

## The Effectiveness of Spirituality Group Therapy on Happiness and Hardiness in Elderly Women

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### Abstract

**Background and Objective:** Spirituality as the basis of beliefs is an important aspect of the life of the elderly and plays a vital role in providing and improving their psychological happiness and hardiness. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of spirituality group therapy on happiness and hardiness in elderly women.

**Method:** The research method was semi-experimental with pretest-posttest design with control group. The statistical population of study included all the elderly in Rasht in 2015. Using convenience sampling, 30 of them were selected and randomly assigned to the experimental group (15 participants) and control group (15 participants). The experimental group underwent 10 sessions of spirituality group therapy program which was in line with Richards and Bergin's pattern. The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and Ahvaz Psychological Hardiness Questionnaire were used for data collection. Data were analyzed using multivariable covariance test. All ethical issues were observed in the study and the researchers declared no conflict of interests.

**Results:** The findings supported the effectiveness of spirituality group therapy on the elderly's psychological happiness and hardiness. Indeed, the old women in the experimental group scored significantly higher in the happiness and hardiness posttest questionnaires compared to their counterparts in the control group ( $p < 0/01$ ).

**Conclusion:** It can be concluded that spiritual group therapy has a significant impact on seniors' happiness and hardiness. Thus, this method can be useful as a tool for increasing happiness and hardiness of the elderly.

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### Summary

**Background and Objective:** Aging is probably the most important demographic phenomenon in the world at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. The old age, which includes people over 60 years, represents a growth of 2.4% compared with a growth of 1.7% of the world's population. The population seems to have risen to an estimated 1.2 billion in 2025, indicating that this population doubles every 25 years (1). Aging is a natural process that begins from the time of the life of the fetus and continues to death, and is naturally

accompanied by the gradual decline of the function of most tissues of the body until the end of life (2). People who are aged and disadvantaged often have many problems, such as lack of mobility and activity (3), unfavorable social and economic status, physical and psychological illnesses, depression and severe disappointment (4,5). These factors somehow have a significant effect on reducing the happiness of the elderly.

Happiness is a positive emotional state that is characterized by pleasure, enjoyment and joy and has some traits and symptoms including positive beliefs about life, positive excitement and a lack of negative emotions (6).

Many factors affect the elderly's psychological health. The results of the research have shown that psychological hardiness is one of the effective variables in people's mental health (7). Psychological hardiness as a repressive personality trait in coping with psychological pressures is nowadays receiving a lot of attention and many believe that it causes more resistance in stressful cases (8).

According to the above, the reduction of happiness and psychological hardiness of the elderly is one of the challenges of psychiatry today, and finding ways to increase happiness and psychological hardiness, especially in the elderly, needs more attention. Thus, it seems that, instead of focusing on the elderly's depression, pain and suffering, increasing their happiness and psychological healthiness can promote their psychological health and life satisfaction. To this end, several approaches have been used so far and each of these approaches has been successful in increasing the happiness and psychological hardiness of elderly people. The time has come to combine spiritual solutions with the theory and methods of psychotherapy (9). As the basis of beliefs, spirituality is an important aspect of the life of the elderly and plays a vital role in providing and improving their psychological happiness and hardiness. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of spirituality group therapy on happiness and hardiness in elderly.

**Method:** The research method was semi-experimental with pretest-posttest design with control group. The statistical population of study included all the elderly in Rasht in 2015. Using convenience sampling, 30 of them were selected and randomly assigned to the experimental group (15 participants) and control group (15 participants). The experimental group underwent 10 sessions of spirituality group therapy program which was in line with Richards and Bergin's pattern. The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and Ahvaz Psychological Hardiness Questionnaire were used for data collection. Data were analyzed using multivariable co-variance test.

**Results:** The participants included women with a mean age of 69 years (SD=5.303). The mean scores of psychological hardiness in experimental and control groups respectively were 62.31 (SD=7.81) and 79.68 (SD=14.19) prior to the treatment. At the end of the treatment, the mean scores changed to 100.01 (SD=9.33) and 70.13 (SD=13.31) for the experimental and control groups in that order. The mean scores of psychological hardiness in experimental and control groups respectively were 49.33 (SD=8.83) and 49.99 (SD=13.01) prior to the treatment. At the end of the treatment, the mean scores changed to 62.86 (SD=6.12) and 51.15 (SD=14.22) for the experimental and control groups in that order.

The findings supported the effectiveness of spirituality group therapy on the elderly's psychological happiness and hardiness. Indeed, the old women in the experimental group scored significantly higher in the happiness and hardiness posttest questionnaires

compared to their counterparts in the control group ( $p<0/01$ ).

**Conclusion:** It can be concluded that spiritual group therapy has a significant impact on seniors' happiness and hardiness. Thus, this method can be useful as a tool for increasing happiness and hardiness of the elderly.

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