

The Effectiveness of Growth Mindset Counseling Program to Enhance Students Resilience in A Public Autonomous University in Thailand

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Abstract: *The 21st century is the age of internationalization and globalization, and the increased effort put into emphasizing local and global opportunities is relatively obvious. This paper presents both quantitative and qualitative research examining study abroad experiences in Thailand impacted the intercultural communicative competence of students, eventually leading to multilingual development of their Thai language ability, English language proficiency, and intercultural abilities, which were the three main constructs for data collection. The population consisted of 30 purposively selected Chinese students enrolled in a graduate program in the 2020 academic year at private universities in Thailand. After a minimum stay of one year in Thailand, the students were asked to complete a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale to self-assess their Thai language ability, English language proficiency, and intercultural abilities. The results demonstrated that study abroad experiences provided students with both positive linguistic and cultural outcomes. The overall mean scores of English language proficiency and intercultural abilities were at a high level, which indicated a high level of development of the students in English and intercultural abilities, whereas their Thai language abilities were at a low level. The interview findings also corroborated the findings of the questionnaire. The study revealed that study abroad experiences offered ample opportunities to pathways to bilingualism and multilingualism. Therefore, investment in the international experiences of students to meet the demands of global competence should be essential to gradually move both students and institutions towards internationalization and globalization.*

Keywords: Resilience, Growth mindset counseling program, Student resilience, Public autonomous university

Introduction

During adolescent years, the physical transformation directly affects adolescents in term of personal identity or sense of self (Erikson, 1959; Rutter, 1999; Wattananonsakul, & Tuicomepee, 2014). In the late adolescents, the sense of self has yet to be completely developed. The transition to university and the university experience can add confusions to the sense of self or the identity development. The unfamiliar university environment and greater responsibilities both in academic and finance have increased the risk of stress, feeling of fear, anxiety, and psychological disorders among late adolescent undergraduate students (Khanthakhuarn, 2010; Buajun, Sawatsing, Nuansithong, & Chotchai, 2019; Phoolawan, Khangrang, Butsri, Duphong, & Larpanantbangkerd, 2020). Many scholars and psychologists have done studies to find interventions and support to help undergraduate students cope with the stressful experience and resilience has been one of the prevalent solutions (Prince-Embury, Keefer, & Saklofske, 2016).

Initially, resilience was defined as a personality trait that emerged in an adverse situation (Werner, & Smith, 1992). Later, it has been explained as the psychological ability to handle adverse experiences and maintain the healthy psychological and physical function with positive emotions (Chambers, & Belicki, 1998; Bonanno, 2004; Gilmore, & Meersand, 2014). Currently, resilience refers to the adaptability of ordinary individuals to overcome everyday adversities and the negative effects, and the individuals continue to thrive (Grotberg, 1995; Masten, 2009, 2018; Rutter, 1999).

In the development of resilience, Grotberg (1999) believes that resilience is the universal resource. Everyone can have it, but not everyone possesses it. Grotberg has posited that the human development process is the foundation of resilience. If an individual achieved Erikson's initial 5 stages of human development, trusting relationship, autonomy, initiative ability, industry task, and the sense of self and identity, he/ she would possess resilience. However, Bandura (1988, 1994, 2008) has stated that self-efficacy is the foundation of resilience. Self-efficacy leads to perseverance and effort to overcome adversities from the perceived self-competence and positive physiological emotional reaction. In another study, Wood & Bandura (1989) has found the effect of self-efficacy on cognitive style. The resilience sense of personal efficacy is fostered when the ability is believed to be acquirable. Then, Bandura (1994) has stated that the social cognitive approach can be used to increase self-efficacy. The 4 approaches are mastery experience, modeling success, verbal encouragement, and physiological state.

