

The Investigation of the Group-Therapeutically Effect on the Selection Theory to Reduce the Students' Examination Anxiety

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ABSTRACT The aim of this investigation was to determine the effect of group therapy following the selection theory on the examination anxiety of second-grade high-school girl students of Tabriz city. The method of the investigation was quasi-experimental, with pre-test and post-test designs involving one control group. The population included all second-grade high-school students in Tabriz in the 2014-2015 academic years. Using the non-random sampling method, 24 students were selected and divided into two groups-experimental and control-with 12 members each. Data were collected using the Spielberg's Examination Anxiety Questionnaire. The questionnaire was used as a pre-test and post-test for the groups. The experimental group underwent a 10-session group-therapy intervention following the selection theory. But the control group faced no intervention. The results showed that group therapy following the selection approach was significantly effective in decreasing the exam anxiety of the experimental group compared with the control group ($p < 0.001$). This treatment was also effective in decreasing excitement and worry about the exams.

INTRODUCTION

Examination anxiety is considered to be one of the most common educational phenomena. It has a close relationship with the anxiety and public concerns of adolescence. This kind of anxiety appears when a person is tested or expected to solve a problem. It makes itself apparent in the performance, leading to the failure of overcoming a situation. In other words, this anxiety reduces a person's real level of performance. When anxiety increases, the educational efficacy goes down. This kind of anxiety affects all beliefs, attitudes, and personal motivations (Izadifar and Ashtiani 2010). However, anxiety is considered to be a major part of a person's life in all communities because it plays a key role in shaping suitable behaviour. The lack of anxiety and anxiety-like conditions may expose people to other disorders. Exam anxiety is considered to be one of the most important processes that millions of students face annually (Hill cited by Izadifar and Ashtiani 2010). Anxiety is one of the most essential issues that every person confronts over time. It is considered to be a global issue. When someone feels anxious, he or she

confronts a dangerous situation according to his or her abilities (Corey 2002). Critical conditions, such as participation in exams, affect these people too much (Qudsyi and Putri 2016). Anxiety has been reported at a high level in Iran. The researchers of this study interacted with many students who experience anxiety during exams. To help reduce anxiety among these students, the researchers tried to communicate with their parents.

The researchers such as Abolghasemi et al. (2000) reported that about 17.3 percent students experience and grapple with exam anxiety. Glaser's selection theory is considered to be one of the most efficient theories followed in psychological interventions to help a person be happy, satisfied, and successful in this regard. Based on this theory, the most important reason for psychological disorders is the shirking of responsibility and ignorance (Glaser 2000). Glaser represented the cause and effect of man's behaviour. The selection theory believes that man's behaviour stems from the target to satisfy five main purposes- love, possession, entertainment, freedom, survival, power and progression. According to Glaser, when non-adaptive behaviours appear, people try to handle and control the perceptions of life through these. Based on this theory, anxiety, depression and

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the feeling of sin can appear in a person and he or she may wonder how to overcome these and still meet the main needs, though he or she may feel that these behaviours are inefficient for this purpose (Shafiabadi and Naseri 2005).

Through the studies carried out, it can be concluded that the selection theory is one of the most efficient therapeutic methods in this regard. Many studies say that anxiety, particularly during exams, is one of the most essential psychological issues. Glaser believed that people have to exhibit the most responsible behaviour to organize their beliefs and feelings in life. Based on Glaser's selection theory, a person feels happy when he or she can reach his or her abilities, self-confidence, and self-respect, and provide the best conditions for the self in life issues himself or herself (Glasser and Glasser 2008). From the investigations and conclusions, it can be claimed that studies of the subject have been restricted. Secondly, due to the newness of the subject, the construction of self-confidence and responsibility and other mental or spiritual moods are very important in this case. Thirdly, the commonness of exam anxiety and other behavioural disorders should be efficiently investigated to reduce the degree of anxiety and depression symptoms. Khoramirad et al. (2011) showed that there is a negative reverse relationship between exam anxiety and spiritual intelligence.

Ghasemi et al. (2011), in a study entitled 'A comparison of the emotional seeking level, overcoming approaches and the degree of susceptibility to stress between under-treatment addicts kept on Methadone and healthy people', concluded that emotional seeking and the degree of susceptibility to stress are the main predictor variables for using the overcoming approaches as well as the drugs to be prescribed to people with a history of drug misuse. Ahmadi and Rezvaninezhad (1999) and Farmani et al. (2015) concluded that group therapy is very effective in reducing exam anxiety. Farahbakhsh et al. (2006) showed that group training is very effective in reducing a student's critical condition. Disfani (2003) investigated Glaser's therapeutic method (responsibility training) on students' critical identity in Isfahan City and concluded that training responsibility is very effective in reducing adolescents' identity crisis. Shaabani and Mehrmohammadi (2000) investigated the therapeutic effect of group consultation on the reduction of the number of criminals in prison and observed that this method is very effective in reducing the degree of identity crisis.

