



**Research Paper: The Effect of Group Counseling based on Choice Theory on Homesickness and Emotion of Thought**



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**Citation:** Nikmorad, A., Asadi, S., Rusta, A. (2022). The Effect of Group Counseling based on Choice Theory on Homesickness and Emotion of Thought. *Journal of Modern Psychology*, 2(1), 21-30. <https://doi.org/10.22034/JMP.2022.248069.1000>

<https://doi.org/10.22034/JMP.2022.248069.1000>

**Article info:**

**Received date:**

19 Oct. 2021

**Accepted date:**

13 Dec. 2021

**Keywords:**

Choice theory, Dynamic thought, Emotion of thought, Homesickness, Impatience

**Abstract**

The present study compared the effectiveness of group counseling based on choice theory on homesickness and emotion of thought. Research design was quasi-experimental administering a pretest-posttest on an experimental and a control group. The population of this study included all students (female and male) referred to counseling center of Sari Payame Noor University in the academic year 2016-2017. The sample consisted of 30 participants who were randomly divided into two groups (one experimental group and one control group) (15 students in each group). Then, homesickness questionnaire and emotion of thought questionnaire were administered to both groups. For two months, the experimental group received 8 sessions of 90 minutes of group counseling based on choice theory; however, the control group did not receive any training during this period. Pre-test and post-test data were analyzed using covariance analysis. The results showed that experimental interventions (group counseling based on choice theory) reduced homesickness score, decreased impatience of thought and increased dynamics of thought in students ( $p < 0.01$ ). It can be concluded that group counseling of choice theory was effective in improvement of emotion of thought and decreasing homesickness.

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## 1. Introduction

Every year, many people leave their families to enter the university. This, in addition to pleasant advantages and outcomes, leads to stressful consequences. These consequences are due to changes in lifestyle, missing out friends and family, disruption of routines and the necessities of adapting to a new environment. Changes in lifestyle include different levels of physical changes (e.g., changes in geographic location), biological (new food conditions), cultural and communication, psychological, etc. Likewise, changes in values, capabilities, motivations and attitudes are noted (Thurber et al., 2007). By creating severe stress in an individual, these changes can disturb the balance between internal resources and external desires leading to the occurrence of roving sensations. Therefore, homesickness is defined as distress or dysfunction, caused by actual or anticipated separation from home and attachment issues, such as parents (Thurber & Walton, 2007). The most important signs of homesickness are feeling sad, being depressed, having excessive sadness about losing the support of those around you, having anxiety, being away from people and feeling nostalgic (Thurber & Walton, 2007).

The most important psychological characteristics of homesickness include having strong obsessive thoughts about home, desiring to return home, feeling deep sadness about homeland belongings (family, friends, acquaintances, objects and places), and having simultaneous emotions of sadness, distress, experiencing suffering and confusion in a new place (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013). Agassinejad et al. (2020) revealed that there was a significant correlation between family functioning and

differentiation with feeling of nostalgia. Based on regression analysis, about 40% of the variance of roving feeling was explained by self-differentiation variables, roles, problem solving, overall family functioning, emotional intercourse and emotional companionship. Problem solving, differentiation, roles, emotional intercourse, overall family functioning and emotional companionship were the strongest variables for predicting roving feelings of female and male students in the dormitory, respectively. Since parenting style and family functioning play a vital role in children's homesickness, it is necessary to familiarize counselors and psychologists of families with more effective parental models as well as the characteristics of an efficient and balanced family.

Going to university is stressful; stress can affect different physical, psychological and social dimensions of individuals (Khazaei et al., 2013) causing some kinds of problems. The emotion of thought can refer to *cognitive tenacity*, *emotional vibration*, *dynamism* and *impatience* when confronting any problems in life. *Dynamism* means that there is a intense feeling of enthusiasm and attraction toward having extensive experience to find something, and *impatience* refers to *apprehensiveness*, that is inner dilemma and agitation as a result of *circulation of thought* followed by *physical manifestations* forcing the person to do something (Kazemi Haghghi, 2007). Thought emotion theory concentrates on the integrated nature of emotional and cognitive domains of creativity and considers the process of creativity as a result of cognitive and emotional transformations. Correspondingly,

emotional turmoil prevents a person from using his/her creative force to create broad ideas and ideas. Therefore, coordination of thought and emotions are important for creative processing. Most students with this feeling are weak in the field of social interactions, especially meeting and contacting other people as well as receiving support, when faced with stressful factors, have a lot of stress and anxiety and lose the power of thinking as well as adapting with the environment constructively and usefully, thus acting very passively in the new environment.

