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A study of the efficacy of teaching happiness
Based on the Fordyce method – to elderly people on their life expectancy
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Abstract

The present study has been carried out as "a study of the efficacy of teaching happiness- based on the Fordyce method- to elderly people living in Isfahan on their life expectancy." The statistical population were the elderly people living in homes for the aged in the city of Isfahan. Sixty elderly individuals were selected randomly using the random cluster sampling method from Niakan and Ofogh-e-Farda homes for the elderly, and divided randomly into experiment and control group (each group consisting of thirty individuals). The study method was demlexperimental. The experiment group were treated with the Fordyce happiness education program. The tool used in the study was the "hope" measure. The data acquired from the study was analysed on basis of the co-variance analysis method. Results showed that the Fordyce happiness education program increases life expectancy in elderly people; this increase is quantitatively equal to (\(p<0.01, F=16.42\)) the follow-up test revealed happiness education endurance.

\textit{Keywords:} happiness education, the Fordyce method, life-expectancy, the elderly.

1. Introduction

A key social factor with which society has to find a way of coping is the universally inevitable issue of old age. In any society a significant portion of the population is constituted by the elderly. In 2006 the United Nations estimated the number of elderly people worldwide at 687923000; this number will have reached 1,968,153,000 by 2050 (Islamic General News Institution, 2007). Sixty percent of the universal population of elderly people presently live in the developing countries.

Research has shown that optimism may increase physical and mental health; therefore any attempt aimed at raising the level of elderly living conditions can help diminish the problems of the elderly on the one hand and consequently those of the family unit and society in general, on the other.

The common problems with which the elderly are faced relate to their physical status including problems of mobility and their mental status namely loss of hope and depression.

Hope is a concept directly related to mental and physical health and measures parallel to and predict medical intervention, mental health, good humour, avoidance of stressful situations, happiness in life and problem-solving ability.
Beruinks and Malle (2005) reporting Mac Innis and Chann (2006) showed that the majority of people define hope as a type of stimulation. It seems that hope is stimulation above that of fear, anger or love since it is not present in creatures, but rather, is to be seen only in human beings. The elderly are mostly faced with physical hindrances and mobility problems as well as psychological issues.

Bailey (2007) asserts that researchers have found that the elderly, in general, experience a lower degree of hope in life.

Schneider et al (2006) assert that optimism and hope are in direct relationship with the degree of contentment in life.

Hankins (2004) studied the effect of treatment based on Schneider's "hope theory" on diminishing depression in hospitalized patients. The result of the study showed that after 10-12 one-hour sessions the degree of optimism in the experiment group in comparison with the control group showed a meaningful rise; likewise the decrease of hopelessness in the former group was significant in comparison with the latter.

Irving et al (2004) found that communal treatment based on optimism can be advantageous.

On basis of the above mentioned researches the main thrust of this study was to determine the efficacy of the Fordyce happiness education method on the life expectancy of elderly people in the city of Isfahan.

Method
The experiment method was semi-experimental involving pre-and post tests. The independent variable was happiness education according to the Fordyce method and the dependant variable, optimism and hope in the elderly.

The research population was the elderly residents in the city of Isfahan in the year 1389 A.H. sixty elderly individuals living in homes for the elderly were chosen randomly and divided into two groups: an experiment group presented with the Fordyce happiness education method and a control group (30 individuals in each. Group)

Tools
1- The questionnaire for measuring hope in adults, form A. the degree of hope is measured with the "adults hope questionnaire" (form A) which has been devised by Schneider for individuals of 15 and above years of age and includes two sub-measures: pathway and motivation the validity and reliability of this questionnaire was measured by two psychology professors of Isfahan University who tested sixty students of this university with it and determined an internal consistency of (a=0.68). A significant relation between the questionnaire with positive affection (r=0.46) and optimism (r=0.64) shows the simultaneous validity of the questionnaire.

Execution Method
Fordyce (1997) believes that happiness can be taught. He is a prominent figure in the psychology of happiness having carried out much research a having published significant works in the field. The Fordyce happiness education program is constituted by 14 cognitive-behavioral elements of which 8 elements are cognitive and 6, behavioral.

These elements are:
1-Being busy and active, 2- Spending more time with others, 3-Being dynamic and doing useful, meaningful activities, 4-Having better programming, 5-Avoiding anxieties, 6-Lowering one's expectations, 7-Having positive optimism, 8-Living in the reality of the present moment, 9-Developing a wholesome personality, 10-Developing a socially extrovert character, 11-Being one's real self, 12-Ignoring problems and negative feelings, 13-Having intimate relationships, 14-Optimizing cheerfulness

With regard to the aim of the study which was determining the efficacy of teaching cheerfulness to elderly subjects on their optimism towards life, eight educational sessions – based on the Fordyce method- and the related marginal programs were carried out with the experiment group having filled the "hope-measure questionnaire for adults" form A in both experiment and control groups beforehand. After the treatment-the Fordyce happiness education method and the related marginal programs- the above mentioned questionnaire was again filled in for both groups. In order
to double-check the results of the post-test of the second stage, after one month the Niakan and Ofogh-e-farda homes for the elderly were revisited and the above questionnaire was filled in for both experiment and control groups for the third time.

**Statistical analysis methods**

In order to compare the experiment and control groups co-variance analysis was utilized.

**Study results**

1. Happiness education based on the Fordyce method is effectual.

Table (1) experiment and control group life expectancy averages and standard deviations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Pretest Mean</th>
<th>Pretest Standard deviation</th>
<th>Post-test Mean</th>
<th>Post-test Standard deviation</th>
<th>Follow up Mean</th>
<th>Follow up Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>25.30</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>28.73</td>
<td>6.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>24.80</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>7.30</td>
<td>26.36</td>
<td>7.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (1) shows the average and standard deviations of the Fordyce happiness education method in experiment and control groups.

Table (2) co-variance results summary: a comparison of experiment and control groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>situation</th>
<th>Change sources</th>
<th>Sum of square roots</th>
<th>Freedom level</th>
<th>Square roots average</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Eta-squared</th>
<th>power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Pretest group</td>
<td>2075.221</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2075.221</td>
<td>189.388</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.769</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>group</td>
<td>359.847</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>359.847</td>
<td>16.420</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.366</td>
<td>0.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow up</td>
<td>Pretest group</td>
<td>2123.022</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2123.022</td>
<td>217.722</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.793</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>group</td>
<td>254.016</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>254.016</td>
<td>13.025</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>0.996</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of table (2) show—considering the pretest scores as the auxiliary variable—that the Fordyce happiness education method incites a meaningful difference between the experiment and the control group (P<0.001). A comparison of the averages shows that this method had a meaningful effect on life expectancy in elderly people. The follow up test revealed the endurance of the method.

**Discussion and conclusion**

The aim of this study was to determine the efficacy of the Fordyce happiness education method on the life expectancy of the elderly in the city of Isfahan. The results of the study showed that the above mentioned method is effectual on life expectancy in elderly people. The results of the present study are in harmony with results carried out by Vinhoven (1993) Mayers (2002) Mayers and Diner (2004). Bailey (2007) Schneider et al (2006) which show that educational treatment is effectual in terms of increasing contentment in life, reducing depression and anxiety, increasing happiness and life expectancy. It can be said in explication of the above results that when the individual feels emotional elation negative feelings such as fear, anxiety and worrying about one's future decrease.

Research has shown that cheerfulness, whatever its cause may have been, can elevate physical health. Individuals who are cheerful feel more secure, decide more easily, Co-operate with others more amiably and feel more contentment in relation to those with whom they live. (Mayers, 2002)

**References**