Weiner (2010) concluded in their studies that exam anxiety is manifested by worrying thoughts, increased heart rate, and challenging emotions during and after the exam. It can be sometimes intensified when it creates a complicated condition for all students. This mood of students will gradually turn into a stable trait, bringing in a feeling of inefficiency. It's found that the fear of evaluation and the personality trait of perfectionism are very effective in increasing the level of exam anxiety. This leads to a decrease in students' educational performance. Indeed, perfectionism is one of the most essential personality traits regarding exam anxiety and educational failure. Ergen (2003) showed that exam anxiety is a cognitive attention structure. People with exam anxiety tend to reflect all evaluation signs through inconvenient learning processes. Its reported, investigated the group consultation effect following the selection theory (reality treatment) on Internet addiction and students' self-esteem, and showed that this method of treatment can significantly reduce the former and increase the latter.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Research Plan

The research plan of the present study comprised the semi-experimental method and its pre- and post-test plans along with the control group.

Statistical Population and Sample Volume

The statistical population of the present study included all high-school girl students of Tabriz city. The population comprised 55,000 people.

Statistical Sample and Sampling Method

Following the non-accidental sampling method, 24 students were selected for this study. Through accidental selection, they were divided into two classes of 12 students each-the experimental and the control groups.

Measuring Tool

Spielberg's Exam Anxiety Questionnaire:

This questionnaire was formulated by Spielberg et al. (1983). It consists of 20 articles-with two subscales of anxiety and emotion-which

measure reactions before and after exams. Every article has the four choices of 'almost never', 'sometimes', 'often', and 'almost always'. The reliability of the questionnaire is reported to be 0.94; for anxiety, it is 0.84, and for emotion, it is 0.90 (Spielberg et al. 1983). Reliability of a questionnaire is measured in Iran by the internal assimilation method (0.92), halving (0.92), and re-testing (0.90) (Abolghasemi et al. 2004).

Completion Method

The two groups were asked to participate in a 1.5-hour consultation session following the selection theory. Ten such sessions were carried out to confirm the techniques and related methods before holding pre- and post-tests of both groups.

Research Execution Method

The research plan was established based on the pre- and post-tests with the control group. Before starting the interventions, the exam anxiety scores of the respective subjects were available. The experimental and control groups were specified. The experimental group were under the intervention of 10 1.5–2-hour sessions for three months. The control group faced no intervention. A week after the sessions ended, the exam anxiety questionnaire was given to all subjects of both groups.

Data Analysis Method

The inferential statistic (covariance analysis) was used to analyse the hypotheses in the study.

RESULTS

Based on Table 1, by eliminating the effect of pre- and post-tests, both groups in the pre-test showed significant differences together. Also, the effect size of the group variable on the exam anxiety variable was obtained at 0.344. According to the categorization by Cohen (1988), this effect is considered to be the highest in this case. Hence, the effectiveness of the selection theory following the group method to potentially reduce exam anxiety is confirmed.

Based on Table 2, by eliminating the effect of pre- and post-tests, both groups in pre-test showed significant differences together. Also, the effect of the group variable on the emotion variable was obtained at 0.312. According to the categorization by Cohen (1988), the effect is considered to be the highest in this case. Hence, the effectiveness of the selection theory following the group method to potentially reduce exam anxiety is confirmed.

Based on Table 3, it can be concluded that the measured $F(24.42)$ for the group variable is significant. Thus, by eliminating the effect of pre-test, both groups are together significant in terms of the degree of anxiety. Also, the size of the effect on anxiety is 0.239. According to Cohen's categorization, the effect is considered to be the highest degree. Hence, the effectiveness of the selection theory in reducing anxiety is confirmed.

Based on Table 4, the mean difference between the groups with respect to exam anxiety is statistically significant. Hence, according to the

Table 1: Results of covariance analysis for the exam anxiety variable

<i>Change references</i>	<i>Total squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Size of effect</i>
Pre-test of exam anxiety	228.24	1	232.46	2.624	0.042	0.138
Group	4354.94	1	4155.743	40.81	0.001	0.344
Error	3117.28	21	78.28			
Total	7700.46	24				

Table 2: Results of covariance analysis for the emotion variable

<i>Change references</i>	<i>Total squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Size of effect</i>
Emotional ability	198.42	1	1890.25	4.517	0.001	0.188
Group	3113.10	1	3093.63	29.12	0.001	0.312
Error	3017.145	21	63.82			
Total	6328.665	24				

Table 3: Results of covariance analysis for the anxiety variable

<i>Change references</i>	<i>Total squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Size of effect</i>
Anxiety	176.42	1	650.67	3.125	0.01	0.103
Group	2865.41	1	2940.92	24.42	0.01	0.239
Error	2739.34	21	63.51			
Total	5781.17	24				

Table 4: The comparison of the means in both experimental and control groups

	<i>Groups</i>	<i>Mean difference</i>	<i>Mean criteria error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Exam Anxiety</i>	Experimental-control	-29.63*	3.116	0.001
	Control-experimental	29.63*	3.116	0.001
<i>Emotional Ability</i>	Experimental-control	17.55*	3.151	0.001
	Control-experimental	-17.55*	3.151	0.001
<i>Anxiety</i>	Experimental-control	13.51*	2.245	0.01
	Control-experimental	-13.51*	2.245	0.01

results of the covariance analysis and the follow-up test, the treatment group, which faced the selection theory intervention, experienced an effective reduction in exam anxiety compared with the control group. The results of Table 4 show that the mean difference in the groups is significant. Therefore, the group treatment was quite effective in reducing anxiety.

