



Effectiveness of group counseling based on self-knowledge sources in increasing assertiveness in male addicts in rehabilitation program

Saeideh Mansoori¹ , Arash Mohagheghi², Akram Rezvanizadeh³, Alireza Karimpour-Vazifekhorani⁴, Javad Kazemi⁵, Maryam Vahedi⁶, Hasanali Ramazani*⁷ 

¹ Department of General Psychology, Garmsar Branch, Islamic Azad University, Garmsar, Iran

² Department of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Tabriz, Iran

³ Department of Clinical Psychology, School of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

⁴ Department of Clinical Psychology, School of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran

⁵ Department of Consulting, University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences, Tehran, Iran

⁶ Department of General Psychology, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran

⁷ Department of General Psychology, School of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran

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Abstract

Introduction: The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of group counseling based on self-knowledge sources in increasing assertiveness of male addicts in rehabilitation program.

Methods: This was an experimental study and the statistical population included individuals being rehabilitated in the center of dependence to drugs in Razi Psychiatric Hospital in Tehran, Iran. Thirty individuals were selected through targeted sampling and assigned to experimental and control groups. Random assignment was used to control the disturbing variables. Ten group counseling sessions were conducted based on the theory of self-recognition sources for the experimental group and after the end of the study, the control group was also intervened to observe ethical considerations.

Results: To analyze the results at the descriptive level, the mean and standard deviation (SD) and at the level of inferential statistics, the t-test (t-difference) were used to compare the scores of self-expression of the experimental and control groups. The analysis of the results showed that group counseling in the way of self-recognition sources was significant and effective in the increasing of self-expression in patients addicted to the drugs being rehabilitated at the level of $P < 0.01$.

Conclusion: Based on the findings, it can be concluded that group counseling education in the way of self-recognition sources increases the self-expression in addicts.

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Introduction

Several factors are associated with addiction such as genetic, neurobiological, and social factors (family and environment), psychological factors, and personality.¹ Moreover, according to Carlson, personality

factors are one of the most important ones.² One of the important personality factors is the self-expression which is the ability of an individual to defend himself and the ability to "say no" to demands that the person does not want to do.³ Studies have shown that this

* Corresponding Author: Hasanali Ramazani, Email: a.feelfull92@gmail.com



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variable has a close relationship with the drug tendency, so that there is an inverse relationship between the lack of this skill and the incidence of addiction.⁴

There are several methods in the treatment for addiction issue. Currently, the main focus is on preservative therapy, in which the pharmacotherapy is the basis. In recent years, focusing solely on these treatments has led to little success.⁵ Many addicts seem to be relapsing, so the use of psychological and social treatments along with these treatments has shown its importance and state. One of the quite new methods of psychotherapy is the one based on the self-recognition sources⁶ which is according to the work of Schoeneman⁷ and Schoeneman et al.⁸ and seems to be effective in improving these people. Increasing self-expression makes a person to behave decisively and be responsible.⁹ According to the researches, weak self-expression increases the tendency to drugs.

Therefore, various methods have been developed in recent years to increase self-expression, such as social skills training, immunization methods, and cognitive therapies. Psychotherapy based on the self-recognition sources is a relatively new area that is effective in increasing self-expression.⁷ Since the balance of energy, entropy, and thermodynamics in the addicted people is not normal, many problems can arise. If the energy level is circulated in social feedback, the person will be whimsical, doughface, and has low self-confident. If a social comparison takes the most energy, the person becomes depressed and feels worthless.¹⁰ Considering that psychotherapy based on self-recognition sources has had a significant effect on variables such as self-esteem, marital satisfaction, positive attitude to addiction,⁸ that is, due to the problems associated with addiction including depression, anxiety, amnesia, psychosis, and brain disorders, and social problems such as theft, prostitution, and violence, increased false occupations and reduced efficiency, and a large number

of disturbed families, and also according to the number of addicts based on drug addiction statistics in recent years (near to 1.8 to 3.3 million), this area needs to be considered seriously.¹¹ In this regard, the results of Amirjan et al.¹² also showed that psychotherapy based on self-knowledge sources was effective in increasing the self-esteem of high school girls. Girls who took advantage of this therapeutic approach increased their self-esteem by balancing their mental energy and self-decreasing self-esteem. Moreover, Hong et al.¹³ made adjustments to self-knowledge sources to change the attitude of students toward interventional addiction. In this study, students with high socioeconomic status (SES) showed a significant change in attitudes towards addiction due to the increased social comparison (compared with their lower self-esteem). The results of Nikooy Koupas et al.'s research¹⁴ showed that there was a negative and significant relation between self-observation and addiction tendency among the sources of self-knowledge, and there was a positive relationship between social feedback and social comparison with addiction tendency and also there was a meaningful relationship between affiliation with delinquent peers and addiction tendency.¹⁵

