

Intervention study of self-concept clarity group counseling on the sense of life in middle school students

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Abstract: This study investigates the role of self-concept group counseling in enhancing the sense of meaning in life among junior high school students, as well as the mechanisms through which this sense of meaning influences their overall well-being, ultimately aiming to ensure students' life safety and campus security. Methods: A sample of fifty junior high school students was selected and divided into an experimental group and a control group. Both groups were pre-tested using the Sense of Meaning Questionnaire. The experimental group participated in group counseling sessions for a duration of two months, while the control group received no intervention. Results: Prior to the intervention, there were no significant differences in the sense of meaning in life between the experimental and control groups. However, following the intervention, the experimental group exhibited a significantly higher sense of meaning in life compared to the control group, which showed no notable change. Conclusion: The findings suggest that self-concept group counseling has a substantial positive impact on middle school students' sense of meaning in life.

1. Introduction

In recent years, incidents of suicide and self-injury among middle school students have become increasingly prevalent. A significant factor contributing to this phenomenon is the low sense of meaning in life experienced by these individuals. Middle school represents a critical period for personal development, during which students' self-awareness is in a stage of integration, and their values and life perspectives are being shaped and refined ^[1]. Moreover, the frequent occurrences of campus violence and concerns regarding life safety underscore the urgent need for comprehensive life safety education and mental health initiatives aimed at middle school students. Addressing these issues has become a central focus of educational policy in our country, as fostering a sense of meaning in life among students is of paramount importance. The sense of meaning in life refers to an individual's perception of the significance and value of their existence, alongside a clear understanding of their future direction. This concept encompasses two components: the pursuit of meaning and the possession of meaning ^[2]. A strong sense of meaning in life is a crucial indicator of an individual's mental health. Research indicates that a robust sense of meaning is positively correlated with life satisfaction and subjective well-being, while being negatively associated with depression. Furthermore, a well-developed sense of meaning can empower individuals to adopt constructive strategies for coping with external challenges, thereby enhancing their psychological resilience and overall mental health.

Previous studies in the field of junior high school students life meaning of intervention is widely explored, but few research from the perspective of self concept clarity of junior high school students life meaning group counseling, and the establishment of middle school students self-cognition, values will bring great influence on students' life meaning, studies have shown that the higher the self-concept clarity of individuals, can correct understanding of self, make reasonable goal of life, more experience the meaning of life. Self-concept clarity will affect the emotional regulation ability of teenagers. The lower the self-concept clarity, individuals are prone to produce negative emotional states such as anxiety, and even induce suicidal delineation^[3]. So this study through the group psychological counseling intervention of self-concept clarity, explore the life meaning of intervention, help students to establish the correct sense of meaning, ensure the safety of students' life and campus, provide new ideas for school mental health practice intervention, in order to better maintain the mental health of middle school students, promote the physical and mental growth and development of middle school students.

2. Research methods

2.1 Study subjects

50 junior high school students from a middle school in Shijiazhuang were divided into experimental group and control group, with 25 students in each group. There was no significant difference between the experimental and control groups in self-concept clarity and sense of life. A group coaching intervention was performed in the experimental group, with no further intervention in the control group.

2.2 Research tools

In this study, Steger et al. compiled in 2006, and Chinese scholar Wang Xinqiang revised the sense of life meaning questionnaire in 2013 based on middle school students. There were 10 questions, including two dimensions, namely, the sense of meaning and the sense of meaning. The scale adopts the Likert 7 point scoring method, in which the second question is the reverse score question. The higher the score, the stronger the sense of life.

2.3 Study process

The intervention was performed in the experimental group, which received an 8-week group counseling once a week for 60 minutes. No control group will receive any intervention.

2.4 Group counseling program

Based on the relevant domestic and foreign literature, on the basis of previous theories and experimental data, combined with the psychological characteristics of junior high school students, we designed the relevant group psychological counseling program around the self-concept clarity and sense of life meaning, see Table 1 for details^[4].