Therefore, it is necessary to know and apply therapeutic approaches that are effective in reducing the feeling of homesickness and emotion of thought in students. Nowadays, the concepts of Glasser's choice theory have gained a special place in mental health (Malekitabar & Riahi, 2017). Glasser (1999) established the theory of choice, in which he emphasized five basic needs (survival, belonging, power, freedom and fun) that motivate all human behavior (Ebnosharieh & Aghili, 2019). Choice theory is an internal part of control theory which explains how and why we choose the path we take in life (Wabolding, 2010). Choice theory is a process with an emphasis on choice, responsibility and personal evaluation, in which an individual responds to the choices and consequences. This theory attempts to inform an individual about meeting his/her needs, leading him/her towards focusing on external factors and towards putting emphasis on his/her abilities and taking more responsibility. Glasser (1999 as cited in Wubolding, 2010) repeatedly notes that choice theory and reality therapy shape the internal control system that is needed to

improve mental health. Teaching choice theory can help people to understand their needs and abilities, the motivation necessary to deal with various problems of work, education, etc. as much as possible. Shojarazavi et al. (2022) stress that reality therapy sessions had a significant effect on increasing public health and reducing negative automatic thoughts of divorced women in the experimental group compared to the control group.

According to what was said, the main question of the present research is:

Whether group counseling based on choice theory effective in roving feeling, emotion of thought and promoting students' motivation is differentiating?

## 2. Method

The research design was quasi-experimental with pre-test-post-test and control group. The population of the present study included all students (female and male) referred to the counseling center of Sari Payame Noor University in the academic year 2015-2016. At first, the questionnaire on homesickness and the emotion of thought were administered on the clients of these centers, and 30 people were selected from among them by the purposeful sampling method and were randomly assigned to two experimental and control groups.

### 2.1. Measures

**Homesickness Questionnaire:** Based on Van Vliet (2001), Zare and Aminpour (2012) standardized the homesickness questionnaire to gauge Iranian students' homesickness which includes 36 items and 5 components with the minimum and maximum scores of the questionnaire between 36 and 180. The reliability of the

test was 0.83 using the internal consistency method employing Cronbach's alpha (Ezheei et al., 2008).

#### **The emotion of thought questionnaire:**

This is a twelve-factor test of *emotion of thought* consisting of sixty-nine questions and has two scales of *dynamism* and *impatience*, each of which measures six factors. Torque correlation coefficients as a validity index for dynamic scale was between 0.39 and 0.74 and for impatience

scale was between 0.40 and 0.75. Correlation coefficients of two scales were 0.13, impatience scale and test was 0.76 and dynamic scale and test was 0.67 (Kazemi Haghighi, 2007). In Ghanbarinejad et al. (2021), the reliability of emotion of thought scale using Cronbach's alpha for impatience score was 0.77 and for dynamics equal to 0.74 and for the whole scale was 0.75.

A summary of group therapy sessions based on choice theory is given in Table 1.

Table 1

#### *Group counseling training sessions based on choice theory*

Sessions	Description of meetings
Session 1	Getting familiar with each other and the introduction and expression of the rules and principles governing group counseling and entitlement about the concepts of choice theory, introducing fundamental needs to subjects, familiarity with the intensity of the needs and plotting the needs of the needs.
Session 2	Specifying the estimate of half the needs of students and getting acquainted with Total Behavior (thinking, acting, feeling, physiology) to increase recognition and awareness of each member of the group.
Session 3	Getting familiar with the concept of reality therapy and creating a sense of responsibility to satisfy basic needs.
Session 4	Teaching reality therapy techniques and getting familiar with the concept of external control and its destructive role in intimate relationships and replacing it with the theory of choice (internal control) instead of external control.
Session 5	Getting acquainted with how to negotiate the inconsistent needs and recognize the goals and values and recognizing the basic needs (the need for survival, the need, the need for fun, the need for freedom, the need of belonging) and identity.
Session 6	Teaching the concept of qualitative world and expressing the importance of sharing the qualitative world of students and their satisfaction and how to plan to solve the problem with respect to current behavior.
Session 7	Getting familiar with the concept of conflict and conflict relationship with the quality world and the fundamental needs and training some of the techniques to increase happiness.
Session 8	Getting back from previous meetings.