Finally, the counseling approach of self-knowledge sources can be helpful in decreasing the number of addicts and mentioned problems. Thus, the purpose of the present research was to answer the question of whether group counseling in the form of self-knowledge recourses can increase the level of self-expression of addicts.

Methods

This was an applied research in terms of purpose and a semi-experimental study in terms of method. The research design was pretest-posttest with a control group. The statistical population consisted of all drug dependent patients in Razi Psychiatric Hospital, Tehran, Iran. Also, all sample members of the study were men. The

sampling method was convenience sampling.

A sample of 30 addicts from the center was selected through a targeted sampling method; 15 were randomly assigned to experimental group and 15 to control group as well. Random assignment method was used to control the disturbing variables.

Inclusion criteria were as follows: addicts who had at least a fifth grade elementary level of education, traditional drug addicts like opium users, being nonaddict to stimulants such as amphetamines, being at the age range of 25 to 45 years old, according to the clients' case, the last four months of drug treatment.

Exclusion criteria were: being absent more than two sessions in the treatment process and not undergoing another psychological rehabilitation concurrently.

Research tool: Gambrill and Richey Assertion Inventory: It has been prepared by Gambrill and Richey¹⁶ and has 40 main subcategories, some of which have been modified due to lack of conformity with Iranian culture which led to 22 questions. In terms of reliability, there is a high correlation between the test materials, and the factor loading of the various test subjects was reported to be between 39%-70%. The reliability coefficient has been reported 0.81 by Gambrill and Richey.¹⁶ After deletion of 18 items and coordinating with Iranian culture, the reliability coefficient was determined 0.82 by Mahmoudi et al.¹⁷ in the Psychiatric Institute of Tehran on 40 middle school students with a 25-day interval.

Intervention method: At first, both groups were taken a pre-test. Then, 10 group counseling sessions based on self-recognition sources were conducted for the experimental group. Finally, a post-test was performed to determine the effects of treatment and compare the groups. After the end of the study, the control group was also intervened to observe ethical considerations.

Ethical considerations: After expressing the research goals for the participants, the participants signed an informed consent

form and had the right to leave the study at any time, and they were given confidence in the confidentiality of information and the right to participate in research.

At the level of descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation (SD) were used to compare the two groups in pre-test and post-test. At the level of inferential statistics, the t-test method was used to examine the significance or insignificance of the research hypothesis. SPSS software (version 23, IBM Corporation, Armonk, NY, USA) was used for data analysis.

Table 1 shows the pattern of drug consumption of sample members in intervention and control groups.

Table 2 shows brief description of group counseling program sessions based on self-recognition sources that included 10 sessions.

Results

Demographic data: The number of people in the control group and the number of people in the intervention group was 15 for each. Average age for control group and intervention group was 33.02 ± 2.60 and 32.08 ± 2.80 , respectively. 7 people in control group were married and 7 people were single. 8 people in intervention group were married and 6 people were single.

Table 3 shows that mean score of the experimental group was 41.57 at pre-test and 77.00 at post-test which showed the increase of 35.42 units. The mean score of the control group was 34.57 at the pre-test and 36.78 at the post-test. The differential score between the pre-test and post-test was 35.42 in the experimental group and 2.21 in the control group.

The results of the Levene's test showed that the assumption of the equality of variances was confirmed ($F = 2.89$, $P = 0.10$). In table 4, after examining the assumption of the equality of variances, the t-statistic is investigated. Based on the results of t-test difference ($t = 10.65$, $P = 0.01$), there was a significant difference between the two groups.