Then, Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen (1984) have posited that the psychosocial factors consisting of the personal psychological factors such as self-efficacy and the social factors such as family relationship have led to the inception of resilience. Similarly, Prince-Embury et al. (2016) have proposed a 3-psychosocial model comprised of self-efficacy or sense of mastery, sense of relatedness or social relationship, and emotional reactivity. The self-efficacy or the sense of mastery leads to perceived competence in overcoming an adversity or a setback. The sense of relatedness or social relationship provides a secure attachment and a sense of support when facing an adverse situation or a failure. Finally, the emotional reactivity is the ability to regulate emotions such as stress, anxiety, anger, and sadness in adverse circumstances. The less emotional intense response means the more emotional regulation. Likewise, Rutter (1999) and Grotberg (1995) have agreed that resilience can be enhanced through psychosocial factors.

Traditionally, resilience has been applied as a solution to help late adolescent such as university students cope with adverse experience (Prince-Embury, et al., 2016). These students are facing increasing responsibilities, more academic workload, personal and academic problems, financial situation, and limited support from the family (Prince-Embury, et al., 2016; Phoolawan, et al., 2020). The recent COVID-19 pandemic and the sudden change to online learning have added more stress on university students. Finally, the low or lack of resilience during the late adolescent development can disrupt the sense of self and identity development (Grotberg, 1999). This would decrease their capability to deal with life adversities at the present and in the future. All these reasons have made resilience crucial for late adolescent university students. Moreover, the growth mindset believes that human's qualities such as ability, personality, attitude, trait, and intelligence are malleable or improvable. Individuals with growth mindset and individuals with resilience share the optimistic cognitive perception toward one's capability and the adverse situation (Wood, & Bandura, 1989; Dweck, 2017). Therefore, they feel in control of the situation.

First, First, & Houston (2018) did a study using a group counseling to enhance university student resilience. The 1-hour group counseling session led students to share and validate their adverse university experience by seeing the common thoughts and feelings, investigating the thoughts and feelings, adjusting the cognitive distortion, being aware of the coping style, and learning more coping strategies. Participants could see their own value in assisting and supporting other members. They felt empowered to face adversities and continue their relationships and support in the outside world. Another study was by Smeets, Neff, Alberts, & Peters (2014), using a 3-session group counseling which led participants to explore themselves. After completing the intervention, the findings showed an increase in

resilience factors such as self- efficacy, optimism, mindfulness, and self- compassion. Participants reported fewer negative thoughts about themselves and the adverse events, more life satisfaction, more control over their life, and feeling cared for and supported. Lastly, it helped them maintain the positive future outlook.

In term of the social relationship, the group counseling has initially been chosen as a tool to enhance the social relationship, hence strengthening resilience. With the pandemic and the sudden reinforcement of the online learning measure, the group counseling has been moved to the online channel via Google Meet. By nature, the group counseling provides a safe environment, trusting and empathic feeling, and support to members making them feel safe to share personal stories. Participants can reflect the outside reality for empathic ears, feedback, suggestion, and reflection of oneself through other members (Corey, 2016). Moreover, the dynamic of group counseling indirectly creates connections and relationships between group members (Corey, 2016).

Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the counseling program with growth mindset on university student resilience by enhancing the psychosocial factors of self- efficacy and social relationship. These factors have been recognized and researched as the bases of resilience. Moreover, this study has also incorporated a growth mindset education into the group counseling intervention. In the end, this group counseling intervention can be a tool that university administrations can utilize to support and help vulnerable students on their campuses. The research objectives were 1) to study the effect of a counseling program with growth mindset education on the university student resilience, and 2) to study the difference of resilience scores between the intervention group receiving the counseling program and the control group proceeding with daily routine with a general advice.

Research methodology

This study was a quasi-experimental study with a pretest and posttest design. The research protocol was approved by the ethical review committee for research involving human research subjects of Srinakharinwirot University. The population of this study were university students majoring in Education and Humanity and attending the psychology classes. All participants volunteered to participate in the study and had signed the consent forms. The inclusion criteria for the intervention group were students ages between 18-21 years who felt stress and anxious about the academic and/or life situation. They were willing to share personal stories via the online group counseling with the intention of reducing their stress and anxious feelings. For the control group, the inclusion criteria were students of the same age range who felt stress and anxious about the academic and/or life situation. However, they were willing to do pre and post resilience assessment in 3-4 weeks interval. There were 46 participants of which 23 participants in the intervention group and 23 in the control group. The intervention group was divided into 3 groups with 7-8 participants each.

