

Full Length Research Paper

Influence of psychological training on personal and professional development and group cohesiveness among the staff of residential campus, BRAC University

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The present study aims to identify the impact of psychological training on the staff of BRAC University and how it has increased the group bonding of staff members. To see the impact, researchers conducted a series of training session with the participants over a span of one year. After the training, data were collected through interview method from the 18 participants. Besides, observation method was applied to see their group cohesiveness. By manually analyzing the data, it was found that the participants have changed themselves both personally and professionally. They have undergone remarkable changes in terms of sharing of ideas and information, empathetic attitude towards fellow mates, and pattern of communication among themselves. Analyzing the problems and managing work stress has improved than before. This training has helped them to realize the entire problem from others' frame of reference, develop collaboration within group and improve positive and holistic attitude about the workplace and their organization's goals. It can be said that apart from some limitations, this training makes the participants to develop healthy communication among the colleagues.

Key words: Psychological training, transactional analysis, psychodrama, personal and professional development, group cohesion.

INTRODUCTION

According to World Health Organization, "Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (WHO, 2014). If the person can be psychologically healthy, he or she can adjust with day to day life and also can utilize his or her full capacity. To maintain an individual's personal, social and professional

life, it is necessary to be emotionally stable person because emotional stability is a vital component in a person's life to cope and adapt with various life situation. Also, it is associated to the individual's occupational life (Bhagat et al., 2016).

Sometimes, the issue of mental health is ignored at the workplace. Poor mental health is the cause of employee turnover, increasing stress, loss of motivation and affects productivity but it has not been addressed in many

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organizations. A study showed that 49% employees were absent due to mental illness (Ohta et al., 2017). Compared to the last few decades, job security and pressure have increased all over the world which could lead to mental health problems. The recent socio-economic condition makes more people to be stressed and worried about their jobs. It is necessary to address the employees' mental health issue in the first phase, make them aware of it and be conscious of taking care of their mental health. One research shows, due to of failing to provide early intervention for their employees, Australian businesses lose 3.2 workdays per worker per year and more than \$6.5 billion each year (Haynes, 2017). In Bangladesh though there are not many reports found about the condition of workplace, it can be shown that the overall prevalence of mental disorders is between 6.5 to 31% among adults; it was much higher in urban areas than rural areas. This rate is both for psychiatric and psychogenic disorders (Hossain et al. 2014). Higher percentage of people work under stressful job conditions which draws the attention to deal with mental health issue in Bangladesh perspective. There are a lot of physical assaults as well as mental tortures which make us aware that it is high time to monitor their condition (Ahmed and Islam, 2016). However, it is necessary to make people feel good and function well to increase productivity for both the individual and the workplace. According to the British Psychological Society (2010), "Improving the psychological well-being of a workforce brings benefits for both the individual employees and the organization as a whole. Psychological well-being is a core aspect of overall well-being and is linked to physical health, longer lives and greater happiness for individual employees."

To maintain positive environment, conflict among staff or with their supervisor should be reduced, and training and workshop should be done to enhance and ensure their psychological well-being. Those trainings and workshops help to increase group bonding and productivity in workplace. Transactional Analysis and some techniques of Psychodrama are useful techniques to enhance positivity among group members as well as personal growth of a member. The theory of Transactional Analysis, developed by Eric Berne, 1958 is a theory of personality, behavior, and communication. By applying Transactional Analysis, individuals can identify the core barrier of interaction with one another. This was also applied for bringing a change in personality and these changes promote both personal and professional area (Mazzetti, 2013). On the other hand, the theory of Psychodrama, developed by Jacob Jacob L. Moreno, MD, in 1921, is a kind of psychotherapy method where an individual presents his or her life events and plays them. It is also a helpful method to accelerate group process in group setting (Blatner, 1996).