Table 1. Consumption/use pattern table

Number of addicts	Years of consumption/misuse	Abstinence period	Opium consumption and daily intake	Heroin consumption and daily intake	Both substances consumption and daily intake	Research group
2	30	2 years 1 year	1 person: 2 g	1 person: 1 g	-	Experimental
1	27	2 years	3 g	-	-	Experimental
3	15	1 year 2 years 1.5 years	-	1 person: 2 g	2 persons: 1 g opium and 2 g heroin	Experimental
3	12	4 years 5 months 1 year	2 persons: 2 and 1 g	-	1 person: 4 g for both	Experimental
3	7	7 months 2.5 years 1 year	1 person: 4 g	1 person: 2 g	1 person: 1 g from every substance	Experimental
2	5	8 months 11 months	-	-	Everyone 2 g from every substance	Experimental
1	3	6 months	1-2 g	-	-	Experimental
4	26	2 persons: 1 year 1 person: 9 months 1 person: 4 years	1 person: 3 g	1 person: 3 g	2 persons: 1 g opium and 2 g heroin	Control
1	24	1 year	-	2 g	-	Control
1	20	13 months	-	-	1 g every substance	Control
2	18	18 months 6 months	1 person: 3 g	-	1 person: 2 g every substance	Control
3	10	22 months 5 months 1 year	1 person: 2 g	2 persons: 2 g every substance	-	Control
4	4	2 persons: 7 months 1 person: 17 months 1 person: 21 months	2 persons: 2 and 3 g	1 person: 3 g	1 person: 2 g opium and 1 g heroin	Control

Table 2. Brief description of group counseling program sessions based on self-recognition sources

Session 1	At the first session, counselor explains the goals of the group formation, rules, and procedure to the participants. Self-knowledge recourses are taught. Also, a series of assignments are specified for the next meeting.
Session 2	In the second session, the assignments of the previous session are reviewed and the members explain each other's assignments.
Session 3	At the third session, after reviewing the last one, the counselor and members discuss the alienation, i.e., self-alienation, in the theory of self-knowledge recourses, which means giving too much importance to the views of others, and the lack of attention to self-observation and opinion.
Session 4	At the fourth session, after reviewing the previous session, participants discuss about the situations in which they have had a great sense of well-being.
Session 5	In the fifth session, the participants discuss their assessment from the standpoint of others, and in this case, assignments for the next meeting will be determined.
Session 6	In the sixth session, previous session is reviewed, they discuss the good work they have done in one year and score 10 to 20 points to each.
Session 7	The seventh session begins with the discussion of competition on the concept of social comparison, and the members present their views. Then, each member evaluates himself from a social comparison perspective. And assignments for social comparisons for the next meeting will be mentioned.
Session 8	The eighth session is specialized to the role play and each member plays the role of a character such as a hero or etc. and expresses his feelings. Community issues and sources of self-recognition are also discussed. Then they discuss social comparisons about the lives of acquaintances such as parents and relatives. For the next session, the members indicate that they are most affected by one of the sub-scales of their recognitions.
Session 9	The ninth session starts with a review of the past session, and then the members discuss the setting of the resources of other members. Members also are asked to write the ways of increasing self-confidence.
Session 10	The tenth session begins with a review of the previous session, and then they discuss about increasing self-belief, and ultimately the members, under the supervision of the counselor, will sum up the sessions and discuss whether group counseling has been useful or not.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation (SD) of self-expression in pre- and post-intervention in experimental and control groups

Group	Measurement turn	Mean ± SD
Experimental (n = 14)	Pre-test	41.57 ± 5.34
	Post-test	77.00 ± 6.79
	Pre- and post-tests differential	35.42 ± 9.73
Control (n = 14)	Pre-test	34.57 ± 4.92
	Post-test	36.78 ± 3.42
	Pre- and post-tests differential	2.21 ± 6.42

SD: Standard deviation

According to the results of table 4, the experimental group scores grew in the post-test stage and this growth rate was statistically significant, but in the control group there was no evidence of growth in assertiveness scores.

