

COMBINING CREATIVE AND POSITIVE INTERVENTIONS FOR ENHANCING HOPE IN INSTITUTIONALIZED ORPHANED FEMALES

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The current study attempts to explore the efficacy of creative interventions mixed with positive interventions on the hope levels of orphaned females living in an institutionalized setting. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant enhancement in hope after applying combined interventions. A pre-post quasi experimental design as used in which 10 female participants between 18 to 24 ($M=20.5$, $SD=2.12$) years were approached using purposive convenient sampling at a local orphanage, Karachi, Pakistan. In the Pre- intervention phase, the Hope Scale Urdu version (Saleem, 2016) was used to establish a baseline for existing hope levels. In the intermediary group intervention phase, creative interventions were merged with interventions gleaned from positive psychotherapy targeting hope while the efficacy was tested using a pre and post test analysis. Statistical analysis using SPSS 22 and the paired sample t-test showed that there was a significant enhancement in post-intervention levels of hope. The research carries implications for practitioners especially those using traditional models of psychotherapeutic interventions to understand the importance of further exploration in the arena of creative interventions when merged with positive interventions for better hope levels in adversely affected populations.

Keywords: Creative interventions, Positive Psychotherapy, Hope, Orphans, Young Adults

Life can bring different difficult circumstances which whether expected or unexpected create grim scenarios for those involved. Loss of parents is a sad reality which affects people both mentally and emotionally all over the world and more so at younger ages (Ali, 2010; Naqshbandi, Abdullah & Hassan, 2012). This creates severe implications for young children in processing grief and bereavement. In collectivistic societies, the presence of a safety net of extended family caregivers provides a better sense of self (Foster, 2000) as compared to institutionalization in orphanage settings. Many such centers are thus unable to cater to emotional needs completely, leading to depression among other issues (Sengendo & Nambi, 1997). Stigma surrounds orphaned or abandoned children growing up in orphanages as they struggle to adjust to their underlying emotions and the perceptions of the world. The reality is indeed bitter for females who predominate in different adoption centers, especially in cultures where females are seen as an additional economic burden. In such developing countries like Pakistan, their future prospects mostly depend on their marriage. Marital prospects too in these countries are limited and rarely beyond the middle socioeconomic status which can be a downright depressing prospect for orphaned girls while contemplating their future (Bargach, 2002; Naqshbandi, Abdullah & Hassan, 2012). Once girls attain a marriageable age, and are still permanent residents in an orphanage, their despair may manifest itself through various symptoms and as such it becomes imperative to create a preventive strategy in order to maintain their self esteem and hope levels.

Hope as a variable is viewed as a beneficial construct for all clients, applicable across all theoretical orientations as well as one that can be instigated across all of the stages during the counseling process (Irving et al., 2004). Several investigations have been developed in order to focus on increasing the levels of hope, which have in turn led to several positive benefits for the participants. Feldman and Dreher (2012) have demonstrated increased hope,

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purpose of life as well as vocational calling among college students participating in a 90-minute intervention relying on hope. Moreover, group therapy for the clients that relies on goal-setting as well as pathways and agency thinking has been seen as resulting in decreased hopelessness, and create increased levels of hope during periods of anxiety (Klausner et al., 1998).

Hope is among the central constructs in Positive Psychology and psychotherapeutic interventions where an optimal level of human functioning is based on the understanding as well as applicability of all of those factors which specifically enable the individual to communicate well and to flourish. The father of positive psychology, Martin Seligman asserted that interventions created within this arena not only work on people's core beliefs to cure mental illness but also work for their personal growth and for enhancing their natural talents (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The core foundations of positive psychology that encourage flourishing consist of broad stand points (i.e., well-being, hope) and relate to factors that are applicable across most therapeutic settings. Hope is the ability to focus on ones' specific goal (pathways) as well as the central factor of motivation (agency) in order to focus on these identified pathways (Snyder, 2002).