After the recruitment, the intervention group participants met online for the pre-session to be introduced to the research team and the study, to sign the consent form, to do 3 grouping, and to do the online pre-test. On a separate meeting, the control group participants met online for the same purposes with general advice, but without the grouping activity. Then the group counseling started the week after for the next 3 weeks. The 6 sessions of group counseling were done daily for 6 days per week. Each session lasted about 90 minutes. At the end of each group counseling, participants were asked to do the post-resilience

assessment. The control group did the post resilience within 3-4 weeks interval from the first meeting.

The researcher was the facilitator of the group counseling. The facilitator applied person-centered techniques in the group counseling. The details of the 6-session group counseling intervention were shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The overview of group counseling activities

Session	Activities
1	Introduction and rapport: Answering basic personal questions and sharing pre-university expectation VS actual university experience; participants do the self-drawing for homework.
2	Self-awareness: Rating how much one knows oneself, sharing thoughts and feelings toward oneself, and reflecting on the self-drawing picture; participants name the self-drawing for homework.
3	Self-acceptance: Sharing a stressful or a setback experience, reflecting on the thoughts and feelings toward oneself at the time, what each participant wishes to have during that time; participants read a growth mindset article for homework.
4	Growth mindset: Discussing the growth mindset article, examining a personal growth mindset experience, sharing a few fixed mindset problems, and exploring possible solutions with the group.
5	Mastery experience: Sharing successful past experience in overcoming adversities and the strategies, learning other strategies and exploring options with other members; participants do the second self-drawing and name it for homework.
6	Self-insight: Reflecting on the second self-drawing and comparing it with the previous one, receiving the feedback from other participants on both pictures, and summarizing the insights about oneself from the group counseling; participants do the online post-test after the session.

This 6-session group counseling program was designed based on the person-centered theory, the social cognitive learning approach, and the growth mindset approach. The counseling program led participants from self-awareness to self-acceptance and finally to self-insight while strengthened self-efficacy through mastering experience, social modeling, social persuasion, and the knowledge of growth mindset. Lastly, the social relationship enhancement was inherent in the group counseling process.

In this study, resilience is defined as an ordinary individual's psychological capability to recover from everyday life adversities allowing the individual to function well in life tasks, where positive psychological state and emotional reaction are the indicators of resilience. The resilience assessment used in this study is the adaptation of the resilience assessment of Pontanya (2011) and Connor and Davidson Resilience Scale (2003). Pontanya's resilience assessment was based on resilience construct of Garmezy et al. (1984) with self-efficacy and social relationship as the 2 main factors. Some personal items and social items in Connor and Davidson Resilience Scale (2003) were adapted to make this resilience assessment reflect the context of the late adolescent participants. The assessment was tested with 104 university students who had a similar background as the participants in the study to ensure the reliability. There were 30 items total measuring perceived self-competence 8 items, emotional reaction 8 items, acceptance of change 7 items, and social relation 7 items. It is a self-report assessment with each item having 5-level rating scale from 1 (very untrue of me), 2 (untrue of me), 3 (not sure), 4 (true of me), and 5 (very true of me). The total reliability of this resilience assessment had the Cronbach's alpha at 0.86. All pre-test and post-test data were consolidated approximately 4 weeks after the initial pre-session meeting. The software SPSS program was used to analysis the descriptive and inferential statistics. The difference of demographic data between two groups was analyzed by Chi-square or Exact test. The independent *t*-test was utilized to analyze the resilience scores between the intervention group and the control group. While the paired sample *t*-test was utilized to compare the differences of resilience scores between the pre-intervention and the post-intervention of the intervention group. The statistical significance was set at p-value <0.05

Research results

After the recruitment process, 23 participants volunteered to be in the online group counseling. The other 23 participants were assigned to the control group. All participants were third year university students of which 37 of them were females and 9 males. The average age of total participants was 20.65 years. The detail of demographic data of two groups was shown in Table 2

Table 2 The comparison of demographic data between intervention group and control group

