

Section: Preliminary studies in PPT

ASSESSMENT OF BASIC BENEFITS OF POSITIVE AND TRANSCULTURAL PSYCHOTHERAPY IN WORKING WITH A GROUP OF MULTICULTURAL STUDENTS



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Abstract

This research was done with a group of multicultural students who were pursuing their studies in Turkey. The aim of the research is to evaluate the benefits of Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy in working with groups of multicultural students. The research data are based on the therapeutic process, which was used in ten psychotherapeutic sessions by applying Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy, with the methods and techniques, such as: the concept of positum, the principle of hope, the balance model, stories and the psychotherapeutic process, all made within the five phases of therapy. The participants in the group therapy were six females from different national backgrounds. All participants expressed complaints about the adaptation process in the new environment. The research results are based on oral data from participants' feedback at the end of each session and at the end of the therapeutic process.

Keywords: student group, multicultural, adaptation, positive psychotherapy, therapeutic process

Introduction

Positive psychotherapy is a short-term psychotherapeutic method with a psychodynamic, humanistic and intercultural approach which is based on three main principles: the principle of hope, moderation and counseling which respectively symbolize the global identity, the social identity and the identity of everyday life (Peseschkian, 2016).

Adapting to a new living place, to a new culture, to another country is a challenge for every person who immigrates or takes a path to live in another country, that is different from the previous one.

Knowledge of cultural factors and coping skills are often necessary throughout the psychotherapeutic process to achieve successful treatment outcomes. Culturally appropriate behavior as well as psychotherapeutic

appropriateness can be challenging because cultural issues are often misinterpreted or even overlooked (Tseng, 2001).

Since Positive Psychotherapy is essentially a psychodynamic approach and is based on the humanistic concept and offers a transcultural - multicultural point of view (Peseschkian, 1986), then even in working with group members from different countries / cultures, treatment with this psychotherapy approach seems to work toward a successful life. At the same time, Positive Psychotherapy aims to deal with conflicts based on personal resources/skills, strengthening and not neglecting the cultural aspect of the person.

Methodology

2.1. The Research Problem

The various study abroad programs carry with them benefits and advantages, on the other

hand, they can also be challenging for young students. During this, problems such as:

1. International students face numerous challenges during the phase of adaptation to the new environment.

a) The main challenges of the students are related to the clash of concepts, namely different cultures.

b) Difficulties in socialization are worrying as they affect the psycho-emotional and academic state of the student.

2.2. Research Hypothesis

The main research hypothesis is:

Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapeutic sessions bring about smoother adaptation for international students who experience difficulties during the phase of adaptation than are experienced by students who do not attend sessions of positive and transcultural psychotherapy.

2.3. Limitations of the Research

Participants from different countries cannot represent the entire country of their origin, therefore this does not mean that their opinions are the same as those of other citizens from the country. Thus, with only one or two representatives, the unique opinion of the community cannot be generalized.

The research also has a limit in terms of gender. Because all the subjects were female, the results of this research can be addressed to the female gender.

2.4. Research Design

The research is qualitative and aims to deal with the difficulties related to the adaptation phase of international students. The sample included international students who were part of the study program in Turkey and who sought help to overcome adaptation challenges.

Since the research is qualitative, the total of ten group sessions were evaluated by using the methods and instruments from Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy. Although the personal experiences were analyzed, the evaluations of the results were made based on the feedback of each participant in the group.

Discussion

According to Şen (2008), theories of multicultural relationships provide explanations of how multicultural differences affect the understanding of one's own culture and the other's culture, and then these differences affect the process of relationship reporting. For students from different cultural backgrounds, it is important to understand how these differences affect the relationship process during the study period.

The psychotherapeutic process began by discussing the group members' concerns with the therapist and the group participants, working on situational normalizing first, then by practicing the Positum concept, developing attachment, building the principle of hope and working and functioning in group form.