According to Snyder's hope theory (2002), there are three components of hope on which human strengths are based. These are Goal Directed Thinking in which people clearly conceptualize their goals, Pathways Thinking in which people develop capacities and strategize in order to attain their goals, and Agency Thinking in which they initiate and sustain the motivation for using these strategies. There are multiple pathways or different available methods for achieving particular goals complemented by internal affirming thoughts (e.g., *I will find out a way to do it!*). Consequently, this motivation (agency thinking) follows the perceived ability to use specific pathways in order to avail particular goals. Another factor which is then available alongside is agency thinking (e.g., *I can do it!*).

According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (1998) theoretical perspective, positive and negative subjective energies emerging from the past can also contribute strongly towards how a person develops in the future. They also state that hope is viewed as a powerful emotion such as love, hate, despair are viewed. It is seen as the emotion which is emerging from within a person and acts as the *fuel* that drives interactions between people and their environment. In one point of view, hope has typically been described as a cognitive or rational thought process which includes goal setting (Snyder, McDermott, Cook & Rapoff, 1997) and *maintaining a rational or mindful approach* when a person responds to life challenges in order to remain *grounded* (Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995). Another view of hope could be seen in the creation of creative processes associated with hope. Individuals who are able to hope, despite past challenges and unknown outcomes, are said to do well in life as they engage in a creative imaginative process that allows them to see beyond boundaries and live without absolutes (Lynch 1965).

Elements of the creative process imbued in the roots of dance, art, poetry and other expressive abstract forms used in the therapeutic process are collectively referred to as creative art therapies (National Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies Associations, 2014). These related therapies utilize expressions of individuality in treatment and can also be referred to as expressive therapies (Malchiodi, 2013; 2014). . Visual and representative articulation offers voice to involvement, and results in individual and societal change. Artistic expressions and the purpose they can serve have developed alongside humanity. An illustrative example from a study in a non-governmental organization in Pakistan reveals relevant work with 350 children from earthquake ravaged districts. In one location, 21 children aged 10–15 years were asked to draw whatever they felt or to write about their

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feelings. 11 of the 21 drew houses, and 10 expressed themselves in writing. Only one child drew a human figure, a duck, and a cat. In one group from Muzaffarabad, the worst-hit district, children drew destroyed houses and schools and injured people. 19 of 23 drew, while four expressed their feelings in writings (Ahmed & Siddiqi, 2006).

In Pakistan, creative interventions have been regularly used in different rehabilitation centers, in psychiatric set-ups through group therapy, and even during psychosis wellness programs in different private hospitals. The discipline of art therapy with creative interventions has been formalized, while therapeutic mediums of dance therapy, music therapy, psychodrama/drama therapy, and play therapy as well as sand therapy continue to grow. Each discipline has been applied in counseling as well as psychotherapy with individuals of all ages, more specifically children (Ahmed & Siddiqi, 2006).

There are strong arguments to support the co-occurrence of positivity and creativity with the latter being seen as an outcome of positive affectivity and hope (Charyton, Hutchison, Snow, Rahman & Elliott, 2009). In contrast to directive counseling that can become mechanical, creativity in counseling has been known to channelize suppressed expressions through redirecting negativity and redefining strengths. Interpreting the inner self and its deeper contextual meaning through an integration of positively directed creative activities could prove catalytic for insight development, by highlighting inner strengths and areas for reflection. In a research, Coholic (2011) shows how people increase their mindfulness through an arts based method which helps them in regulating their emotions, social and coping skills.

Carrying on from the problems associated with being orphaned and living in an institutionalized setting, the degree of hopefulness would hold distinct implications in any therapeutic intervention applied for improving future outlook. Impediments could still arise in the form of associated factors stemming from cultural and contextual presuppositions among the target population, yet the factor of hope remains significant in furtherance of a better sense of flourishing keeping positive psychology in account. Desmet and Sääksjärvi (2016), in a 6 week study found strong support for creatively designed positive interventions as compared to traditional approaches to positive psychotherapy. Thus creative or expressive interventions serve as a means of release of pent up emotions and show cathartic potential along with the possibility of a subsequent and corresponding increase in positivity. When coupled with elements of design to creatively engage participants, it would result in greater efficacy of the intervention.