Demographic data	Intervention group (n=23)	Control group (n=23)	p-value*
Age (years old)			
- 20	8(34.8%)	10(43.5%)	0.877*
- 21	14(60.9%)	12(52.2%)	
- 22	1(4.3%)	1(4.3%)	
Mean±SD	20.70±0.56	20.61±0.58	
Gender			
- male	3(13.0%)	6(26.1%)	0.459*
- female	20(87.0%)	17(73.9%)	
Faculty			
- Humanities	15(65.2%)	2(8.7%)	<0.001**
- Education	8(34.8%)	21(91.3%)	

*Exact test, **Pearson Chi-square

When all resilience assessments were analyzed, the intervention group had the minimum and maximum of the pre-test scores at 86 and 125 and the post-test score at 87 and 133. For the control group, the minimum and maximum of the pre-test scores were 100 and 117 and the post-test score were 97 and 125. There were no differences of pre-test score of total resilience and other components between the intervention group and the control group (p-value <0.05).

After finished the counseling program with growth mindset education, although, both groups showed the increase in the resilience score, the mean difference increasing scores of intervention group was 9.78 (95%CI=6.29, 13.28; p-value <0.001) while the control group was 2.35 (95%CI=0.04, 4.66; p-value =0.047). However, the mean of post-test score of total resilience, self-competence, emotional reaction, and acceptance of change components in intervention group were statistical significantly higher than the control group at p-value = 0.008, 0.033, 0.004, and 0.044 respectively. The detail was shown in Table 3. It was evident that the counseling program with growth mindset education was effective in enhancing university student resilience.

Table 3 The difference of total resilience scores and its components between the intervention group and the control group.

Variables	Intervention group (n=23)	Control group (n=23)	Mean difference (95%CI)	t	p-value
	Mean ±SD.	Mean ±SD.			
Total resilience score					
-Pre-intervention	107.39±9.39	108.30±5.16	-0.91(-5.45,3.63)	-0.409	0.685
-Post-intervention	117.17±9.27	110.65±6.34	6.52(1.80,11.24)	2.785	0.008*
Resilience components					
Self-competence scores					
-Pre-intervention	30.09±2.73	30.57±2.59	-0.48(-2.06-1.10)	-0.610	0.545
-Post-intervention	32.70±3.10	30.87±2.49	1.83(0.16-3.50)	2.204	0.033*
Emotional reaction scores					
-Pre-intervention	27.78±3.61	27.00±2.49	0.78(-1.06-2.62)	0.857	0.396
-Post-intervention	31.26±2.97	28.96±2.01	2.30(0.80-3.81)	3.079	0.004*

Table 3 (continue)

Variables	Intervention group (n=23)	Control group (n=23)	Mean difference (95%CI)	t	p-value
Acceptance of change scores					
-Pre-intervention	26.09 \pm 2.71	26.78 \pm 2.58	-0.70(-2.27,0.88)	-0.892	0.377
-Post-intervention	27.83 \pm 2.27	26.30 \pm 2.69	1.52(0.04,3.00)	2.075	0.044*
Social relationship scores					
-Pre-intervention	23.43 \pm 4.17	23.96 \pm 3.67	-0.52(-2.86,1.81)	-0.451	0.655
-Post-intervention	25.39 \pm 3.27	24.52 \pm 3.10	0.87(-1.03,2.76)	0.925	0.360

*p < .05

Discussion

The study findings show that the group counseling intervention with growth mindset education has a positive effect on resilience of late adolescent university students. After receiving the group counseling, the resilience score of the intervention group is significantly higher. When compared with the control group, the intervention group also has significantly higher resilience level. Moreover, by the end of the counseling program, students reported that they felt stronger and ready to tackle any future adversity. They appeared to be more relax. They spoke about their future with more confidence and offered supports to each other after the group counseling ended. The findings are consistent with the previous studies that the resilience counseling intervention helps university students to better cope with adversities. It leads to a cognitive adjustment making students feel more satisfied with life, more in control over life, and cared for and supported. It helps them to have an optimistic outlook for the future (Smeets, et al., 2014; First, et al., 2018).

