

Introduction

- A 10-week Acceptance and Commitment Therapy group for depression and anxiety was modified and implemented at the Bowling Green State University (BGSU) Psychological Services Center.
 - This group was based on an intervention created for Cornell University's Counseling and Psychological Services by Matthew Boone, LCSW, and Cory Myler, Ph.D.
- The group served undergraduate and graduate students from BGSU as well as nonstudent members of the community.
- Group facilitators were upper year clinical psychology doctoral students with a special interest and previous experience in ACT.
- The intervention combined didactic elements, mindfulness exercises, experiential activities, group discussion, and homework.
- Group members were administered survey measures to assess psychological flexibility and life satisfaction before participating in the intervention and after their completion.

Method

Participant Characteristics

- Community members, graduate students, and undergraduate students were recruited for the group via emails and flyers.
- Those interested first participated in a brief screening session to initially describe the group to them, and gauge their appropriateness for the group.
- Across the two semesters, 27 individuals enrolled in the ACT Group (college = 14 ; community = 13)
- Total N at post-assessment = 17
 - College students = 8, community members = 9
 - Age mean total = 37, total age range = 19 – 67
 - College student age mean = 22, age range = 19-30
 - Community member age mean = 52, age range = 30-67
 - Caucasian 82%
 - Female 70%

Outcome Measures

- Acceptance and Action Questionnaire – Second Version (AAQ-II) is a 7-item measure where higher scores represent higher psychological inflexibility and experiential avoidance (Bond, Hayes, Baer, Carpenter, Guenole, Orcutt, Waltz, & Zettle, 2011).
- Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21) is a 21-item measure of distress along the three axes of depression (DASS-D), anxiety (DASS-A), and stress (DASS-S; Antony, Bieling, Cox, Enns, & Swinson, 1998).
- Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWL) is a 5-item scale that measures an individual's judgment of subjective wellbeing (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).
- Quality of Life Scale (QOL) is a 16-item measure assessing current satisfaction with different areas of a person's life (Burckhardt, Woods, Schultz, Ziebarth, 1989).

Results

Outcome Variables for Total Sample

- Paired samples t-tests (2-tailed) were conducted to compare the variables for the entire sample (N=17) at pre- and post-group.
 - DASS-D scores decreased significantly, $t(16) = 3.04, p=.008$
 - DASS-A scores decreased significantly, $t(16) = 3.52, p=.003$
 - DASS-S scores decreased significantly, $t(16) = 2.35, p=.032$
 - SWL scores increased significantly, $t(16) = -3.38, p=.004$
 - AAQ-II scores decreased significantly, $t(16) = 2.31, p=.034$
 - QOL scores increased but were not significant, $t(16) = -1.22, p=.237$

Outcome Variables by Group Status

Table 1. Mean Scores for Students at Pre- and Post-Group (N=8)

Measure	Pre-Group (SD)	Post-Group (SD)	P-value
AAQ-II	31.75 (6.22)	23.75 (6.92)	.002
DASS-D	9.25 (4.80)	3.37 (2.50)	.001
DASS-A	8.87 (4.94)	3.50 (2.67)	.009
DASS-S	12.37 (3.70)	6.87 (2.53)	.019
QOL	71.62 (16.84)	93.25 (29.25)	.012
SWL	18.62 (8.03)	26.50 (3.96)	.014

Table 2. Mean Scores for Community Members at Pre- and Post-Group (N=9)

Measure	Pre-Group (SD)	Post-Group (SD)	P-value
AAQ-II	35.33 (16.12)	28.55 (7.05)	.291
DASS-D	10.00 (6.39)	7.50 (5.06)	.306
DASS-A	6.44 (4.71)	4.61 (.35)	.142
DASS-S	9.77 (3.45)	9.00 (3.39)	.618
QOL	73.66 (26.43)	68.55 (17.27)	.544
SWL	15.00 (7.44)	22.00 (12.40)	.093

Clinical Significance of Findings

Table 3. Clinical Significance for Total Sample (N=17)

Measure	Mean Description at Pre-Group	Mean Description at Post-Group
DASS-D	Moderate/Severe	Mild
DASS-A	Moderate	Mild
DASS-S	Moderate	Mild
SWL	Slightly Dissatisfied	Slightly Satisfied

Conclusions

- Overall, the group was successful in reducing self-reported depression, anxiety, and stress, and increasing quality of life, satisfaction with life, and psychological flexibility for group members.
- However, when the student and community member samples were analyzed independently, it appeared that the group was more efficacious for college and graduate students.
- Analysis of student group members pre and post-assessment measures resulted in statistically significant increases in self-reported psychological flexibility, quality of life, satisfaction with life, and significant decreases in self-reported psychological distress.
- One hypothesized reason for this difference is that the group was designed for college students and might thus be better suited to meet their needs when compared to community member counterparts.

Discussion

Challenges in Implementation

- Meeting the needs of undergraduate students, graduate students, and community members concurrently was sometimes challenging.

Limitations

- Because of the limited sample size, most conclusions are more qualitative than quantitative in nature.
- Similarly, there was little variation in sample demographics so results might not be generalizable to more ethnically or racially diverse populations.
- Out of 27 original participants, 10 individuals (4 community members and 6 students) dropped out consisting of both college and community members. It's unclear what factors contributed to this attrition.

Implications and Future Directions

- The hope is that this group will be continuously offered at the Psychological Services Center at Bowling Green State University each semester.
- Feedback from group members will be utilized in order to adapt the protocol to maximize the group's effectiveness and retention.
- Further examination of data with a larger overall N may be beneficial in understanding what group components and/or participant characteristics contributed to differences in outcomes among students vs. community members.

Contact

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