Hence, the current study attempts to enhance hope in orphaned females using the medium of creative interventions merged with positive interventions in order to instill a positive sense of being. Keeping in view previous literature, it can be assumed that there would be a significant enhancement in hope among orphaned females using a combination of creative interventions and positive psychotherapy.

Method

Research Design

The present research utilized a pre-post quasi experimental within-group design in which the same group of participants was compared before and after the combined intervention using creative and positive interventions.

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to collect the data after approaching a renowned orphanage in Karachi. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The participants consisted of 10 orphaned young adult females meeting the inclusion criteria of age range between 18 to 24 years ($M= 20.5$; $SD=2.12$), minimum intermediate education, being unmarried, with no known psychiatric disorders or disabilities, and being permanent residents of the institutionalized setting.

Measures

Following measures were used in the current study:

Informed consent form. The informed consent sheet showed the research participants, the purpose of the research. The participants were explained the idea of confidentiality and that the results that were obtained would be used for the benefit of other young girls in similar situations.

Demographic information sheet. This included basic information about their name, age, and level of education. Earlier their marital status had been ascertained from the management of the orphanage as they were approached purposively. A number of areas pertaining to demographic information were expanded obliquely as the sessions progressed. The participants in the first session talked about themselves, their hobbies, and their future and how they mostly learnt arts and crafts in their institution. They were studying textile designing, fashion designing as their graduate program along with sewing and cutting, cooking and gardening in their institution. As the purpose of the research was described, they became highly motivated when they became aware of the outline of the research.

The Hope Scale. The Urdu version of Hope Scale was used (Saleem, 2016). It was originally developed by Snyder, et al. (1991). It is a 12-item measure of a respondent's level of hope. The measure is scored according to an eight-point rating scale, extending from definitely false to definitely true. Alpha coefficients of between .74 (agency) and .88 (pathways) are reported by Snyder et al. (1991) for the instrument. The first four items measure agency thinking and last four items measure pathway thinking. The scores of all 8 items are added together and give the final score for the hope scale. Cronbach's Alpha for the hope scale (Urdu Version) was found to be .76, which is satisfactory.

Procedure

Permission was first sought from the orphanage where the girls were living. The management was informed about the nature of the research work and they helped in pinpointing potential participants matching the criteria for the research. The participants were asked to fill the consent form, and then they were asked to fill the demographic form. The demographic information form included their names, age and their qualification. They were then given the Hope Scale Urdu Version (2016) to fill. All participants were provided with a briefing regarding the therapy and its aims. They were informed that if they want to withdraw then their decision would be fully respected. The session plan comprised of 10 sessions for the 10 participants in a group setting. The duration of each session was between 90 to 120 minutes. The session plans included activities taken from *Favorite therapeutic activities for children, adolescents, and families: Practitioners share their most effective interventions* (Lowenstein, 2011) and *Art therapy for groups: A handbook of themes and exercises* (Liebmann, 2004). The session plan took into account creative interventions as a primary medium and merged positive interventions during the interaction with the participants in the group process while focusing on hope through indirect questions

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interspersed throughout the session plan (the details of the session plan are given below in Table 1). After the 10 sessions, the participants were given the same Hope Scale again to see the difference in the enhancement of hope. The data was analyzed through SPSS22.

Table 01

Ten-Week session plans (Pre-intervention, intervention & post-intervention)

