



A Study on the Impact of Positive Psychology Group Counseling on Mood Changes in College Students

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Abstract

Research Objective: This study aims to explore the impact of positive psychology group counseling on mood changes among college students, aiming to enhance their psychological health. Utilizing the PERMA model as the theoretical framework and employing a group counseling approach, this empirical study seeks to validate the positive effects of group counseling on the mood of college students, providing valuable insights for educational authorities and families to further promote holistic development in college students. **Methodology:** The study recruited college students from a teacher's college in Jinhua, Zhejiang Province, China, randomly dividing 44 participants into an experimental group and a control group. The 22 students in the experimental group participated in an 8-week positive psychology group counseling program, while the control group did not receive any intervention. Mood states of both groups were measured before and after counseling using the Brief Profile of Mood States (POMS), and data were statistically analyzed, including measures of normal distribution and paired sample t-tests, to assess the impact of group counseling on mood changes in college students. **Result:** Results indicate significant improvements in positive emotions, confidence levels, and reductions in negative emotions among students who participated in positive psychology group counseling. Compared to the control group, the experimental group showed significant differences in mood state scores, reflecting positive psychological changes. **Conclusion:** This suggests that positive psychology group counseling effectively enhances the psychological health of college students, aiding in stress relief, self-awareness enhancement, and resilience building. Thus, positive psychology group counseling can be considered an effective psychological health intervention that positively impacts the psychological development of college students. These findings offer valuable practical experience and guidance for educational authorities and

families, helping to advance mental health education and overall development among college students.

Subject Areas

Psychology

Keywords

Positive Psychology Group Counseling, College Students, Mood Changes

1. Introduction

In recent years, the mental health issues of college students have increasingly come to the forefront, gradually becoming a point of societal concern [1]. Influenced by exam-oriented education, schools have neglected mental health education, thereby overlooking the psychological well-being of students [2]. College students often have limited social experience [3] and weak resilience [4], and some struggle to adapt to the teaching models at universities, which can lead to academic and graduation anxiety [5] [6]. Without active interventions and guidance, these issues can hinder the psychological development of college students. Positive psychology is an emerging field within traditional psychology that focuses on studying positive mental states.

This study primarily utilizes the PERMA theory proposed by Martin Seligman, which includes five elements: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment [7]. PERMA helps to deepen the understanding and definition of well-being and is a widely recognized and influential model in positive psychology. Its essence lies in promoting positive education that focuses on both the manifest and latent positive forces and qualities in individuals, ultimately cultivating positive personalities at both individual and collective levels. This has significant implications for enhancing the subjective well-being and fostering positive emotions among college students. Positive psychology group counseling is an integration of positive psychological principles and group counseling methods. Through interpersonal interactions within the group, it creates an understanding, inclusive, and empathetic atmosphere, enabling group members to enhance their character strengths and developmental potential through the practice of positive emotions, cognitions, and personality traits [8]. Group counseling, compared to individual counseling, is more beneficial for the absorption and growth of college students [9]. Positive psychology advocates focusing on the positive potential of individuals, enriching the content of group counseling and enhancing its effectiveness; the two complement and reinforce each other [10].

Through empirical research, this study deeply explores the impact of positive psychology group counseling on the mood changes of college students [11], aiming to provide useful recommendations for educational authorities and fami-

lies to further promote the comprehensive development of college students. The study focuses on the effects of positive psychology group counseling on various emotional aspects of college students, including tension, anger, fatigue, depression, energy, confusion, and self-related emotions. It is hoped that this research will offer valuable suggestions and references for educational departments and families in promoting the participation of college students in positive psychology group counseling [12].

2. Research Subjects and Methods

2.1. Research Subjects

The study recruited college students from a teacher's college in Jinhua, Zhejiang Province, China. Participants were selected based on their willingness to participate, as determined through interviews and questionnaire responses, with an emphasis on those having a strong desire for self-exploration and development and who could adhere to group norms. A total of 44 students participated, including 24 males and 20 females. They were randomly assigned to either the experimental group (22 participants, including 12 males and 10 females, with one dropout) or the control group (22 participants, including 12 males and 10 females, with no dropouts) [13].

2.2. Questionnaire Survey

To comprehensively assess the impact of positive psychology group counseling on students' moods, the study utilized the Brief Profile of Mood States (POMS). Scoring for this questionnaire is on a scale from 0 ("not at all") to 4 ("extremely"), covering dimensions such as tension, anger, fatigue, depression, vigor, confusion, and self-related emotions. The internal consistency of the overall DASS scale was 0.93, with internal consistency for its sub-scales ranging from 0.80 to 0.84 [14].

2.3. Group Counseling Scheme and Process

The group counseling program was based on the PERMA theory [15], referencing the "Positive Psychology Therapy Manual" and "Group Counseling". The counseling was designed to run over 8 weeks, from October 8, 2022, to November 26, 2022. The sessions were held every Sunday evening for 1.5 hours. The first session focused on team formation and the last on closure and goodbye, with the intervening sessions following a set schedule in **Table 1**.

2.4. Statistical Analysis

Data from the questionnaire surveys were analyzed using SPSS 21.0 software, employing normal distribution measures and paired sample t-tests to compare pre- and post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. Qualitative analyses included reviews of shared experiences and positive events noted during the group sessions, with significance set at $P \leq 0.05$ [16].

