningful in $P < 0.01$ level; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is therefore concluded that there is a meaningful difference between average grades of adolescents in the emotional components of adjustment questionnaire in the pretest and posttest phases.

According to the results of Table 3 indicate that as the “t” calculated in social performance is equal to (-4.87), then it shall be meaningful in $P < 0.01$ level; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is hereby concluded that there is a meaningful difference between average grades of adolescents in the social components of adjustment questionnaire in the pretest and posttest phases.

According to the results of Table 3 indicate that as the “t” calculated for narrative therapy group is equal to (-5.84), then it shall be meaningful in $P < 0.01$ level; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is hereby concluded that there is a meaningful difference between average grades of adolescents in the aforementioned components of adjustment questionnaire in the pretest and posttest phases.

Table 4: Comparison between difference of average of pretest and posttest of experimental and control groups in self-efficacy

P	t	df	SE	SD	M	N	Group	
0.000*	5.99	27	1.07	4.15	9.53	14	narrative therapy	self-efficacy
			0.84	3.14	1.28	14	control	

According to the results of Table 4, it indicates that as the “t” calculated in self-efficacy is equal to (5.99), then it shall be meaningful in $P < 0.01$ level; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is hereby concluded that there is a meaningful difference between average grades of adolescents in the self-efficacy of adjustment questionnaire in the pretest and posttest phases.

Discussion:

Those adolescents who attended the Narrative group therapy sessions, were encouraged to specially consider their own lives in the framework of story and narration through being provided with a safe and trustable environment, considering the fact in the process of therapy, a reproach-free and friendly based on mutual respect was taken, and then describe the stories and problems of their own past, which were full of failures and defeats on the extent that they felt they have problems in their own and felt severe disappointment. During the therapy process and by taking benefit from certain techniques such as problem externalization, they managed to define their problems as a phenomenon apart from their identities. Further, they were encouraged to fight their problems out of their ego and broke the structure of their stories full of problems. This process resulted in their dominance on the environment and feeling of solving it with their own selves. More clearly, they managed to identify natural obstacles and remove the same in order to reach their purposes and reorganize their environment in a new manner and apply suitable connecting solutions with their family members and friends in a way that such process was not only quite attractive for the adolescents in the form of story and finding their metaphors, but resulted in an increase in their adjustments.

The results of this study are in harmony with the results of Movahedi Nasab study (2010), who used the Narrative group therapy to alleviate the students identity crisis [27] as well as Allen and Allen study (1995), who mentioned that the persuasive therapy group has been effective to the method of decision making and narrative therapy on controlling sentiments, anger and generation of positive sentiments in adolescents [28]. Meanwhile, it has been along with the results of Ramey et. al. (2009) study, who stated that narrative therapy affects the identity changes in children [29], as well as the results of Rahmani and Mohebi (2012) study, which indicated that narrative therapy has been effective in reducing tension of the children [21]. On the other hand, it is in the same direction as of certain studies in this fields indicating effective application of this approach for the adolescents [19, 22]. Considering the obtained results, indicate that narrative group therapy method has managed to increase the level of self-efficacy of the first grade high school students.

In order to clarify the same theoretically, it may be said that whereas according to Bandura (1997) approach, the most important source to increase self-efficacy is to recognize past successful experiences; as the participants in the Narrative group therapy embarked with destructing their own pessimistic stories and separated themselves from the problems and searched in their own background to find exclusive or “brilliant moments”- i.e. [9]. The moments they have behaved against the stories full of problems and had successful

experiences [15], therefore, they acquired durable self-confidence and changed their broken identities to the position of champions [17]; hence, Narrative group therapy was useful and effective on the inefficient and self-destructing beliefs.

The findings of this study are along with the study of Mohammadi, et. al. (2012), which proved that Narrative group therapy results in a considerable increase in self-esteem and self-efficacy in orphaned adolescents [18], as well as the findings of studies, which specified that narrative therapy approach results in a decrease in the symptoms of depression, negative automatic thoughts and ineffective viewpoints [18, 20].

Conclusion:

At the end, it may be concluded from this study that narrative therapy counseling has had positive effects on general adjustment, social, educational and emotional performances as well as self-efficacy of the adolescents. These are known as important accepts of adolescents life which effect the whole life of each person. Thus, due to its brief nature as well as considerable effects of this approach on the educational therapy centers, the schools advisors and developing consultants as well as those practitioners in the field of growing adolescents are recommended to take benefit from the results of this study to improve proper growth of the adolescents especially in the field of adjustment and self-efficacy.

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