Session No.	Aims and Objectives	Intervention and Outcome
1	The first session was placed as an introductory session aimed at creating an understanding between the group members and the therapist in order to set the tone for future sessions. This session also had the additional objective of establishing a pre-intervention baseline through the administration of the hope scale.	<p>Initially, the therapist introduced herself and asked about the group members for building rapport. Later after a briefing the hope scale was administered.</p> <p>Group members discussed and were encouraged to unanimously create a system of rules for the sessions including areas related but not limited to confidentiality and for helping each and every member to get a chance to speak and participate during future sessions.</p>
2	This session aimed at building a dual conceptualization of hope and creativity through self reflection and focus on one's own life.	<p>After a review of the previous session, participants were briefed about expectations and myths surrounding therapy. Next, the concept of Hope was introduced as an important variable in our life following positive psychotherapy techniques. Participants were encouraged to speak about their experiences surrounding this concept and reflect on its meaning in their life.</p> <p>The idea of creative interventions was then given to the participants as a medium of therapeutic expression and anticipatory curiosity was built up for future sessions through a discussion on how creative expression is connected to our lives.</p>
3	This session focused on the importance of exploring thoughts, feelings and perceptions about past circumstances and how they integrate into the present ones. Intervention of <i>Colour your Life</i> (Creative intervention) and <i>Meaning in Life</i> (Positive Intervention).	<p>Using the creative intervention <i>Colour your life</i>, this session encouraged the participants to talk self reflectively about their perception of life beginning from general perception to more specific examples. Participants discussed their views on life based on questions from the positive intervention of finding <i>meaning in life</i> including what it is about, and how thoughts, perceptions and views related to life differ.</p> <p>Participants after self reflection based on their created image of life both in colour on paper and through verbal explication, arrived at the conclusion that it reflected the process of growth and changes. This session helped participants in creating a cohesive narration of their life which supported their past difficulties, present challenges and accomplishments.</p>
4	The session aimed to help participants understand the beauty of emotional expressivity, and emotional regulation. Intervention of <i>Mood Chart</i> (Creative intervention) and <i>Mindfulness and Virtuous Circle vs Vicious Cycle</i> (Positive Intervention).	<p>Participants were introduced to the <i>Mood Chart</i> in which they were given an explanation of emotions, their importance and moreover how to manage them so as to understand the components of the emotions that the mood chart was made up of in order to create <i>mindfulness</i> related to predictive patterns of emotions and their regulation.</p> <p>The Mood Chart proved to be a self explanatory activity that drew in the girls via the engaging</p>

	<p>medium of drawing and they visibly enjoyed denoting different emotions using multiple colours. Emotional regulation via critical evaluation of emotions was also catered to, using the concepts of <i>Virtuous circle vs Vicious Cycle</i> to examine both positive and negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours along with their consequences. The participants gained insight about their triggers for positive and especially negative emotions.</p>
<p>5. This session built participant clarity related to future goals in context of character strengths using mindfulness in order to increase motivation levels as an adjunct to hope. Intervention of <i>Mandala</i> (Creative intervention) and <i>Purpose of Life, Character Strengths, and Mindfulness</i> (Positive Intervention).</p>	<p>Participants were briefed about the concept of <i>Mandalas</i> as a creative means of self-exploration in order to answer the reflective question - Who am I? They were shown how the activity was actually a step toward understanding <i>inner or character strengths</i>. This in turn led to a discussion on the importance of being <i>mindful</i> of their strengths and weaknesses as denoted through various colours. Participants agreed that mindfully paying attention to their self in this manner could create a difference in their daily lives and routine work, keeping them motivated. The session was then linked to the previous one where the virtuous circle and vicious cycle were again referred to with strength based understanding in order to encourage the girls to come up with their future goals.</p>
<p>6. This session focussed on the development and maintenance of self confidence. Intervention of <i>Creating valued images through clay modelling</i> (Creative intervention) and <i>Developing Self Confidence and Self Belief</i> (Positive Intervention).</p>	<p>The participants were encouraged to use the pliable nature of Play Dough to create two things: a. something they value the most and b. something they feel close to. They were asked to give these to themselves and visualize a sense of confidence in themselves. Previous sessions were referred to in order to help participants understand how far they had come along in their journey toward self confidence and self belief.</p>
<p>7. This session encouraged the conceptualization of group cohesion as a means toward better interpersonal skills. Intervention of <i>Group Drawing</i> (Creative intervention) and <i>Conflict Management and Interpersonal Skills</i> (Positive Intervention).</p>	<p>Working through the competency of interpersonal skills was achieved by means of a <i>Group Drawing</i> engineered to produce some level of conflict and ultimately, for improving interpersonal skills. In this session the group of 10 females were given instructions to work on a single chart paper together. It would be their choice what to do with that single paper. The activity created the awareness that working together is also important in life achievements as <i>conflict management</i> and <i>interpersonal effectiveness</i> come into play. Later, they reflected on their abilities to conform, manage and be flexible in working together.</p>
<p>8. The session focused on the development of tolerance, valuing others and gratitude as vehicles of conflict resolution. Intervention of <i>Object drawing</i> (Creative intervention) and <i>Development of Character strengths</i>:</p>	<p>The benefits of valuing others were portrayed through the awareness that we should focus on the strengths and remember the positive side of people whom we value the most in order to move beyond conflict management to conflict resolution as</p>