Table 1: Group psychological counseling program

unit	theme	moving target	activity content
Unit 1	It's good to know you	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Help group members get to know each other and accept group partners 2. Establish group goals and basic group norms 3. Initially establish a trusting and warm atmosphere 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Warm-up exercise: name squat squat squat 2. Introduce yourself 3. Introduce the students sitting next to you 4. Sign a group contract
Unit 2	I am who I am	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stimulate members' interest in self-exploration. 2. Have a clear cognition and evaluation of yourself, and sort out your physiological, psychological, and social self 3. Think about and adjust your own shortcomings. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Warm-up activity: Squirrel moving 2. Fill in the fifteen "I am" 3. "Be a tree, find a ray of light" 4. Design my personalized business card 5. Sharing and understanding
Unit 3	Others are a mirror	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Know and understand themselves in the eyes of others, so that members can know themselves from the perspective of others. 2. Further consolidate and deepen the clarity of your own understanding. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Warm-up activities: I have you don't 2. Mirror blind box 3. Self-sketching 4. Sugar-coated cannonballs 5. Share and communicate
Unit 4	The choice of survival	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand and clarify your own values; 2. Understand the most valuable and meaningful things in your life through communication. 3. Be aware of the influence of important others in your life. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Warm-up activities: a piece of five cents 2. The Great Auction of Life 3. "This Muddy Life" video 4. Share your thoughts 5. Perception and summary
Unit 5	Draw a graph of my life	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remember your important past experiences and improve your understanding of the past 2. Learn from past experiences and apply them to real life. 3. Accept yourself right now. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Warm-up activities: turtles and crows 2. Draw a life curve 3. My five things 4. Minesweeper 5. Perception and summary
Unit 6	Unlock the road of life	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Help members to establish a positive and correct self-cognition and promote their own growth. 2. Find the gap between the current ideal self and the realistic self in the past experience. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Warm-up activities: strong winds 2. Self coordinates 3. Life blind box 4. Perception and enlightenment
Unit 7	The future is not a dream	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guide the members to explore and look forward to a better future. 2. Improve self-concept clarity by enhancing self-continuity. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Warm-up activity: The chick becomes a phoenix 2. The rest of the cave 3. Painting: The Last Appearance 4. Share and summarize
Unit 8	Say goodbye	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and summarize all units to encourage members to integrate themselves and improve the clarity of individual self-concept. 2. Share your experience and gains. 3. Wish each other well for a better future. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Warm-up activities: There are thousands of knots in the heart 2. Reminiscences 3. Send messages to each other

2.5 Statistical methods

Study data were entered and collated by SPSS25.0, and pre-test and post-test data of the experimental and control groups were analyzed.

3. Study Results

3.1 Comparison of the significance of life between experimental and control groups

Table 2: The t-test tested pre-test differences between the experimental and control groups

variable	Pre-test of experimental group(N=25)	Control group pre-test(N=25)	t	p
Seek meaning	23.04 ± 4.67	24.56 ± 3.51	-1.301	0.200
Have meaning	23.12 ± 4.77	23.96 ± 3.68	-0.697	0.489
The sense of meaning of life	46.16 ± 7.30	48.52 ± 3.71	-1.441	0.158

By spss, the pre-test. The results show from Table 2 that the difference between the control group was not significant in the total score of life meaning ($t = -1.441$, $p = 0.158$), seeking significance ($t = -1.301$, $p = 0.200$) and having significance ($t = -0.697$, $p = 0.489$), indicating that the experimental group and the control group were homogenous groups^[5].

3.2 Comparison of meaning of life between experimental and control groups

Table 3: The t-test tested the differences between the experimental and control groups

variable	Experimental group post-test(N=25)	Control group post-test(N=25)	t	p
Seek meaning	28.20 ± 4.27	23.72 ± 3.57	4.026	0.000
Have meaning	27.36 ± 3.77	24.20 ± 3.93	2.901	0.006
The sense of meaning of life	55.56 ± 6.07	47.92 ± 3.49	5.457	0.000

Through data analysis by spss, the independent sample t-test was used to test the difference. According to Table 3, the experimental group and the control group had significant differences in the total score of life meaning ($t = 5.457$, $p = 0.000$), seeking meaning ($t = 4.026$, $p = 0.000$) and significance ($t = 2.901$, $p = 0.006$), indicating that the group counseling intervention has a significant role in improving the sense of life meaning of junior high school students.