The process moved on to the application of the balance model because using the balance model, as a tool of Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy, in working with students of different cultures seems to be effective in enabling the achievement of relevant results. According to Peseschkian (2000), the balance model provides similar results to a holistic view of emotions, cognition, relationship dynamics, meaning and intuition that are addressed according to the client's condition, for a person can only be fully healthy and productive when the person balances these four basic aspects of life. People often find themselves in a transcultural relationship. The effectiveness of this relationship depends on the interaction with both cultures and how much the persons understand and accept each other's culture. The more common points there are between the two cultures, the more the person adapts and the easier it is to understand the other culture (Şen, 2008). So, during the situational encouragement stage, we worked toward creating interaction with this new culture which makes the adaptation process easier as well as creating new perspectives for them.

During adaptation in a foreign environment, students face the problems of communication difficulties, conflicts in social and moral values, creating social and professional relationships, the feeling of being a foreigner, as well as adaptation to the new education system (Güçlü, 1996). On the other hand, Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy with a transcultural, dynamic and comprehensive

approach sees man as a good being by nature and with many abilities and potentials (Peseschkian, 1985), therefore the use of methods and instruments of Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy have become the main sources and reasons for successful therapeutic achievement. At the end of the sessions, there were changes in the participants, especially in terms of culture, initiative and social relationships.

During the psychotherapeutic process in ten sessions with the group of multicultural students, visible results were achieved in improving the psycho-emotional state of the participants. At the beginning of therapy, the participants reported difficulties in adaptation to the new environment, followed by language and

academic difficulties, lack of and difficulties in socialization, difficulties in accepting the new culture and changes in eating and sleeping habits. These situations were reflected in the reduction of the quality of their lives. However, during the psychotherapeutic process, with the use of Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy techniques, the participants in the group reported significant changes in the improvement of their psycho-emotional state and in the ease of adapting to the new environment. At the end of the sessions, there were changes in the participants, especially in terms of cultural meaning, they were taking more self-initiative and they were able to create new social relationships.

Table 1.
Demographic data of the group subjects

Participant	Age	Gender	State of origin	Studying period	Study level
1	20	Female	Zimbabwe	16 months	Bachelor
2	25	Female	Somalia	16 months	Master
3	18	Female	Svaziland	6 months	Bachelor
4	18	Female	Svaziland	6 months	Bachelor
5	19	Female	Kazakhstan	6 months	Bachelor
6	24	Female	Kazakhstan	6 months	Master

Conclusions

In ten sessions with the group of multicultural students, visible results in improving the psycho-emotional state of the participants were achieved. At the beginning of the psychotherapeutic process, the participants reported difficulties in adapting to the new environment, followed by language and academic difficulties, lack of and difficulties in socialization, difficulties in accepting the new culture and changes in eating and sleeping habits. These situations were reflected in the reduction of the quality of their lives. However, during the psychotherapeutic process, with the use of Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy techniques, the participants in the group reported significant changes in the improvement of their psycho-emotional state and in the ease of adapting to the new environment.

We held a meeting of the group after 4 months following the end of the psychotherapeutic process, and even after those

participants reported that their psycho-emotional condition continues to be good and their quality of life had improved.

Lastly, holistic approach, the importance of personal concepts, working towards re-building the life balance, encouragement on working and overcoming conflicts, as well as the verbalization of concrete steps not only lead to the return of a good state of psycho-emotional stability, but at the same time, with the broadening of the goals, the participants engage in self-help and become independent from the therapist. By adding the transcultural approach and working with multicultural student groups, Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy remains a favorable alternative that brings successful therapeutic results.

4.1. Recommendations

Initially, it would be well to recommend the use of a measuring questionnaire for measuring the psycho-emotional state of the participants. This can be done at the beginning of the therapy

and at the end, it will be important to compare the results and have numerical data. Otherwise, in this research, the results are based only on the oral data of the participants, on their feedback.

Another recommendation could be to include participants from both genders in the group, and then to analyze these results.

While in the theoretical aspect, it is recommended that other instruments from Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy be included in the next researches, such as: the Differential Analysis Inventory (DAI) and/or the Wiesbaden Inventory for Positive and Family Psychotherapy (WIPPF) questionnaires, as they may affect the quality of future findings.

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