

The Effect of Problem-Solving Counseling Program on Anger and Subjective Well-being among Juvenile Delinquents

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Abstract

This study, through group counseling applying problem-solving counseling theory, part of positive psychology, wanted to improve anger control and subjective well-being among juvenile delinquents and to contribute to suggest positive directions and methods in dealing with them. The research findings are as follows:

- The problem-solving group counseling program was effective in reducing anger of risky adolescents.
- The problem-solving group counseling program was effective in improving subjective well-being among risky adolescents.
- The problem-solving group counseling program was more effective than the comparative group counseling program.

Consequently, the analysis showed that the problem-solving group counseling program was very effective in reducing anger among risky adolescents and solving psychological problems of them.

Keywords: Anger, Group Counseling, Juvenile Delinquents, Problem-Solving Counseling, Subjective Well-Being

1. Introduction

Recently, social problems of adolescents are very serious. The crime rate of them has increased, and there have been various problems from intramural violences, verbal curse to the Internet and game addictions, even to smartphone addiction. Especially, violence in school is in serious situation now. Many students suffer from verbal and non-verbal violences in school and there have been not a few cases where students commit suicide.

Among serious social problems of adolescents, there are some adolescents who cannot control their emotions properly and express them as anger to others, generating the problem of juvenile delinquents.

As a characteristic of adolescents, they meet the second growth period. While they experience rapid physical growth, they are mentally unstable. Generally,

depression rapidly reduces mental energy of the person, making the person lethargic. But, depression for adolescents, even if it forces those affected psychologically depressed, raises bodily energy and triggers them to act impulsively, or express their anger¹.

Delinquency means, in general, behavior deviating from one's status or social norms. In the case of adolescents, delinquency starts from status delinquency such as drinking, smoking, running away from home, violence and robbing of money, develops into increasingly serious social behaviors up to crimes. To understand delinquencies of Korean adolescents, one needs to consult the 2013 Adolescents White Paper. According to the book, in 2008, the number of reports of disappearance from home of female adolescents was 10,303, and that for male adolescents was 5,304. In 2012, the number for female adolescents has risen to 12,871 and that for male ones to

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7,819 respectively. The rate of smoking adolescents has risen from 11% in 2005 to 15% in 2011. The number of adolescents arrested for selling sex has also risen from 1,745 cases to 4,457 in 2012. The proportion of crimes committed by adolescents out of all the crimes also rose from 3.6% in 2006 to 5.1% in 2012². These statistics show that juvenile delinquencies have risen over time in recent years.

As described above, the adolescent years are very important. Especially, if adolescents fail to control and adjust their emotions, it is possible that they can commit delinquencies including school violence, and social problems including home violence. Thus, to have a healthy life for individuals and the society, adolescents need to learn how to control their anger. Therefore, we need to help them to properly moderate their anger and solve it through rational measures.

However, since most of existing anger-regulating programs have focused on cognitive-behavioral treatment theories, they have limits in the sense that there are directional aspects by active involvement of counselor, and involuntary participation of adolescents. And, by focusing too much on negative problematic behavior, adolescents can have defiance against them.

Recently, with the development of positive psychology, empirical researches tend to focus on positive cognition and emotion rather than negative cognition and emotion³. In 2002, Seligman argued that while traditional psychological counseling helps patients in maladjusted conditions to recover to adjustment above the average level, positive psychology helps patients to achieve mentally healthy and happy self-realization. He suggested the importance and significance of positive psychology⁴.

D'Zurilla, to help people effectively solve various problems facing in real lives since the 1970s, suggested problem-solving counseling theory. It is the process where counselor helps patient solve problems, and its aim is to improve problem-solving capacity by helping the patients recognize their own problems and learn the process they can be solved. He viewed that, through such processes, one can improve one's capacity to solve all the problems facing in daily lives such as personal problems (cognition, emotion, behavior, and health), problems related with human relationship (couple, family), community problems (crime and public service). Through many experiments, he proved their effects⁵.