3.3 Comparison of the difference before and after the meaning of life in the experimental group

Table 4: The t-test tested the results of the experimental group

variable	Experimental group post-test(N=25)	Control group post-test(N=25)	t	p
Seek meaning	23.04 ± 4.67	28.20 ± 4.27	-4.611	0.000
Have meaning	23.12 ± 4.77	27.36 ± 3.77	-4.023	0.000
The sense of meaning of life	46.16 ± 7.30	55.56 ± 6.07	-7.340	0.000

Through data analysis by spss, the paired sample t-test was used to test the results of the group counseling intervention. According to Table 4, the experimental group showed significant differences in the total score of life meaning of the experimental group ($t = -7.340$, $p = 0.000$), significance ($t = 4.611$, $p = 0.000$) and significance ($t = -4.023$, $p = -0.000$), indicating that the group counseling positively improved the life meaning of junior high school students.

3.4 Comparison of the difference before and after the meaning of life in the control group

Table 5: The t-test varied the results of the control group

variable	Experimental group post-test(N=25)	Control group post-test(N=25)	t	p
Seek meaning	24.56 \pm 3.51	23.72 \pm 3.57	1.572	0.129
Have meaning	23.96 \pm 3.68	24.20 \pm 3.93	-0.632	0.533
The sense of meaning of life	48.52 \pm 3.71	47.92 \pm 3.49	1.089	0.287

After data analysis by spss, the paired sample t-test was used. In Table 5, the total significance of life ($t = 1.089$, $p = 0.287$), significance ($t = 1.572$, $p = 0.129$) and possession significance ($t = -0.632$, $p = 0.533$).

4. Discuss

The results show that the experimental group and the control group are homogeneous groups, and there was no significant difference in the pre-test data. After the group counseling intervention, the sense of the experimental group in life was significantly improved, and there was a significant difference with the control group, while the control group did not change significantly^[6]. It is enough to prove that group tutoring has considerable effect on improving students' sense of life meaning.

After this group tutoring, students have a clearer understanding of self, more perfect self-integration, improved clarity of self-concept, and have a more comprehensive understanding of the value and meaning of life. In the process of group counseling, students can analyze themselves more comprehensively, explore themselves, realize the gap between their ideal self and the real self, accept and find themselves, clearly understand themselves and integrate, and explore the meaning of life in an open and accepted group atmosphere. Find evidence of love life, look at the importance of the meaning of life from different perspectives, share their experience and gains, and attract experience into life^[7].

5. Conclusion

The group tutoring based on self-concept and assisted by the sense of life meaning has achieved a certain effect on the intervention of the sense of life meaning of junior high school students^[8]. The sense of life meaning of the experimental group is significantly higher than that of the control group, and the pre-test data of the experimental group are also significantly different from the post-test data. It shows that group counseling is a good intervention program for junior high school students to improve the sense of life meaning^[9]. The establishment of a good sense of life meaning has a positive impact on the academic development, mental health and even life safety of middle school students.

Although the intervention achieved some results, this study also had some deficiencies. First, the

number of this study was small and students from a junior high school in Shijiazhuang, so the study subjects were not representative enough. Second, although the study demonstrated the effect after the intervention, no certain reinforcement after the intervention may weaken its positive effect, and the sustainability of the study results remains to be tested. Third, there are limitations in the presentation of the intervention effects, with less intuitive feelings from the study subjects, and the lack of qualitative analysis such as interviews. In the future research, these aspects can be improved^[10]. Firstly, the research objects should be enriched and the representativeness of intervention effect in the general population, secondly, the long-term effects of intervention should be investigated and follow-up tracking tests; finally, some interview tests should be added to improve the group program design, so as to truly exert the practical effect of group intervention and enhance the sense of meaning of life.

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