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Transformative Consciousness for Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Skills Development

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Abstract

This paper is a slice of a big project exploring the transformative consciousness among college students. Drawn from Wolinsky's (1993) notion and exemplars of quantum consciousness exercises, researchers of this study developed and validated eight modules named as the transformative consciousness exercises and established their effects on the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills among college students. Using an experimental research methodology, particularly the randomized pretest- and posttest-control-group design (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012), the researcher-made Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationship Skills Scale (IIRSS) was administered to the randomly selected 23 students in the experimental group and 21 students in the comparison group. No significant differences were found between two groups prior to the intervention. For eight weeks, at one-and-a-half-hour session per meeting, the experimental group underwent the transformative consciousness program while the control group underwent the self-awareness program. Results showed that there were significant differences found between the experimental and control group. Furthermore, the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills of students in the experimental group were higher than those who were in the comparison group; and such difference was significant. Thus, it could be construed that the transformative consciousness exercises may have been instrumental in increasing the participants' intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills. The use of these modules, for intervention and further research, are hereby recommended for those interested in transformative consciousness studies.

Keywords: consciousness, transformative consciousness, intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills

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Introduction

Transformative consciousness exercises as a program for intrapersonal and interpersonal skills development is anchored on eastern wisdom teachings that in a certain degree, goes beyond western approaches in dealing with psychological and adjustment problems through experiencing a shift in one's consciousness. This shift of consciousness may exert transformational changes in all areas of the person's life. Consequently, when this consciousness transformation happens to an individual, it may create a ripple effect in the individual's family, community, and the society as a whole.

Western approaches to psychotherapy such as the psychoanalytic approach achieved self-understanding through analysis of childhood experiences that are reconstructed, interpreted, and analyzed (Sharf, 2012). The insight that develops from this analysis may bring about changes in feelings and behaviors of the client. Psychoanalytic research theorizes that newborn infants (5-12 months) realize that they are separate from their mother. Quantum psychology goes further when it theorizes that the false core is the false reason or false conclusion children draw to explain why they are separate (2001).

In psychotherapy, if a client comes in with a problem of "I am worthless," it is taken truly as the problem and has to be worked out. However, the approach that will be used in the transformative awareness module with this kind of issue is to look at "the concept of "I am worthless" as a false conclusion about why something happened, which the person cannot heal because it is a false reason and that the person has to see the false conclusion for what it is, a false conclusion – and discard it" (Wolinsky, 2001).

Ramesh (1996, in Sabotka, 2011, p.159) says "... in comparison with the inconceivable infinity that we actually are, what we think we are, is a mere hallucination, an illusory and insubstantial shadow." This illusory sense of self is referred to by Albert Einstein as an optical illusion of consciousness. If this illusion is recognized, it dissolves, for the "recognition of illusion is also its ending" (Tolle, 2005, p. 20). Further, Tolle explained that spiritual realization is to see clearly that what is perceived, experienced, thought, or felt is ultimately not one is, that he/she cannot find himself/herself in all those things that continuously pass away. Rather, one discovers oneself by experiencing the inner space of consciousness that is referred to by Wolinsky (2000), "Spaciousness of ESSENCE-I AM" (p. 35). This is an approach to consciousness that provides experiential pathways by which the person can begin and relate to a quantum universe – a universe in which the facts of observer-created realities and the inherent interconnectedness of all things are experienced and recognized. This underlying experience of unity or interconnectedness, for Wolinsky, is where the true wholeness can be experienced.

Kant (1948) says people have an inner sense by which they learn about mental aspects of themselves that in important ways is parallel to the outer sense by which they learn about outer objects. This inner sense, which for Brentano (1874/1973) is either inner observation or inner perception, is similar to the observer referred to by Wolinsky in his quantum consciousness exercises and also used in the transformative consciousness modules.