Consequently, this study, using the group counseling programs applying problem-solving counseling to adoles-

cents based on positive psychology, intends to contribute to solving the adolescent problems by improving anger-regulating capacities among adolescents, and enhancing positive emotions like subjective well-being. To achieve this, this study will execute group counseling program developed based on problem-solving counseling theory, and test its effects on regulating anger among delinquent adolescents and their subjective well-being.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Research Subjects and Procedure

Counseling was performed for four weeks from August 3, 2013. Every Saturday, counseling was performed for 2 and half hours. The counseling was given to the experimental group (10 students) from 14:00 and to the comparative group (10 students) from 17:00. The experimental group program was performed to the control group (10 students).

2.2 Research Design

This study, using the experimental group applying problem-solving counseling and the comparative group applying REBT theory, and the control group no treatment is given, uses designs before and after experimental and comparative group's research, as shown in Table 1.

2.3 Program

This program was created referring to the problem-solving short-term counseling program developed by Sung-Joo Park⁶, as shown in Table 2.

2.4 Measurement Tools

This program was created referring to the problem-solving short-term counseling program developed by Sung-Joo Park⁶.

Table 1. Research Design

	Before	Treatment	After
Experimental group	O ₁	X ₁	O ₂
Comparative group	O ₃	X ₂	O ₄
Control group	O ₅		O ₆

O₁, O₃, O₅: Before test (anger, subjective well-being).

X₁: Treatment of experimental group (Problem-solving counseling program).

X₂: Treatment of comparative group (REBT program).

O₂, O₄, O₆: After test (anger, subjective well-being).

Table 2. Theme and contents of the problem-solving counseling program

Structure		Theme per session	Program contents
Initial stage	1	O.T & self introduction	Introduction of the program and of the group members - Deciding nicknames of group members, and organizing the group, etc.
Middle stage	2	what is anger?	Search for attitude to anger and cultivating positive attitude - Understanding emotion - Positive understanding of anger
	3	Clear definition of anger	Search for reason to define anger clearly - collection of information on anger and search for internal/ external reasons for it - Redefinition of one's anger
	4	Search for alternative to solve anger	Search for various and creative alternatives to solve anger, and prediction and determination of alternatives through cost/benefit calculus. - Brainstorming, cost/benefit calculus - Evaluation of realizability depending on personal and social values
	5	Plan to execute the alternative of solving anger	Planning execution on alternatives to solve anger, and practicing by searching for techniques and methods to execute them - Training using role-play and theater of situations, etc.
	6	Execution evaluation and revision to solve anger	Evaluation of results performed through execution plan. Search for elements obstructing execution, and finding alternatives to solve it, and establishment of execution plan. - Results evaluation and search for alternatives (Brainstorming, cost/benefit calculus) role-play and theater of situations. - Search for obstructing elements and removal of them
	7	Execution evaluation and overall evaluation	Final evaluation for the execution and the overall evaluation on problem-solving process - self evaluation and self-reinforcing
Final stage	8	Summary and feedback	Total evaluation on program and feedback sharing among group members - Writing a pledge

2.4.1 Anger Level Test Sheet

This study used the Korean version STAXI-K made based on STAXI of Spielberger⁷.

2.4.2 Scale of Subjective Well-Being

This study used what Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin developed and Yeon-Ji Ryu translated⁸.

3. Results

3.1 Equivalence Check among Groups

To test equivalence among the experimental group, the comparative group and the control group, we did the previous T-test for anger and subjective well-being, which did not show any significant results as shown in Table 3, proving that the two groups are equivalent.

