The Effectiveness of the Group Psychological Counseling Model to Enhance Psychological Well–Being of Elderly in Yala Province, Thailand

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Abstract

This mixed-method study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the group psychological counseling model for enhancing psychological well–being of elderly in Yala Province, Thailand. The experimental group consisted of 8 elderly people selected by multi-stage and purposive sampling. Research instruments comprised; psychological well–being questionnaires for the elderly people with the reliability of 0.77, the psychological counseling model with the IOC ranged from 0.60 – 1.00, and items for a focus group discussion. Data were analyzed by using Friedman and Wilcoxon signed-rank test including content analysis. The findings revealed that the mean scores of psychological well-being of the elderly were higher after participating in group counseling and the follow up were 4.11, 5.13 and 5.29, respectively. The mean scores Psychological well–being of the elderly were different between before counseling, after participating in group counseling and the follow up ($\overline{X} = 14.250$, p <.001). Focus group report of the elderly who attended the group counseling model showed that they were satisfied with the group counselling model as they had opportunity to freely express and exchange their ideas within the group members and satisfied with the model and applied to living well. The study found group psychological counseling model results in a statistically significant and influences the level of psychological well-being of the participants for enhancing psychological well–being of elderly in Yala Province, Thailand. The study findings could be utilized as the baseline data for enhancing psychological well–being of elderly in the community to develop the plan for improving the quality of life of the elderly. Furthermore, the findings could be used for developing the guideline for providing the service which met the needs of the elderly.

Keywords: Psychological counseling model, Well–being, Elderly group

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Introduction

Thailand's demographic structure is changing to an aging society since 2005, where the proportion of the population aged 60 years and over reaches 10 percent, increasing at a faster rate of more than 4 percent per year and is moving towards an aging society. The proportion of the population aged 60 will reach 20 percent in 2021, which will be the ultimate aging society when the proportion of the population aged 60 and over reaches 28 percent by 2031. (Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute, 2016). There are various aspects appear to come along with the increasing numbers of elderly, for instance, socio-economic and health issues, due to the fact that chronic health conditions related to age lead the most elders to be dependent people. Also, the chronic diseases affect routine and daily life of these elders. Eventually, elderly abandonment may occur and will be the big issue in the future (Pisutthipa, M. 2011).
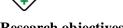
Psychological well-being plays an important role since it reveals individual perception and environment (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). According to the survey of the Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development institute (TGRI), improving individual psychological well-being is essential, especially in Thai elderly group as their level of psychological well-being is low comparing with other groups. The results of the survey illustrated that the means score of psychological well-being in one-third of Thai elders was lower than the means score of all age group (Foundation for Thai Elderly Research and Development Institute Annual Report, 2014). In addition to the survey, Thai elders dwelling in the Southern Border Provinces have been facing with the non-peaceful situation that could be occurred at any given moment and cannot be rule out. These are one of the main causes affecting quality of life including mental health of the elders in this area (Thongdee, J., Rongmuang, D. &Nakchattree, C., 2013).

The situation of elders in the Southern Border Provinces is considered according to the socio-economic context of the area. Most elders usually have to stay alone during the daytime in weekdays in their residential areas. Many of them still have burden on taking care of their grandchildren , Some of which still work themselves for living (Yala Municipality, 2013). The life context including their health conditions could affect the mental health of these aged people leading them feeling worthless. For these reasons, promoting psychological well-being for elders in this area is essential to prevent upcoming mental health issues that could be occurred in this aged group (Wongpanarak, N., 2013).

Psychological counselling is the process that could help people with mental health issues. Group counseling is the process that could help clients having mental issues by counseling in the form of group. Health providers as counselors provide opportunity to their clients to freely express their feeling . They also provide important information regarding the way to release stress, coping or addressing with the emotional consequences (Wongthim, S., 2011). Consequently, this approach could help clients especially elders in Yala Province, Thailand to continually develop their mental health. These elders not only have physical and mental health issues from their health conditions, but also have physical and mental health consequences from the non-peaceful situation. These problems seem very complicated to address (Rattanadilok, P, 2013).

For these reasons, the researchers intend to study regarding the effectiveness of the group psychological counseling model for enhancing psychological well–being of elders in Yala Province, Thailand. The results could be applied to institutes that have a role in caring elderly people as the way to care this group of people. Also, the findings could be continued as health innovation for caring elders in the future.

Research objectives

To evaluate the effectiveness of a group psychological counseling model for enhancing psychological well–being of elders in Yala Province, Thailand.