The transformative consciousness modules include the process whereby the person is led to a kind of observation which is free of judgments, evaluation, significance and preference. In this kind of observation, the observer feels free to experience the emotion and free to stop experiencing it. This quantum observation is born of choice, it is chosen consciously and intentionally and encompasses whatever is being felt and thought. The space that occurs as a result of observing an ongoing experience is not a space of denial, or amnesia, or blankness. It is actually the space of allowance whereby nothing need be excluded from awareness (Wolinsky, 2000).

Further, quantum psychology follows the principle that says, once an observer creates a belief, the first belief is the strongest. Hence, creating a new belief over an earlier belief causes more conflict. This perhaps explains the partial failure of both psychology's re-decision and the New Age thinker's thought affirmation. In both cases, the observer creates an unwanted belief, such as, "the world isn't safe," and attempts to change the belief to, "the world is safe," (Wolinsky, 1993).

On the contrary, in the transformative consciousness modules, old beliefs will be re-examined and experienced as limiting to an individual, and thus, has to be de-constructed to allow more space in the consciousness and facilitate the person's shift of consciousness. Furthermore, this program for intrapersonal and interpersonal skills development was designed to acquire transformative self-awareness so that the person discovers who he/she is,

even beyond awareness itself (Wolinsky, 2001). The transformative consciousness exercises hopes to initiate a process whereby the person realizes that he or she is beyond anything he or she thinks or imagine himself or herself to be and ultimately realizing that there is no ego or "I" or beyond. Through this process, a new consciousness emerges that enables the individual to perceive oneself in a new light, thus setting off a healthy and meaningful way of relating to oneself and to others. This new consciousness could be likened to what Tolle (2005) explained as state that leads the individual to be free from the imprisonment within their own personality or to be free from their own mis-taken identity (Nisargadatta, 1994, in Wolinsky, 2000).

In this study, transformative consciousness exercises were theorized to bring about the process of dismantling the false core- false self or the ego by providing more dimensions of awareness to the individual and enhance his or her subjective experience of freedom (Wolinsky, 2000). This similarly means freedom from the ego. When this happens, an improvement in their intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills were hypothesized to take place. *Figure 1* illustrates the paradigm of the study.

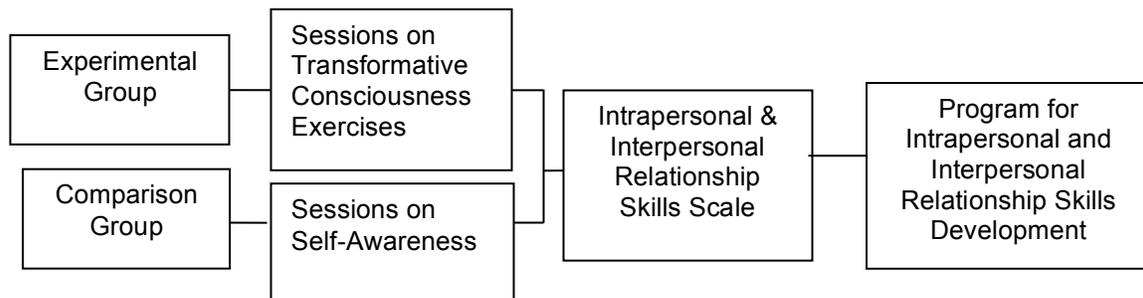


Figure 1. Changes of students' intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills prior to and after the transformative consciousness sessions

Statement Of The Problem

The main objective of this study was to find out the effect of the transformative consciousness exercises on the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills of the students.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skill of the experimental group and comparison group prior to and after the transformative consciousness sessions?
2. Are there significant differences between the comparison and experimental group's intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills prior to and after the intervention?

Based on the aforementioned questions, this hypothesis is advanced: There are no significant differences between the comparison and experimental group's intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills prior to and after the intervention.