Table 1. Positive psychology group counseling program.

| Unit name | Unit Goals | Content | Extend |
|-------------------|---|---|-------------------|
| Team Building | Clarify the objectives of the group, make members understand the nature of the group, formulate group norms, and form a team concept. | Team introduction, drumming flowers (self-introduction), group self-construction. | |
| Positive Emotions | Cultivate and improve the positive emotions of the members, promote the development of individuals towards the positive side or the direction of social approval, and help students to obtain happiness | Relaxation training, emotional mindfulness, discussing feelings | |
| Engagement | Experience the feeling of complete relaxation when engaged, increase the sense of individual involvement, and enhance self-confidence | Learn about meditation, start meditation, and describe your experience. | |
| Relationships | Reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of your interpersonal style and learn how to communicate with others | Blind people cross barriers, communicate games, discuss feelings. | Three good things |
| Meaning | Combined with epidemic creating role-playing game, to realize everyone is meaningful, when next do everything is also meaningful. | Role play, talk about feelings, cheer each other up. | |
| Achievement | Build a profile of your significant strengths, discover different selves, improve self-confidence and pride, and guide members to learn to use their strengths. | Different hands and mouth, establish a significant advantage profile, share feelings. | |
| Review | Help members set their own goals, deal with feelings of separation, and end the group with hope. | Footprint review, look to the future, evaluate activities. | |

3. Results

The study analyzed mood state changes in the experimental and control groups over the 8-week period using the POMS scale. Pre- and post-test mood state scores of the experimental group showed significant differences, indicating a positive shift in mood compared to the control group, which showed no significant change. Key findings in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Comparison of mood state scores between experimental group and control group ($M \pm SD$).

| emotion | experimental group | | control group | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| | Pre | Post | Pre | Post |
| tension | 2.12 ± 0.41 | 1.23 ± 0.52 [#] | 2.36 ± 0.54 | 2.63 ± 0.82 |
| anger | 2.31 ± 0.62 | 1.12 ± 0.32 [#] | 2.14 ± 0.33 | 2.38 ± 0.75 |
| tired | 2.94 ± 0.52 | 1.56 ± 0.47 [#] | 3.12 ± 0.22 | 2.91 ± 0.62 [*] |
| depressed | 2.56 ± 0.64 | 1.37 ± 0.39 [#] | 2.38 ± 0.32 | 2.52 ± 0.78 |
| energy | 2.43 ± 0.68 | 3.04 ± 0.50 | 2.33 ± 0.55 | 2.42 ± 0.61 [*] |
| flurried | 2.22 ± 0.52 | 1.07 ± 0.22 [#] | 2.02 ± 0.23 | 2.23 ± 0.59 [*] |
| Emotions related to the self | 2.64 ± 0.65 | 3.57 ± 0.74 [#] | 2.51 ± 0.72 | 2.63 ± 0.60 [*] |

Note: # indicates $P < 0.05$ before and after the experiment between the two groups; * indicates $P < 0.05$ for comparison between the two groups after the experiment.

4. Discussion

Academic Pressures, Family Status, Competition, and Job Prospects: The psychological state of contemporary college students is affected by various factors including academic pressures, family dynamics, competition, and concerns about future employment prospects [6]. These pressures often lead to anxiety, fear, and avoidance behaviors among students. Consequently, the Ministry of Education recommends that educational institutions and authorities enhance their mental health guidance for college students and provide professional psychological support to those exhibiting severe symptoms [7] [8]. The positive impact of active psychological team counseling on the moods of college students primarily manifests in the following ways: participants in an 8-week active psychological team counseling program show increased scores in positive emotions and decreased negative emotions, thereby boosting self-confidence and offering numerous benefits to college students.

The Role of Peers and Experience in Psychological Health: College students, being both the focus and agents of school-based psychological health education, primarily engage in self-education. Due to the common issues and shared experiences among peers, they naturally develop understanding and empathy. Moreover, the close social proximity among classmates and peers makes peer support highly effective; experienced classmates or friends often serve as the most beneficial helpers [17] [18] [19]. This peer influence is a key reason why positive psychological group counseling is effective.

Teamwork and Social Interaction in Group Counseling: Positive psychological group counseling requires participating college students to learn to cooperate with others, which fosters their team spirit. In group counseling sessions, students interact and share ideas and capabilities, adjust their actions, and work together on tasks. This mutual dependence and collaborative effort help students develop a stronger sense of team identity and responsibility, improving their ability to cooperate with others in their future studies, work, and personal lives.

Health Benefits of Group Counseling: Group counseling not only helps students manage stress but also provides numerous health benefits. Engaging in group activities allows students to relax physically and mentally, shift their focus from heavy coursework to the joys and challenges of group games, and stimulate their endocrine systems, releasing endorphins and other chemicals that further reduce stress, alleviate anxiety, and enhance mood. These activities make students healthier and happier and equip them better to handle life's pressures and challenges.

Targeted Mental Health Education: Based on the psychological characteristics of college students, targeted mental health education, counseling, or guidance activities can be implemented to help students develop an awareness of mental health, improve their ability to regulate emotions, and adapt socially. These efforts aim to prevent and alleviate psychological issues and assist students in managing self-care, academic success, interpersonal relationships, dating, job

searching, personal development, and emotional regulation [20] [21] [22]. These targeted interventions are crucial for promoting well-rounded personality development among college students, ensuring a healthy psychological state that supports their overall well-being and success.

5. Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that positive psychology group counseling effectively improves mood and emotional well-being among college students, suggesting that it can be an important part of mental health education and interventions in university settings. This study provides evidence that such counseling can significantly alleviate stress and promote a positive psychological state, offering practical implications for educational policy and family support systems aimed at enhancing the holistic development of college students.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

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