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tolerance and gratitude and Conflict Resolution (Positive Intervention).

discussed in the previous session. Participants were reminded of and inspired to think about the manner in which we keep our own strengths and our positive sense of self in mind whenever we are asked to think about ourselves, yet the flip side emerges when we are asked to think of others.

The session then revolved around explaining that every person is different and our expectations from them are to be seen in the same light as their expectations from us. Showing another person gratitude and importance by our positive actions such as giving compliments will increase positivity in our surroundings.

Using the creative medium, they were asked to draw the favourite object of a significant person in their life that they wished to give to them. This helped in creating a visual conceptualization for inner gratitude and encouraged feelings of positivity.

9 The session combined group work using role plays with humour to encourage the development and potential of humour as important character strength. Intervention of *Expressivity via role play (Psychodrama)* (Creative intervention) and *Development of Character strength: humour* (Positive Intervention).

The participants were given the idea that laughter is very importance in life. When we face any trauma, or difficulties in life, laughing and creating good moments is dependent on our inner will to do so. For this purpose, the participants were equipped with pen and paper and encouraged to showcase situations where using their own scripts, actors and director they would be able to provide positive endings utilizing humour. .

The participants performed together in groups and unanimously agreed that this was the funniest and the most enjoyable session.

10 Feedback and closing session

Reassessment was first done using the hope scale All previous sessions were reviewed and participants discussed how the sessions had made a difference in their points of view related to hope Following the discussion, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation and contribution.

The above mentioned table describes the ten-week session plan comprising of 10 group therapy sessions. The outcomes of these sessions were to enhance hope, enlighten the participants, and to help them positively focus on their strengths as is seen in the results.

Results

The results were computed through SPSS 22. To see the efficacy of the combination of creative and positive interventions for enhancing hope in institutionalized orphaned females, paired sample t-test was used and Hedege's g was used to check the effect size .

Table 2

Paired sample t-test comparing pre & post-intervention mean scores of hope (N=10)

Variable	Pre- Intervention (n = 10)	Post-Intervention (n = 10)	95%CI

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	<i>R</i>
Hope	1.50	.53	3.50	1.78	-6.22	.00	-4.77	-2.23	1.52

Note. CI = confidence interval, LL = lower limit, UL = upper limit, *r*=Hedges’s *g*

The findings of the above-mentioned table showed the differences in the pre and post scores of levels of hope in orphan females. Table 2 provides the mean differences in the levels of hope between pre-intervention and post intervention data. It shows that there is a significant enhancement in hope after using combined creative and positive interventions and the mean score for hope is significantly higher at post intervention as compared to pre-intervention results.

Discussion

The present research intended to examine the effectiveness of creative interventions combined with positive interventions for hope in orphans. The hypothesis was supported and results indicate significant enhancement in the levels of hope at post intervention hence supporting the hypothesis. This finding is significant in its impact on the concept of hope as a necessary accompaniment of future success and shows that this research is in line with previous findings as mentioned earlier (Charyton, Hutchison, Snow, Rahman & Elliott, 2009, Coholic, 2011, Desmet & Sääksjärvi, 2016).

Expressive writing and drawing as used in this research seem to help as coping strategies to improve mood and literature supports this finding as explained through positive narratives leading to positive success (Craft, Davis & Paulson, 2012). Meanwhile, the medium of drawing also helps in distracting from negative feelings and in effectively improving short-term mood (Drake & Winner, 2012). For instance, the session plan focused on improving one’s life, by looking at their perspective of life through phases of developmental stages in interventions such as *color your life* and making a *mood chart*. This was done to allow them to critically evaluate their emotions that would in turn lead to specific thoughts and behaviors. The drawing of a Mandala and using play dough as again evidenced by previous literature (Fincher, 2009) were used for self-exploration and self-awareness accompanied by role playing for building connections and a trajectory for interpersonal effectiveness in group work .