Research Design and Methodology

The randomized pretest and posttest control group design was employed in this study. This randomized experiment is a type of research in which the participants are allocated at random (by chance) to an experimental or controlled condition. In this study, random assignment was done by drawing slips of paper from a hat. This gives each participant an equal chance of being allocated to the experimental or controlled groups. The experimental and control conditions involved differences in procedure related to the hypothesis under examination. So by randomization, the researcher avoided any systematic differences between the experimental and control conditions prior to the experimental manipulation. Hence, in this study, it was established that the two experimental conditions: the experimental and the comparison groups were comparable as per random selection.

After establishing whether the two experimental conditions were comparable, the interventions were done. After which, the researcher assessed whether the scores on the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills of the participants differed between the two conditions. These measured variables were the dependent variables. If the size of the effect differs significantly between the two conditions and all variables other than the manipulated variable have been held constant, then this difference is most likely due to the manipulated variable (Howitt & Cramer, 2011), which in this study, is the transformative consciousness exercises.

Method

Participants. The participants of the study were the 45 randomly selected students from 290 first year education students enrolled in the courses general psychology (PSY 101) and personhood development (VED 201) in West Visayas State University extension campus in Himamaylan City, Negros Occidental, Philippines. The participants had an IQ of average to above average as measured by the Culture Fair Intelligence Test Form A. There were 25 randomly assigned students both in the experimental and control groups. Out of the 25 students assigned in the experimental group, 24 had voluntarily given their consent after the researcher obtained their parents' consent to participate in the study. On the other hand, out of the 25 randomly assigned students in the comparison group, only 21 gave their consent to participate in the study.

Materials and instrumentation

The Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationship Skills Scale (IIRSS) was a researcher-made instrument that was adapted from several measures, namely automatic Thoughts Questionnaire by Hollon & Kendall (1980), Survey of Rational Beliefs by Demaria, Kassinove & Dill (1989), Friendliness Scale by Reisman (1983), Fear of Intimacy Scale by Descutner & Thelen (1991), and Self-compassion scale by Wright, et al, (2003). The developed Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationship Skills Scale was subjected to jury validation and reliability testing. The Cronbach's alpha of reliability was 0.812 which meant that the research instrument was reliable.

The following assigned scale was employed to interpret the scores obtained by the participants:

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
0.68 - 1.00	High
0.33 - 0.67	Average
0.01 - 0.32	Low

The Transformative consciousness modules. The eight researcher-made transformative consciousness modules were subjected to jury validation. They were revised based on the suggestions of the jury. The revised modules consisted of 90-minute activities per session for eight weeks. However, the 8th session runs for three hours to accommodate deepening of the exercises. These sessions were undergone by the experimental group, while the comparison group underwent with the usual self-awareness sessions in the same duration.

Table 1 shows the transformative consciousness sessions and the corresponding topic while Table 2 presents the topic summary of self-awareness sessions.

Table 1. *Topic Summary of Transformative Consciousness Modules*

Sessions	Topic
1	Introductions and Guidelines Observing One's Inner Thoughts
2	I Observe Myself As Myself Observes Me
3	My Emotions are Energies
4	I Am the Source of What I Seek
5	Being with Others Makes Me Grow
6	I am No Longer Alone
7	Breaking Free
8	Letting Go and Embracing Emptiness

Table 2. *Topic Summary of Self-Awareness Modules*

Sessions	Topic
1	Introductions and Guidelines, Who Am I?
2	How I See myself and How Others See Me.
3	Other People's Perceptions of Me and how they affect My own
4	Personality Style
5	Relationships with others
6	Working in a group: exploring your group working style
7	My Self-Defeating Patterns
8	Believing in Myself: Write My Own Rules

Procedure. Permission to conduct the study was secured from the campus administrator of West Visayas State University Himamaylan campus. After permission was granted, the researcher invited her students in VED 201 (Personhood Development) and Psych 101 (General Psychology) with above average IQ to participate in the study. In return to their participation, they earned credits for the midterm and final grading periods. Those who volunteered to get involved in the study were asked to sign the letter of consent after they secured their parents' consent. The volunteers were then randomly assigned to either the experimental and comparison group using the fishbowl technique. The schedules for the pretest and sessions for both groups were arranged.

The Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationship Skills Scale (IIRSS) were personally administered by the researcher before the scheduled sessions. After the 8th-week, 90 minute weekly sessions, posttest was administered personally by the researcher to both the experimental and comparison groups using the same measure.

The data gathered were subjected to appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean scores from the pre-test and post-test of the comparison and experimental groups were used to find out the level of changes that occurred in their consciousness quotient and intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship levels after being subjected to the two different conditions. Standard deviations were utilized to determine the dispersion of the means. Wilcoxon signed-rank test is recommended for small subject numbers and repeated measures (Field, 2005). Spearman rho was utilized to determine whether the means of the Consciousness Quotient Inventory and Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationship Skills Scale have significant relationship. Alpha level was also at .05.

All statistical computations were computer-processed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Results and Discussion

Results of the study revealed that the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skill of the experimental group prior to ($M = .678$, $sd = .053$) and after ($M = .722$, $sd = .055$) the sessions were *high*. On the other hand, the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills of the comparison group prior to ($M = .647$, $sd = .037$) and after the sessions ($M = .649$, $sd = .037$) were average. Table 3 shows the data.

The pretest intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills of the students in the experimental group ($M = 0.678$) was lower compared to the posttest result ($M = 0.722$). A mean difference of .044 was observed between the pretest and posttest results in the experimental group. This seemed to indicate that after the intervention the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills of the participants increased.

Table 3. *The Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationship Skills and the Mean Difference between Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Experimental and Comparison Group*

	N	M	Description	Mean Difference	SD
Experimental group					
IIRSS pretest	23	.678	HIGH		.053
IIRSS posttest	23	.722	HIGH	.044	.055
Comparison group					
IIRSS pretest	21	.647	AVERAGE		.037
IIRSS posttest	21	.649	AVERAGE	.002	.037

Scale	Interpretation
0.67 - 1.00	High
0.33 - 0.66	Average
0.01 - 0.32	Low

Results also shows that the pretest intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills of the students in the comparison group (M = .647) was lower compared to the posttest result (M = .649). A mean difference of 0.002 was observed between the posttest and pretest results of the participants' intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills in the comparison group. The self-awareness sessions employed in the comparison may also be considered effective; however, the difference was very slight or small despite the observed increase in the participants' IIRS. The data is shown in Table 3.

The pretest results using the Spearman rho test showed that there was no significant difference in the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills between the experimental and comparison group (Z = 1.702, p = .089). Hence, the two groups are comparable prior to the intervention. The results are shown in Table 4.

After the intervention, it was observed that there was a significant difference in the posttest results between the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills of the comparison and experimental groups (Z = 3.401, p = .000). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Significant Difference in the Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationship (IIRS) Skills Between Experimental and Comparison Groups*

Intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills		
	Comparison Pretest - Experimental Pretest	Comparison Posttest - Experimental Posttest
Z	1.702	3.401*
Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)	.089	.000

*p < 0.01

According to Wolinsky (2001), an individual who may experience a trauma of separation, which he calls as the narcissistic wound or narcissistic injury, feels isolated and seeks out others to form relationships and hangs-on to that even if it already created a negative impact on oneself. The transformative consciousness exercises, to some extent, may be able to allow an individual to heal this narcissistic injury through an experience of being connected to others. Thus, the exercises were able to exert an increase in the participants' IIRSS.

The participants' IIRSS may also have improved because the transformative consciousness exercises facilitated the participants' experience as observers of the going in and going out of their feelings and emotions, and being able to observe it impartially without judgments or preference, consequently, freeing them from its negative impact. This kind of stance is similar to the meta-awareness as described by Chin and Schooler (2009) which is used interchangeably with metaconsciousness and Brazdau's (2012) concept of a witnessing experience.

