

*Research Article***Can Group Psychotherapy Induce Change in Clients?**

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**Abstract**

The ability of psychotherapy group to induce change in the clients is an area of conflict between psychotherapists and the investigators. Added to that the different aspects of change in the clients still in need for research. Fifty clients from both Minia Adult Male and Adult Female Groups participated in this study. They filled the Minia University Group Experience Associated Change Questionnaire which was designed by the research team. The clients approved the occurrence of change to all of them with attending the therapy group.

**Keywords:** Psychotherapy, group, change, ability

**Introduction**

The ability of the group to induce change is an area of conflict between investigators and clinicians. Eysenck's (1952, 1965) claimed to prove that 75% of neurotics got better regardless of whether or not they were in therapy. This conclusion based on the interpretation of six controlled studies.

Added to that Michael Scrivenin 1974 asked the American Psychological Association's Ethics Committee that APA-member clinicians are required to present a card to the clients prepared to attend the therapy group on which it would be explained that the procedure they were about to undergo had never been proven superior to a placebo ("Psychotherapy Caveat," 1974).

However, Emrick (1975) reviewed 72 studies of the psychological and psychopharmacological treatment of alcoholism and concluded that evidence existed for the efficacy of therapy. Luborsky, et al., (1975) reviewed about 40 controlled studies and found more evidence. Bednar & Kaul (1979) wrote "group treatments have been more effective than no treatment, than placebo treatment, or than other accepted forms of psychological treatments".

Later Kazdin & Weisz (2003) and Nathan (2007) reported that therapy group is able to induce change in different aspects as

psychological, physical, occupational, relational aspects.

**Methodology**

The research questions were; "Is psychotherapy group able to induce change in its clients? and what are different aspects of change?"

The studied therapy groups were the Minia Adult Female Psychotherapy Group and the Minia Adult Male Psychotherapy Group. These groups are open and continuous led by the senior professor of psychiatry in the Faculty of Medicine, Minia University, Refaat Mahfouz Mahmoud, with the help of co-therapists (staff members in the Neurology and Psychiatry Department of Minia University Hospital, Minia, Egypt).

The groups are held regularly in Minia Neurology and Psychiatry Department in Minia University Hospital every Sunday for two hours. Patients who participate in both groups are adults, with a minimum degree of education (at least can read and write) and carry heterogeneous diagnoses. Clients in active psychotic or manic episodes can participate after remission of active symptoms.

Fifty clients from both Adult Female and Adult Male Groups participated in this study. Inclusion Criteria were; 1) Age: 18 years and older, 2) Both genders were

included, 3) Regular attendance as a group member in Minia Psychotherapy Group with a minimum duration of 6 months, 4) Consent of the patients to participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria were; 1) Irregular attendance of group, 2) Regular attendance with duration less than 6 months, 3) Refusal of the patient to participate in the study procedure (only 2 clients in Adult Male group).

The questionnaire used in the study (Minia University Group Experience Associated Change Questionnaire) was designed by the research team. This questionnaire enter in various steps of development, it started with the main researcher exploring her own change during her training on psychotherapy thus she became able to put a preliminary version from the questionnaire. This version was reviewed by other authors leading to some modifications. This modified version was used in a pilot study on 4 clients attending the group, the transcripts of those clients were reviewed by the authors then other modifications

were done to it. The last version was reviewed by professor Refaat Mahfouz Mahmoud, a professor of psychiatry, in Minia university, with an experience exceeding 40 years in conducting therapy groups. After approval from prof. Refaat Mahfouz this questionnaire was applied to 50 clients attending the groups.

This questionnaire consists from some of the important socio-demographic data as age, gender, marital status, residence, occupation, educational level, duration of group attendance and presence of psychopharmacological treatment or individual psychotherapy. Other areas of interest were covered in the questionnaire; including is group therapy able to induce change? What are the different aspects of change? The analysis of the results was done using SPSS program.

## Results

The studied sample included 50 clients with age range from 18 to 48 years. The majority of them were females. Most of them were unmarried, living in urban areas, currently working and having a university level of education.

**Table 1: The clients' comment on presence of change**

<b>Experience of change</b>	
Yes	100.0%
No	0.0%

All the clients attending Minia psychotherapy groups experienced a change after regular attendance of the group for six months (Table 1). The clients reported the presence of different facets of change as emotional, intellectual, symptomatic, physical health, physical appearance, feeding habits, functioning, all relations as relation with God, parents, partner, siblings, relatives and friends added to change in the concept of sex and marriage.

## Discussion

The debate about the ability of therapy group to induce change was approved by the clients attending the Minia Adult Male/

Female Group if they were regular in attendance and for duration at least 6 months. These findings were congruent with the finding of Luborsky, et al., (1975), Bednar & Kaul (1979), Kazdin & Weisz (2003) and Nathan (2007).

All the clients reported their experience of change with attending the therapy group. This could be explained by the presence of therapeutic environment that contains cohesion, love, acceptance, added to the presence of a well-trained therapist.

There was not any difference between clients regarding age, sex, marital atatus,

education regarding the occurrence of change with attendance of therapy group. This was congruent with many of the previous evidence as (Cahalane et al., 1994; Beutler et al., 1994; Zlotnick et al., 1996) who suggests that the association between patient gender and treatment outcome is weak. Added to Staczan et al., (2017) who reported that gender issues of patients did not play a crucial role in the outcome of any type of psychotherapy.

The perceived change by the clients occurred in different aspects not only in their presenting symptoms. The change could occur at the level of emotions, cognition, feeding habits, physical health, physical appearance, functioning, relation with God and others.

Change in relational aspect was also dominant in the clients' change. This was congruent with Mullin et al., (2016) who reported formation of a more mature and integrated object representations, as well as improvements in self-descriptions added to improvements in various aspects of object relation functioning after psychodynamic psychotherapy. Also Arnold et al., (2000) reported improvements in patients' self-representations with psychodynamic psychotherapy, Fowler et al., (2004) reported changes in personality functioning. Price, et al., (2004) reported changes in affective quality of object relations, self-esteem and management of aggressive impulses.

The majority of married clients experienced change in their relation with their partner. These results are congruent with results of couples who received the behavioral marital therapy (BMT), the couples experience positive change on overall marital adjustment, and positiveness of communication when discussing a current marital problem (O'Farrell et al., 1985).

### Conclusion

Group therapy is effective in changing the clients who attend it regularly. There are different aspects of change that occur after attending the group as psychological, physical, occupational and relational aspects.

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