Combining the primary approach of creative interventions with positive psychotherapy was a successful endeavor as the participants found it easy to talk about their life and views through their creative handiwork either visual or as a role play and this in turn could be extended toward their views on life bordering on hope, optimism and aspects of self-development. The aims and objectives of the combined interventions were used to enhance their hope for better interpersonal relationships in future. More recently, the concept of using Positive Arts Interventions has emerged as detailed by clinical case examples from Australia, Canada and Ukraine detailed by authors, Darewych and Bowers (2018).

The session objectives led to overall positivity in the self in the form of healing through catharsis, humor, and facilitation of self-development. Appleton (2001) used numerous art therapy methods such as drawing, building creative boxes, collages photography with trauma survivors and found that expressive arts are an excellent method for processing and resolving traumatic issues because these traumatic issues are stored in the memory as images. It was observed that the intervention activities in this research also led to an increase in their interest in the therapy as they got to know more about themselves. The enhanced self-exploration and self-awareness were the most interesting and enlightening aspects as increase in mindfulness was also observed through creative methods. Subsequent

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emotional regulation was also discussed and observed in the participants' emotions, social skills and coping skills.

Appleton (2011) also provided an example of a client who used creative actions involved in the activity that had a greater impact on client than is possible in traditional talk therapy methods. Most of the participants in this research similarly felt the change in themselves after the intervention in their anger, in their mood swings, which improved towards mood stability, their interpersonal relationship improved when they get to know how to work together, how to listen to others and welcome other ideas as seen in previous literature as well (Mansell, Morrison, Reid, Lowens, & Tai, 2007). Some participants complained that they had disturbed sleep but after taking creative intervention sessions they felt an improvement in their sleep too. The overall improvement was seen because of the healing process through art, channelizing their energy into coloring, play dough, making something creative, expressing and enlightening their self-esteem. Connor, DeYoung and Silvia (2018) reported similar results with a group of young adults who reported a strong link between their creative activity and flourishing with the latter increasing on days when creative activity was part of their routine.

The overall qualitative responses of the participants in post intervention discussion demonstrated an optimistic view of their future, and the willingness for a successful career and married life showing the effectiveness of the merged positive-creative intervention for the given sample.

Conclusion

The study shows that there is a significant enhancement in hope through creative interventions combined with the approach of Positive Psychology. Creative interventions merged with positive interventions served as a motivational vehicle for continuing the therapeutic process for the orphaned females group while enhancing their hope for their future. It gave them the direction to conceptualize goals for life and enhanced sustainability in related elements including conflict management and resolution maximizing interpersonal effectiveness and character strengths like tolerance, gratitude and humour. Literature suggests that hope is diminished in cases of institutionalized living as seen in orphanages due to limited resources and future possibilities. With this in mind, the enhancement of hope is a step toward a preventive approach and one that is important for overall health and wellness at an individual level as well as the community level.

Implications of the study

It is worth mentioning that average levels of hope were already present in the participants, but it was enhanced using this combined intervention. The participants were already motivated to improve themselves, as they knew there is support present in their environment but the only area they were lacking in was the facilitation to overcome the problem. This is important for psychologists working with orphaned young adults who may feel similarly. Practitioners should also keep in mind the efficacy of using a combined approach where creative means keep participants open to receiving interventions in a group setting.

Limitations and future recommendations

The current study utilized a within-group design. A control group would be beneficial in future studies in order to analyze results in terms of changes in the levels of hope using singular or even different intervention.

Another limitation is with respect to gender – as all were females and taken from one orphanage setting. Future studies may want to include both males and females in samples to facilitate any variance existing in results.

Other variables in Positive Psychology such as subjective well-being, happiness, quality of life could also be examined for a better comparison of the orphaned population. A cross sectional sample across diverse age groups may also be taken to understand how levels of hope could be enhanced.

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