

Piloting a brief CBGT intervention for stressed Icelandic female university students

Background: The university years are generally considered to be a time of transition when young people enter adult life and prepare their future career. International research has shown that stress is common among university students, especially among females. Therefore, a brief cognitive behavioural group therapy (CBGT) was developed, and pilot tested. The therapy focused on enhancing self-esteem and perceived mastery among participants with GBCT to combat the stress.

Objective: The main objective of this study was to explore female students' mean symptoms of stress and their sense of mastery and self-esteem before receiving the CBGT and again immediately post intervention. The CBGT was conducted in 6 consecutive weekly group sessions for 90 minutes. Participants were divided into five sub-groups and all had been screened with psychological stress prior to the intervention.

Method: This was a quasi-experimental study and the questionnaires consisted of the Perceived Stress Scale, Pearlin Mastery Scale and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale and questions on background variables. The sample consisted of 22 undergraduate and graduate female students, aged 21-42 years. Most were in a steady relationship, cohabiting or married (73%). Forty percent were graduate students. Data was analyzed with descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests.

Results: The preliminary results of this pilot study revealed that participants' mean stress-scores decreased significantly between pre and post intervention whereas mean mastery and self-esteem scores increased significantly during the same period of time.

Conclusion: This pilot study, provided by advanced psychiatric nurses, indicates positive results of six 90 minutes CBGT sessions for Icelandic female university students who experienced stress. These results will contribute to further development of an intervention to target stress among university female students.