#### **2.2.data collection**

In order to conduct the present study, Payam-e-Noorshahr University in Sari was chosen, from which a list of all students referred to the counseling center located at

the university was received and after the necessary coordination and agreement with the participants and putting emphasis on confidentiality of the information obtained and observance of the ethical issues, the

researcher administered the questionnaires of homesickness and emotion of thought (pre-test), then 30 people were selected by purposeful sampling and then in two groups. Participants were randomly assigned to one experimental group and one control group (each group 15 participants); then, the experimental group received 8 sessions of 90 minutes of choice theory training and the control group did not receive any training; after the relevant training, the homesickness and the emotion of thought were measured again in the

experimental group as well as the control group (post-test) and then the data were analyzed.

### 3. Results

The following section contains the obtained results from the pre-test and the post-test.

Table 2 mentions the demographic characteristics of the research participants.

Table 2

*Demographic characteristics of the research participants*

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-25 Years	13	42.23
	26-30 Years	17	57.77
Gender	females	20	57.78
	man	10	42.22
Total		30	100

Table 3 illustrates the mean and standard deviation for emotion of thought and

homesickness are in pre-test and post-test for experimental and control group.

Table 3

The mean and standard deviation of homesickness and emotion of thought research groups in pre-test and post-test

Variables	Test	Experimental group (choice theory)		Control Group	
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Homesickness	Pre-test	133.80	15.55	135.33	15.55
	Post-test	70.40	9.75	134.40	14.17
Impatience of thought	Pre-test	84.13	9.10	75.93	9.63
	Post-test	51.06	12.35	72.33	11.43
Dynamics of Thought	Pre-test	59.53	11.40	66.40	11.62
	Post-test	79.86	10.76	66	12.24

As seen in Table 3, the mean of homesickness and impatience of thought in the experimental group decreased more than the control group. On the other hand, the mean of dynamic of thought in the

experimental group increased more than the control group.

For data analysis, univariate analysis of covariance was used, the results of which is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

*Analysis of covariance homesickness in the post-test stage between groups (group counseling based on choice theory and control group)*

Variable	Source	SS	Df	MSE	F	P-value	eta
Feelings of nostalgia	pre-exam	1888.60	1	1888.60	22.59	0.001	0.456
	Group	29781.15	1	29781.15	356.32	0.001	0.930
	membership						
	Error	2256.59	27	83.57			
	Total	949438	30				

Based on the results obtained from Table 4 and after calculating the pre-test scores as covariate scores in groups, the results of covariance analysis showed that there was a significant difference between the two groups at ( $P < 0.001$ ) significance level. It could be concluded that after being given consoling based on choice theory, those participants in the group counseling were able to achieve the total score which means the reduced levels homesickness; that is to

say, group counseling based on the theory of choice had a significant effect on reducing the score of homesickness in students referring to the university counseling center.

Table 5 reveals the results of multivariate analysis of covariance to determine the difference between the control and experimental groups in the impatience and dynamism of thought.

Table 5

*results of multivariate analysis of covariance for the difference between the control and experimental groups in the impatience and dynamism of thought*

Variable index	Multivariate tests	Value for observation	F	df	Error df	P-value	eta
Group	Pillay trace	0.675	25.92	2	25	0.001	0.67
	wilks' lambda	0.325	25.92	2	25	0.001	0.67
	Hotelling's Trace	2.07	25.92	2	25	0.001	0.67
	Roy's Largest Root	2.07	25.92	2	25	0.001	0.67

According to table 5, there was a significant difference between the two groups in impatience and dynamic of

thought ( $p < 0.001$ ). In other words, it could be said that the difference between scores expresses that the effects on group

counseling based on the theory of choice in the scores of dynamic and impatience of thought was meaningful.