Research methods

The current study applied mixed-method approach consisting of quantitative and qualitative study. With regard to quantitative study, a quasi-experimental design was used to compare means between before experiment, after experiment, and follow-up period (4 weeks after experimental termination). The 8 participants attended in the experiment 9 sessions, 90 minutes per session and were evaluated psychological well-being 3 sessions mentioned earlier. Data were collected in June-August 2017. For the qualitative approach, focus group discussion was used only in the follow-up period (4 weeks after experimental termination). Research instruments were 1) Psychological well-being evaluation form adopted from concept of psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989; Ryff& Keyes, 1995) and 2) questionnaires with rating scale and 6-point Likert Scales which the researcher has developed to suitable for the context of the elderly in the southern border provinces of Thailand Based on the Riff and Keyes concept of mental health (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995) and contextual studies in the researcher's area 3) Group interview questions, and 4) the group psychological counseling model with model evaluation form - 32 questionnaires - for evaluating the model. The Item Congruence (IOC) of the model was between 0. 6 0 – 1 . 0 0 and the reliability coefficients was 0.77.

Population and sampling

Target population in this study was people aged 60 years old and older dwelling in Yala Province, Thailand. The 8 participants participated in the study were selected by using multi-stage random sampling and purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria including elders considering health condition and those who were willing to participate in the study.

Table1 Group Psychological Counseling Model

Steps in the counselling process	Themes in counselling	Objectives	Counselling theory and framework
Create a group	Orientation "Glad to meet you"	To enhance positive relationship and trust between counsellors and group members as well as among group members by providing information regarding psychological well-being and advantages of attending in the project.	Client-Centered Counseling 1. Unconditional positive regard 2. Empathy listening 3. Clarifying
Create a group	Promoting psychological well-being for elders in terms of building good relationship with others and attentive listener "Magic umbrella"	To enhance positive relationship between counsellors and group members and to provide the essential information leading the member to find themselves.	**1.** Transactional Analysis 1.1 Questioning technique 1.2 Identifying technique 1.3Structural analysis techniques 1.4 Explanation **2.** Client-Centered Counseling 2.1 Empathy listening 2.2 Reflection technique

Steps in the counselling process	Themes in counselling	Objectives	Counselling theory and framework
Breaking the ice	Promoting psychological well-being for elders in terms of building positive relationship with others and focusing on creating a trust. "Having a trust and come together"	To enhance awareness of a group member regarding the importance of trust and learning the way to trust others.	**1.** Transactional Analysis 1 . 1 **Examples** of **context clues** 1.2 Explanation 1.3Interpretation techniques **2.** Client-Centered Counseling 2.1 Questioning technique 2.2Summarizing technique **3.** Gestalt therapy using role play
Breaking the ice	Promoting psychological well-being for elders in terms of being autonomy "I am confident in myself"	To enhance awareness of a group member regarding the importance of being yourself. The member could learn about how to open mind with others, how to be yourself, and how to understand yourself.	**1.** Theory of existentialism 1.1 Building self-awareness 1.2 Explanation 1.3 Questioning technique **2.** Gestalt therapy using Round Robin **3.**Client-Centered Counseling using unconditional positive regard
Action	Promoting psychological well-being for elders in terms of ability to adjust environment "Empty chair"	To enhance awareness of a group member regarding the importance of adjusting environment. The member could learn about how to adjust him/herself with the different environment and understand the world that we live in differently.	**1.**Gestalt therapy using the Empty Chair Technique **2.**Client-Centered Counseling 1) Listening technique 2) Summarizing technique
Action	Promoting psychological well-being for elders in terms of thinking for the future "life expectation"	To enhance awareness of a group member regarding the importance of life expectation including understanding the meaning of life	**1.** Theory of existentialism 1.1 Literacy techniques 1.2 Questioning technique **2.** Client-Centered Counseling 2.1 Summarizing technique 2.2 reflection of feeling
Action	Promoting psychological well-being for elders in terms of having life goals "Follow the dream"	To enhance the group members for having awareness and considering their life goals including learning about how to create their life goals and thinking of prosperity of life.	**1.** Theory of existentialism using interpretation techniques 2 Group counselling using reflection of feeling 3.Gestalt's model of imaginary
Action	Promoting psychological well-being for elders in terms of individual development "Open mind for the new experience"	To enhance awareness of self-efficacy and individual development for learning and opening the new experience leading to individual development	1. Theory of existentialism 2. Literacy techniques 3. Questioning technique 4.Client-Centered Counseling using reflection of feeling
Experimental termination	Post training	To provide opportunity for group members to think and summarize their experiences, and advantages from participating in the group counseling model. Also, to think about the implication for their daily life. Moreover, the researchers evaluated the psychological well-being of the participants after attending the program for the study findings.	**1.** Client-Centered Counseling using reflection of feeling **2.** Theory of existentialism 2.1 Questioning technique 2.2 Literacy techniques

Data analysis

1.Friedman and Wilcoxon signed-rank test were used to compare the evaluation of mental status of the participants participated in the study during the time before participation, follow-up period, and after participation.