DISCUSSION

According to the results of the covariance analysis, there is a positive significant reduction in anxiety in the treatment group. Hence, the elimination of the pre-test effect in both groups made a significant difference regarding the degree of anxiety. Also, multiple comparisons of the means of the experimental group (the selection theory intervention group) and the control group (the lack of intervention) showed that the mean difference is significant. Hence, group treatment using the selection theory method was very effective in reducing anxiety compared with the control group. The results of the study coincide with the results of Hussein (2014), Izadifar and Ashtiani (2010). Also, they coincide with the results of Jarareh and Korkani (2013), who also proved that the treatment method based on Glaser's selection theory can significantly reduce the degree of anxiety among students. From the results, it can be stated that the Selection Theory Approach can help the participants specify their needs regarding the five main psychological frameworks that try to reflect all the caregiver statements.

That is because this gives them an opportunity to represent all behaviours relating to handling and managing of the related emotions and anxiety. This again increases the responsibility of the people. Students can take their pick from these five psychological choices to get a better opportunity to control their anxiety (Roger 1999).

This theory only refers to a person trying to manage and control his or her life events. The past plays a key role in someone's present problem but it cannot be considered as the main determinant for all people. Regardless of what happened in the past, what we need now is the main effective performance to plan our present. Our main task is to achieve something better than what we did in the past. In other words, our duty is to recover our present (Corey 2002).

According to the results of the present study, by the elimination of the pre-test effect on both groups, there is a significant difference between the degrees of emotion. According to the significance of the group variable in the covariance analysis, and the results of multiple comparisons between the groups, the mean difference between both groups is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Hence, compared with the control group, the results of the treatment group show that the selection theory method is quite effective in controlling the emotions. The results of Hussein (2014) coincide with the results. They also coincide with the results of Islami et al. (2012) regarding the investigation of the treatment-reality effectiveness and life quality as well as students' emotions. In the representation of these results, it can be stated that students have to

handle their own behaviours when they face anxiety and other related events. The selection theory method is subjected to the physical symptoms or emotional seeking of all students, such as an increase in heartbeat, respiratory rhymes, and signs of anxiety. The results of the study are mainly subjected to the physical and intense emotional symptoms and educational performance. Based on the results of the study, by the elimination of the pre-test effect, a significant difference is observed between the two groups. Due to the significance of the group variable in the covariance analysis, a significant difference is observed between the experimental and control groups. In the results of multiple comparisons between the two groups, it is shown that the mean difference of both groups is significant. Hence, compared with the control group, the selection method is very effective in reducing anxiety. The results of the study coincide with the results of Hussein (2014),

Ergen (2003), and Larson et al. (2011) concluded that anxiety has a close relationship with mental ruminations and emotional motivation among all students. On the other hand, these factors can predict mental ruminations. Forghani et al. (2012) investigated the effectiveness of the treatment reality on self-esteem and anxiety among students and concluded that this method of treatment can significantly reduce a student's anxiety. Also, Ghamari Kivi et al. (2015) found that exam anxiety declined due to cognitive restructuring of students in Iran. Rahmani and Rahmani (2015) also proved that group therapy on acceptance and commitment had a considerable effect on reducing anxiety among students.

From these results, it can be stated that students who suffer from exam anxiety believe that their struggles will lead to failure, that they can never improve their performance, which will lead them to fail the exam. This study showed that by increasing the consciousness level, and by correcting all beliefs, selections, requirements, and finally, students' behaviour, the researcher helped reduce the degree of students' mistakes by controlling their thinking system significantly. This is a better way to control exam anxiety.

CONCLUSION

The selection theory approach can help all participants specify what they want to do to control anxiety. Students can find their own way

to reach their purpose. This treatment method can significantly reduce all intense physical symptoms among students. This theory considers man as an existence that tries to select his or own options and choices in reaching all responsibilities in this world. According to Kory's finding, these students are then able to make a better world for themselves. Also, related theories and approaches can help people recognize their own external control psychologically. It is believed that only an individual can achieve something for himself. All individuals learn how to select a healthy method instead of uncertain behaviour, and this makes them rely on the present healthy status of life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ♦ It is recommended that the effect of group therapy on university students be investigated because of its efficiency on second-grade high-school students.
- ♦ It is recommended that the effect of this therapy for the treatment of anxiety, depression, and other psychological disorders be investigated.

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