Discussion

The results of the present study showed that group counseling education in the way of

self-recognition sources increased the self-expression in addicts being rehabilitated. In this regard, some researches show that psychological rehabilitation based on the self-recognition sources improves the self-esteem of adolescent girls. Self-esteem has a direct relationship with self-expression and self-expression increases self-esteem and rational expression of thoughts and feelings, decreases anxiety, and improves the social-communicative skills and observation of others rights.¹⁸ The weakness of self-expression increases the tendency towards the substance, and therapy based on the sources of self-recognition is a relatively new area that can be effective and useful in increasing the effective self-expression.¹⁹ In addition, by training the regulation of the sources of self-recognition, psychological adaptation in prisoners has improved,²⁰ and the results of these researches are consistent with the results of the present study.

Table 4. T-test comparison of pre-test and post-test difference of assertiveness of experimental and control groups

	Mean differences of two groups	df	t	P
Assertiveness	33.21	26.00	10.65	0.01

df: Degree of freedom

In this regard, unbalancing of the three sources of self-recognition will cause problems in the field of compatibility. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to these sources and their development and growth²¹ from the viewpoint of people with substance dependence, since the healthy person in Schoeneman's view is a person who has created a balance between various powers, in a way that has reached a kind of unity that stems from the coordination of those forces.⁷ Reaching this stage is interpreted as the concept of self. Achieving this balance does not happen in all humans, but few people manage to achieve such a stage. Therefore, the more humans are away from this balance, they are closer to psychological anomalies.²² The basic hypothesis studied in the present study was that group counseling, based on self-recognition resources, increases the self-expression of addicts being present in rehabilitation program. The analysis of the results confirmed it. Addicts are returned to the environment after being rehabilitated and free from substance. However, in the case of inconsistency in self-recognition resources, even in the absence of physical dependence to the substance, there will be irrational answers to the environmental stresses and negative demands and it paves the way for mistakes and relapse. By regulating self-recognition resources, the individual will assess his/her needs and will not say yes to others request for consumption of drugs.²³ Studies show that the increasing knowledge gained by self-awareness and self-recognition enhances the sense of human authority on his existence and self-esteem and helps him reach to the sense of coherence, purposefulness of thoughts, and wisdom and insight.²⁴ Education of self-recognition resources relies on reason and strategy, whose effectiveness depends on achieving the above goals. In this method, people improve their communication skills through their own channels of self-awareness, which contributes to the performance in their

marital life. In the implementation of present research, it was attempted to balance the different parts of the psyche by relying on the principle of self-regulation. This important aim is achieved by increasing the focus on normal self, decreasing the focus on problematic self on the self-observation path, taking advantage of social comparison with two ways of comparison with higher and lower ones, increasing the dimension of social consciousness through social feedback, and finally, comparing these resources with each other and carrying out practical assignments.²⁵

Conclusion

In sum, when a higher energy level flows around a social feedback, the individual becomes a suggestible person with a low self-confidence. If a social comparison takes the most energy, he becomes a depressed person with a sense of worthlessness. Psychotherapy based on the sources of self-recognition, by creating a balance between the levels of psychological energy, has increased mental health and self-expression in addicts. By reducing the extreme social feedbacks in which the reaction of others is important to the individual, the individual is more likely to spend more energy on self-observation, so his self-esteem is enhanced, since he knows his positive qualities and his anonymous innate talent. This increase in self-esteem may also lead to the increase of the ability to "say no" in addicted people, which in turn reduces the tendency toward drugs. By improving self-observation, in addition to being aware of their states, thoughts, and feelings, many addicts make important changes.

It should be noticed that this research was only applied to people who themselves had come to the addiction treatment center, so we had to be careful in generalizing the results to other people dependent on the drugs that were compulsorily kept at the camp. On the other hand, considering the limited sample of the study, more studies are needed in this field to provide more reliable results about the effects of psychotherapy based on the

sources of self-recognition on mental health and its therapeutic effects on other variables of positive psychology and psychological disorders, and also its effects should be compared with other therapeutic approaches. It also is better to be applied to other groups, including women, different cultural groups, and those in compulsory camps. Ultimately, the design and training of psychological training packages based on self-recognition sources can be helpful in directing the efforts of psychologists and supporters working in this field.

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Authors' Contribution

The authors' contributions are as follows:

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Conflict of Interest

Authors have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval

This study was confirmed by the Ethics Committee of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Tabriz, Iran (IR. TBZMED. REC. 1397. 1370).

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