2. Content analysis was used in order to analyze the collected data from note-taking, observation and focus group discussion.

Research ethics

This study was approved by Research Ethics Committee of Sirindhorn College of Public Health, Yala. The IRB approval number is 094/2559. During the time of data collection, the researchers conserved a right of a participant who gave information and was interviewed.

The researchers initially introduced themselves and, then, explained a study method, the research objectives of this study, measures taken to ensure confidentiality including data protection, and the risk and benefits of the study.

Results

Table 2 Comparing means of psychological well–being of the participants between before experiment, after experiment, and follow-up period

Item	Means of psychological well–being					
	Before experiment		After experiment		Follow-up period	
	$\overline{X}$	SD	$\overline{X}$	SD	$\overline{X}$	SD
1	4.5	1.33	5.16	1.00	5.13	0.99
2	4.87	1.17	5.61	0.72	5.71	0.65
3	4.34	1.10	5.21	0.66	5.34	0.63
4	3.95	1.23	5.13	0.66	5.34	0.71
5	4.00	1.79	5.05	1.09	5.21	1.09
6	3.50	2.17	4.92	1.10	5.21	1.04
7	3.55	1.18	4.97	0.79	5.24	1.00
8	4.21	1.49	5.00	1.04	5.16	1.00
Overall means	4.11	1.43	5.13	0.88	5.29	0.88

The table 2 shows that the mean score of the psychological well-being of the participants after the experiment ($\bar{x}$=5.13) and in the follow-up period ($\bar{x}$=5.29) were higher than before the experiment ($\bar{x}$=4.11) at 0.05 level of significance.

Comparing the mean score of the psychological well-being between before the experiment, after the experiment, and during the follow-up period

The results from data analysis revealed that means of psychological well-being of participants between before the experiment, after experiment, and during the follow-up period were statistically significant ($\overline{X}$ = 14.250, p <.001) as showed in table 3.

Table 3 Comparing means of psychological well-being between before experiment, after experiment, and follow-up period using Friedman Test

Factors	Themes in counselling	N	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Sig.
Positive relationship with others	Before experiment	8	4.4625	.63419	1.00	12.452*	.002
	After experiment	8	5.3400	.38940	2.44		
	Follow-up period	8	5.4288	.21451	2.56		
Autonomy	Before experiment	8	3.5250	.66708	1.00	14.250*	.001
	After experiment	8	4.6500	.39641	2.13		
	Follow-up period	8	5.4750	.42678	2.88		
Environmental mastery	Before experiment	8	4.2725	.71829	1.19	11.267*	.004
	After experiment	8	5.3100	.33903	2.81		
	Follow-up period	8	4.9163	.36656	2.00		
Purpose in life	Before experiment	8	3.8038	.71845	1.00	15.548*	.000
	After experiment	8	4.9075	.34972	2.06		
	Follow-up period	8	5.2863	.34994	2.94		
Personal growth	Before experiment	8	4.1788	.60072	1.13	9.742*	.008
	After experiment	8	5.2688	.31041	2.56		
	Follow-up period	8	5.1975	.34972	2.31		
Summary	Before experiment	**8**	**4.0488**	**.52453**	**1.00**	**14.250***	**.001**
	After experiment	**8**	**5.0963**	**.24865**	**2.13**		
	Follow-up period	**8**	**5.2600**	**.22678**	**2.88**		

*p<.05

Table 3 presents that means of psychological well-being of participants during the time of before the experiment, and after the experiment were statistically significant ($\overline{X} = 14.250$, p <.001). This means that the group psychological counseling model influences the level of psychological well-being of the participants.
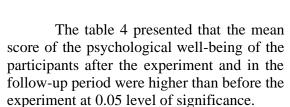
The researcher continually compared between the components of psychological well-being by using multiple comparison with Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test presented as table 4.

Table 4 The results of multiple comparison using Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test comparing between the components of psychological well-being

Factors	Comparison of pairs	N	Z	Sig.
Positive relationship with others	Before and after experiment	8	2.527*	.012
	Before experiment and follow-up period	8	2.524*	.497
	After experiment and follow-up period	8	0.679	.497
Autonomy	Before and after experiment	8	2.530*	.011
	Before experiment and follow-up period	8	2.524*	.012
	After experiment and follow-up period	8	2.395*	.017
Environmental mastery	Before and after experiment	8	2.521*	.012
	Before experiment and follow-up period	8	2.028*	.043
	After experiment and follow-up period	8	2.032*	.042
Purpose in life	Before and after experiment	8	2.527*	.012
	Before experiment and follow-up period	8	2.521*	.012
	After experiment and follow-up period	8	2.388*	.017
Personal growth	Before and after experiment	8	2.524*	.012
	Before experiment and follow-up period	8	2.383*	.017
	After experiment and follow-up period	8	0.254	.799
Summary	Before experiment and follow-up period	**8**	**2.521***	**.012**
	After experiment and follow-up period	**8**	**2.521***	**.012**
	After experiment and follow-up period	**8**	**1.960**	**.050**

*p<.05

The table 4 presented that the mean score of the psychological well-being of the participants after the experiment and in the follow-up period were higher than before the experiment at 0.05 level of significance.