The results of the multivariate covariance analysis (inter-group effects) of dynamics and impatience of thought score in the post-test stage between groups are tabulated in [Table 6](#).

Table 6  
*Multivariate covariance analysis (inter-group effects) of dynamics and impatience of thought score in the post-test stage between groups*

Source	Source	SS	df	MSE	F	P - value	Power of test	eta
pre-test	Dynamics of Thought	5.84	1	5.84	0.046	0.832	0.002	0.002
	Impatience of thought	641.53	1	641.53	5.03	0.034	0.162	0.162
Group membership	Dynamics of Thought	2368.18	1	2368.18	29.72	0.001	0.533	0.533
	Impatience of thought	3615.13	1	3615.13	28.39	0.001	0.404	0.522
Error	Dynamics of Thought	79.66	26	79.66				
	Impatience of thought	127.32	26	127.32				

The results indicated that by considering the pre-test scores as covariance scores, the difference between the two groups in the scores of dynamic and impatience of thought tests were significant ( $p=0.001$ ). In other words, the differences between the two groups (group counseling based on choice theory and the control group) stressed that group counseling based on choice theory was able to increase the dynamic of thought score and reduce the score of impatience of thought in the participants.

#### 4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to compare the effectiveness of group counseling based on choice theory on the feeling of homesickness and emotion of thought in students. The result of the research revealed that group counseling based on choice theory was effective in improvement of the emotion of thought; these results are consistent with research by [Ghanbarnejad et al \(2021\)](#). Likewise, the result of this research has shown that this counselling method was effective in reducing homesickness; however, to the knowledge of the researcher, there has been no similar research done regarding the variables of the present study.

To explain the results, it can be said that participating in group sessions could increase the actions and reactions of group members resulting in the exchange of information and broadening the experiences of each student in educational sessions and getting them familiar with the basic needs of Glasser (1999), responsibility in doing things and gaining familiarity with total behavior (thinking, acting, physiology, feelings) leading to decrease in the homesickness. On the other hand, Glasser (1999 as cited in Masten & Barnes, 2018) believed that the not judging, the sense of responsibility, the proper control and proper satisfaction of needs, especially the need for love and belonging in the group which would be desirable, improves mental health.

The nature of group education could have a positive effect on increasing psychological well-being and dynamics in students. Because of the members of the group, every individual person in the group felt that he/she had similar problems to other members of the group; thus, it would be effective in reducing the impairment and reducing the negative spirit which in turn could result in increasing the dynamics (the emotional component of thought) among group members. Therefore, group counseling with choice theory can promote dynamism of thought and reduce homesickness in students (Zare & Namdarpour, 2020). Glasser (2003) stated that individuals can save their lives with the conscious selection of their feelings and behavior. He stressed that the theory of choice or what was later called control theory insists on the fact that humans have always behaved in a way that control the world and make themselves as part of the world to serve their main needs. In using the

choice theory in group counseling, it is taught to people to face with their problems and problems to make them be prepared for living in the community, in addition to those who encounter other people with similar problems. This can certainly be relief for people (Raddadi et al., 2017). Given the fact that in the choice theory and in the present study, the basic needs of mankind, especially the two needs of exchange of love and affection as well as the need for focusing on the sense of value and trying to deal with them were highlighted, training these abilities to students could have an important impact on reducing homesickness and impatient of thought and increasing dynamic of thought in them.

This research, like any other research, had limitations; since the population of the study was limited to the students of Sari Payame Noor University, this can create restrictions on the external validity of the research and generalization of the results.

## 5. Conclusion

In general, the results of this study illustrated that the teaching of choice theory was effective on homesickness as well as emotion of thought. Consequently, psychologists and consultants can use the results of this research in counseling and psychotherapy centers to help people.

## Acknowledgment

The researchers would like to thank everyone who contributed to this research.



### Conflict of Interest

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with any organization. Also, this research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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