According to Sher and Wikielman (2009) the process of metaconsciousness reflection about affective experiences can partly reshape that experience and the deliberate allocation of attention can strongly modulate the affective effects of negative stimuli. In the same vein, Chin and Schooler (2009) believed that

metaconsciousness or meta-awareness which is being facilitated through the transformative consciousness exercises in the study may also allow humans the ability to monitor and control their thoughts which in turn make goal-driven behavior possible. For Bradzdau (2011) this metaconsciousness is a process of “pure being” where the person is in a state where he or she experience “interconnectedness between all there is, between the I and the other human beings, and all the other life forms and nature around you” (p.2). As a consequence, this may led to an improved intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills of the person.

Furthermore, the IIRSS of the participants improved may be due to the transformative consciousness exercises that facilitated a sophisticated self-awareness level, which is according to Jordan (2001), is a locus of witnessing in consciousness that can make the behaviors, emotions, desires, and thoughts into objects of attention. Once this is established, a second development of self-awareness occur when a witnessing self, start to relate actively to the coming in and going out of emotions, desires and thoughts. For Jordan, this is a witnessing self that knows that emotions have been evoked, but one is free to make decisions about what to do with it because there is already a degree of non-attachment as this witnessing position “stably relocates from embeddedness in the ego processes” (p.2). Moreover, for Wolinsky (2001), this kind of self-witnessing which he term as “the observe” not only viewed a world out there, as Newtonian physics had claimed, but it altered, influenced, and some physicists would claim, created, what it saw through the act of observation

Conclusions

In research, employing two groups such as the ones used in this study, namely; the experimental and comparison groups demand that these entities must be comparable in most aspects before the intervention. The result showing no significant difference in the participants’ Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationship Skills between the experimental and comparison groups prior to the intervention is a strong supporting evidence to show that both the experimental and comparison groups at the start of the study are comparable. Thus, significant differences in posttest of the participants’ CQ and IIRS may be caused by the intervention.

The observed significant change in the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills (IIRS) of the participants in the experimental group after the intervention shows that the transformative consciousness exercises prove to be a more significant factor in improving these skills as compared to the self-awareness exercises in the comparison group. The already high IIRS in the experimental group have been further enhanced as proven by the significant difference between their mean scores prior to and after the interventions. This change however, was not observed with the comparison group. The observed increase in the participants’ IIRS in the comparison group did not come out significant. Hence, it may be concluded that the transformative consciousness exercises is more effective in improving the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills of the participants in the experimental group.

Recommendations

Foremost, it is recommended that the curriculum committee for values education of an institution integrate in their courses particularly in VED 201 personhood development this program for intrapersonal and interpersonal development skills using the developed modules for transformative consciousness.

Secondly, administrators and policy makers may use the results of the as bases in developing a program for the well-being of the faculty and staff.

Thirdly, these developed modules of transformative consciousness exercises may be used as part of the school’s Guidance Program. Sessions may be done during homeroom classes. It is further recommended that facilitators or homeroom advisers who may want to adopt these modules undergo a workshop on the Transformative Consciousness Exercises to be able to have a first-hand experience with these techniques.

Fourth, the developed transformative consciousness exercises may be used as additional techniques in psychology or other social science courses to help students manage their thoughts, feelings and emotions, and thus, be able to strengthen their relationships with self, others, and the whole created beings.

Fifth, it is recommended that another version of the transformative consciousness exercises may be designed appropriate to those who have below average IQ. Another version may also be designed for high school students as well as for professionals and for those who are in the pursuit of spiritual growth.

Finally, another study may be conducted using an instrument to measure the consciousness quotient of the participants that will measure the person's meta-awareness aspect to further validate the effect of transformative consciousness exercises.

Further, another study may be conducted with participants who have low consciousness quotient, different age levels or to a different population such as the faculty and staff and those coming from private and public sectors of the community. Moreover, it would also be interesting to find out the effect of the transformative consciousness exercises among the facilitators of the study. A study allotting a much longer duration of sessions such as for 3–4 months and in a place with less distraction is also suggested.

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