2. The results from focus group discussion showed that the participants were satisfied with the group counselling model as they had opportunity to freely express and exchange their ideas within the group members. Also, this method provided them to enquire what they need to know and understand their situation. These leaded the participants to understand their life goals, trust others, proud to be themselves, and apply these to their routine and daily life. The themes and excerpts below illustrate the important findings from focus group discussion after the experiment and in the follow-up period as follows:

Positive relationships with others

The results from attending group counselling model 9 sessions in total of the participants showed that promoting psychological well-being to elders in terms of building good relationships with others could be able them to have positive relationships with others. It could be noticed that before the experiment, the participants did not prefer to know each other or concern for others. Since the first time they met each other in the same group during orientation, they could build the relationships within the group members. They rather understand and concern for others. Every single time of group counselling, the elders gradually increased their awareness regarding advantages of trusts, helping others, and more understand regarding how to act as a giver or a receiver

The example of excerpt in terms of improving positive relationships with others

" I think that participating in this activity could help me feeling happy. This is because previously I feel alone. First time when I met the group members, I felt shy to talk with them because I don't know about them. But when I started to talk with them, you know I then felt more understand about them.

The components of autonomy

The results from the focus group discussion illustrated that after attending the group psychological counseling in terms of being autonomy, the participants pointed out that their ability of being autonomy was improved. They also described that 9 sessions of participation as the group members enhanced their ability to make a decision, explore themselves to others, and understand and respect themselves and others.

The example of excerpt in terms of improving autonomy

"*Since I have done this activity with you, I feel more confident in myself. Previously, before doing something, I have to consult others about what I have to do or how can I make a decision. Now I am confident to tell others what I want. It doesn't mean that I don't listen to others. I just can tell others what I want to do or what I think*"

Implication of the study

1. The psychological well-being form could be applied as a tool for evaluating mental health conditions or psychological well-being in elders living in the similar context, or dwelling in the same region. Also, this could be applied in elders in special conditions, for example, elderly people with chronic diseases, dependent elders, or vulnerable elders, by adjusting questions based on differences of socio-cultural context.

2. In addition to applying the model in elderly group, the psychological counseling model could be applied to another group of people in the different areas and context by considering the context of target area and practice the group counseling before conducting the study.

Discussion

The mean score of the psychological well-being of the participants before experiment, after experiment, and follow-up period were statistically significant ($\overline{X} = 14.250, p < .001$). That would mean a good effectiveness of psychological well-being model and influences the level of psychological well-being of the participants for enhancing psychological well–being of elderly in Yala Province, Thailand . Also, the mean score of the psychological well-being of the participants after the experiment and in the follow-up period were higher than before the experiment at 0.05 level of significance. These were consistent with the point of view according to the results from the focus group discussion. Most participants illustrated that they are satisfied with the group counseling as they have opportunity to freely express how they feel, what they need, and so on. These could help them to understand others, plan their life goal, be autonomous, and create a trust. The participants could apply what they receive from attending the group counseling in the daily life. Consistent with the study of Sangarun, C. (2014) the group psychological counseling could promote participants to recognize and accept their emotional consequences and idea leading to the ability of decision making and creating their life goals. Also, these could encourage the participants to build their relationship with others and try to have the new experiences which lead them to achieve their life goal.

Furthermore, there are some supporting factors affecting the effectiveness of the group psychological counseling model. One of which is that the participants live in the same area. Consequently, the participants could easily build their relationship with the other group members. Also, the appropriate time and place could encourage the participant to participate in the study. The place was convenient for the participants as the group counseling were conducted in the first floor of Public Health Center 3, Yala Municipality. Also, the time of counseling was not the working and prayer time of the participants (between 13.00 – 14.30). Consistent with the study of Thongdee, J., Rongmuang, D. & Nakchattree, C., (2013). Studying about health status, and quality of life among elders in Yala Province, Thailand, they found that health promotion planning for elders in Yala Province, Thailand needs to be appropriated with the socio-cultural context of the clients.

Suggestions

1. The future study should compare between two groups, control group and experimental group, for testing the effectiveness of the model.
2. The participants should be followed up for 3 months and 6 months after the experiment.

3. The results should be expanded to another group, for instance, patients with chronic illness, elders in the rural areas, vulnerable group, and so on, for enhancing their psychological well-being appropriated with their context.

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