

Efficacy of Group Counseling: A Case Study of Women Survivors in Kashmir

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Abstract

Group counseling is widely used as a therapeutic tool to help clients manage and cope with trauma resulting from political violence. It has been found superior to individual counseling for treatment of stress syndromes. Given its established efficacy in trauma management, group counseling sessions were held with four female beneficiaries of the Human Effort for Love Peace Foundation (HELP), a non-government organization based in Srinagar, Kashmir. These women were survivors of direct or indirect violence resulting from the ongoing armed-political conflict. The members were working in the food and craft center at the foundation's SHEJAAR project in Srinagar. The objective of this endeavor was to promote sharing and caring amongst the group members, decipher and gauge their psychological and other mental health issues, disseminate information on such issues through psycho-education, encourage the reception of psychiatric help, and explore adaptive coping mechanisms, problem solving techniques and other treatment strategies. For the same, the model of this therapeutic technique outlined by Corey (2000) was followed. The group was a closed one in nature and members belonged to low-socio economic background. In total, twelve sessions of one hour duration each, one per week, over a span of four months, were facilitated by a counselor and a clinical psychologist for the group. After the termination stage, individual interviews were conducted followed by a focused group discussion about the usefulness of these sessions for the group members. Analysis of these interviews revealed that members found these sessions useful in equipping them with adaptive coping mechanisms, obtain information on mental health issues, handle stigmatization, and seek psychiatric help. The analysis also reflected the observational learning as one of the most useful outcome for the members of the group.

Keywords: Group counselling, women survivors.

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