In addition to self-comprehension, the group counseling intervention provides a safe and secure place for experience sharing. Sharing personal stories and experience with other members allow participants to reflect on each other's experience and see different aspects of the experience both the positive and the negative. Participants learn from the experience of other members with a similar background. Hence, they can identify with the experience and open to suggestions and change. They are ready to apply what they have learned from others when facing similar problems, obstacles, and failures in the future. This modeling process is one of the social cognitive learning approaches that encourages self-efficacy and enhance resilience (Bandura, 1988).

Other benefits of group counseling are feedback and support. The feedback and support from other members provide participants with a more complete picture of themselves and help them realize the capability to do more and be more than what they think and feel about themselves. Moreover, they realize that they are no longer just a receiver, but they become a giver and supporter as well. Being able to provide support and suggestions to other members make them feel competent, while the receiver feels supported, understood, confident, and optimistic. Previous research and theory suggest that the sense of competence or efficacy such as providing advises and sense of relatedness such as being connected with others, are important factors in the development of resilience (Bandura, 1988, 1994; Grotberg, 1999; Prince-Embury, et al., 2016).

The sense of competence or efficacy has also been encouraged by the counseling program as well. The self-efficacy is strengthened through sharing of the past achievement and the past growth mindset experience that lead participants to overcome obstacles and become capable individuals today. Sharing stories about overcoming obstacles remind them of their capability and a sense of mastery. When participants recognize their sense of

mastery, they feel efficacious about their ability and more optimistic about the future. When participants believe in their personal efficacy, their cognitive perception on adverse situations changes as well. They perceive more control over the adverse situations and feel more optimistic about overcoming an obstacle or a problem. Rutter (1999) has referred to this as the cognitive process style. Individuals with the positive cognitive process style have the sense of control and positive coping behavior, therefore they are more resilient. The cognitive process style is an essential part of resilience development (Rutter, 1999).

Finally, the social relationship component has not been significant in this study and it may be the result of the online counseling. However, the group counseling has been beneficial during the COVID-19 pandemic under the social isolation situation. It is effective and efficient to ease and resolve common problems shared by participants. The group counseling provides a safe and secure environment for participants to share their common experience and hardship. It helps them realize that they are not the only one facing the problem. The group also provides the understanding, support, and suggestions. The understanding and support motivate participants to learn from other members' experience, try different solutions, and change. Furthermore, the nature of group counseling encourages relationship building because sharing personal stories and experiences require trust in each other. Moreover, the person-centered approach, with the belief in human's capability to solve their own problems, provides the self-insight, the understanding of self, and different perspectives on the adverse situation (Corey, 2016). Participants realize the forgotten parts of themselves, see the unrecognized abilities, and appreciate oneself for helping others. Therefore, the resilience group counseling can enhance resilience and support university students in managing life adversities or the unexpected situations such as social isolation. Despite, the shift to the online group counseling, it continues to provide the resilience enhancement benefit as well.

Conclusion

From this study, it is evident that the resilience group counseling is an effective intervention in enhancing university student resilience. The intervention aiming to promote self-efficacy and social relationship can have the positive effect on resilience. Despite the result, this study had some limitations. The first limitation was the limited diversity in the participants due to COVID-19 pandemic. Only the third-year student participants, majoring in Education & Humanity, participated in the study, therefore, it might not represent the diverse undergraduate student experience. The second limitation was the small sample size which could affect the generalization of the findings to the population. The third limitation came from the self-report assessment. By using the self-report assessment, the results depended on the personal judgement and it could be bias. The fourth limitation was no content analysis. The content analysis of the group counseling and self-drawing could reveal more information about participants. The fifth limitation was the interruption of the online group counseling due to technological problems and the uncontrollable environment problems such as the poor or no internet connection on some occasions and the interruptions by family members.

With the above limitations, there are a few suggestions for the future research. The first suggestion is that the future study should have a larger sample size with a diverse age range and educational level. The second suggestion is to include a behavioral measurement to counterbalance the bias from self-assessment measurement. The third suggestion is to do

content analysis from the group counseling and the self-drawing to gain more insight into each participant.

Finally, the result of this study has showed that the group counseling program with the growth mindset education has had the positive effect on the late adolescent university student resilience. Therefore, the university administration should consider having this counseling program available for needed or vulnerable students or apply some of the counseling activities in the student orientation or the counseling service.

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