Table 3. Equivalence Check among Groups T-Test

Category		N	M	SD	Levene test of equal variance		t-test	
					F	p	t	p
Anger	EX	10	48.40	8.40	1.78	.28	2.71	.13
	CM	10	47.10	9.30				
	CT	10	49.60	11.45				
subjective well-being	EX	10	70.30	12.10	.49	.51	1.92	.08
	CM	10	79.10	12.82				
	CT	10	80.60	10.44				

*.p<0.05 **.p<0.01 ***.p<0.001

3.2 The Effect of Problem-Solving Counseling Program on Anger Level

To check whether the mean differences among groups are statistically significant, we did the ANCOVA, using prior

Table 4. Findings of anger level ANCOVA analysis

	Source	SS	df	MS	F	LSD
State anger	covariates	226.68	EX	226.68	16.51	
	group	1107.66	CM	553.83	40.34***	1>2>3
	error	356.92	26	13.73		
Trait anger	covariates	109.64	EX	109.64	10.76	
	group	421.46	CM	210.73	20.68***	1>2>3
	error	264.96	26	10.19		
Total	covariates	567.88	EX	567.88	18.94	
	group	2885.11	CM	1442.56	48.12***	1>2>3
	error	779.52	26	29.98		

*** $p < .001$.

scores of each index of anger level as covariates and using groups as fixed factors. The findings are shown in Table 4

3.3 The Effect of Problem-Solving Counseling Program on Subjective Well-Being

After tests showed in general that the values of the experimental group were higher than those of the comparative group, and those of the latter was higher than those of the experimental group. Table 5 shows the results.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study, through group counseling applying problem-solving counseling, a part of positive psychology, intended

Table 5. ANCOVA of the covariates of test scores of subjective well-being

	Source	SS	df	MS	F	LSD
Pos	Covariate	201.54	1	201.54	28.97	
	Group	42.01	2	14.78	3.48*	1>2,3
	Error	174.24	26	6.70		
Neg	Covariate	69.47	1	69.47	4.11	
	Group	1297.30	2	648.65	8.38***	1>2>3
	Error	439.43	26	16.90		
Life	Covariate	619.51	1	619.51	55.82	
	Group	171.50	2	85.75	7.73**	1>2>3
	Error	288.57	26	11.10		
Total	Covariate	2022.95	1	2022.95	151.16	
	Group	97.00	2	48.50	3.62*	1>2>3
	Error	347.96	26	13.38		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

to improve anger control and subjective well-being among juvenile delinquents and contribute to finding ways to lead them into positive direction.

First, this study tried to test the effects of the problem-solving counseling program in reducing anger levels among juvenile delinquents. The test showed that the treatments lead to statistically significant differences and the same was true for the sub-levels of anger, state anger and trait anger. And, for the comparative group for it REBT counseling theory was applied, anger scores were significantly reduced, compared with the control group. But, the effects were more effective to the experimental group than to the comparative group.

Second, this study also wanted to test the effect of problem-solving counseling program in improving subjective well-being. The tests showed that the program led to the statistically significant effects. The scores in the positive emotion and life satisfaction, sub-elements of subjective well-being, went higher and the scores of negative emotion went down. And, the scores of the comparative group to which REBT counseling theory was applied also showed the effects of the treatment. And the effect of the treatment to the experimental group was bigger than those to the comparative group. But, in the scores of positive emotion, sub-element of subjective well-being, there were no significant differences between the comparative group and the control group, and it was only effective to the experimental group. It seems to show that, since problem-solving counseling is based on positive counseling, it increases positive emotion as well as reducing negative emotion among juvenile delinquents.

Considering the above findings, it seems that the problem-solving counseling program, one of the positive counseling theories, can contribute to control of anger among juvenile delinquents. By doing so, it will contribute to making individuals and the society more healthful.

However, this study was performed to high school students in D city. So, it has problem in generalizing the findings. And, it also has problems because there are more kinds of delinquencies and seriousness. And, this study is based on voluntary participation of subjects. But, if involuntary participants were included in the treatment, the results can be different. Finally, if the counselor is not a professional who acquired master's and doctoral degrees in counseling psychology and more than 15 year clinical experiences like the case of the counselor of this research, the results would be different depending on counselor.

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