Theory of Transactional Analysis (TA) and Psychodrama are useful techniques to explore self and to

understand how people function, how they express their personality in terms of behavior. TA is a useful technique to know about self and also a systematic tool to foster personal growth and changes. It is the theory of personality which is used in different fields in our social arena, such as administration, teaching and learning, academic and professional performance, and organization employees to improve the quality of their relationship and job satisfaction in workplace; it helps a person to improve social communications and solve conflicts (Reza et al., 2018). There are some ideas which made the foundation of TA theory. In this training some of these ideas were used which go with the objectives of this training. Among them, strokes, Ego state model and Transactions were applied. The Ego state model of TA was applied because it tells us how we are structured psychologically. According to Berne, "Ego state is a consistent pattern of feeling and experience directly related to a corresponding consistent pattern of behavior". It tells that each person has three ego states which are Parent, Adult and Child. There are two basic models of ego states, the structural and the functional model. In the structural model it shows what is in each ego state and in the functional model shows how we use them (Bianchini and de Nitto, 2019). In Organizational settings communication and interaction between individuals can be improved by the awareness of own ego state model. When employees can understand their own ego state model they can raise their awareness to take action to use their adult ego state. Besides that, knowledge of transaction helps a person to keep the communication parallel and they know how to cross the communication if there is any possible argument. The analysis of stroke helps to increase job motivation. From the pattern of stroke, an individual can learn to give positive stroke rather than talking about the negative part of the individual. (Stewart and Joines, 1987)

In addition, tools from psychodrama were helpful to increase group bonding. How to take decisions in the group was learned from this technique. It enables us to intervene in the organization systems through encouraging creativity and leadership of the group members which cause great contentment among them. (Chen et al., 2013)

As these trainings outcomes are effective for human growth, communication and helpful in dealing with the group in the organizational settings, so the training was applied for the residential staff of BRAC University. The training was designed by the few components of these two theories which helped to explore and understand the dynamics of the members of the residential semester (RS) of BRAC University. BRAC University's Residential Semester on Savar campus is unique among the higher education experiences in Bangladesh. It offers a holistic curriculum based on the principle of 'experiential learning' which cultivates a broad range of soft skills and qualities to complement the theoretical contribution that students

undergo. To ensure the development process of the students, the staff and teachers work hand in hand. As the semester is entirely residential, the staff members of the university play an important role in the well-being of the students (BRAC University, n.d.). Staff members of the Residential semester work full time for the students' wellbeing where they need to maintain communication with the students and with other members of the RS. However, sometimes working in groups can be indeed challenging because of the different personalities of the team members and some personal issues individuals undergo.

To overcome the challenges, the Counseling Unit of BRAC University organized and conducted a series of training sessions with the motto of enhancing self-awareness, growth and development for RS. It was assumed that going through psychological training would assist them to create a support network and a sound board with the team member. Other members of the group could develop specific ideas for improving a difficult situation or challenge through group work. Besides, by observing how other people tackled problems and made positive changes, the individual would be able to discover a whole range of strategies to face their own concerns. These changes would ultimately help to fulfill the purpose of the RS as well as the BRAC University. Besides, this research emphasized on how it would help the employees of the organization so such sessions can be arranged on a regular basis for other employees. Moreover, it would be beneficial for the researcher to implement it in further trainings and research initiatives.

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the changes in both personal and professional lives of the staff members who took part in this training program
2. To measure the influence of these changes in their personal and professional lives through this training.
3. To implement the impact of psychological training on group cohesiveness.

METHODOLOGY

The sample of the research was based on purposive sampling method. The participants of this research were the eighteen staff members of RS who took part in the training program/ group therapy. Among them 13 were males and 4 were females. The age group of the participants was in between 24 to 44. They all have bachelor and post graduate degrees. They have work experience of 1 to 11 years.

A series of training was designed by applying some tools from Psychodrama and the theory of Transactional Analysis. Both techniques were intended to explore and understand the dynamics of the members of the RS as well as to promote their personal and professional areas. At the same time, the target was to enhance group bonding with the other members and develop self-

awareness among them.

The contents we have chosen for the training program was covered by the seven training sessions. Training was combined with transactional analysis and psychodrama method. The contents covered the rapport buildup of the group member, personal growth and enhance communication with each other which suitably fit with seven sessions. Table 1 gives the short summary of the session.

After the session, interview method was used where open ended questions were asked about the training progress and measured the influence of the changes in their personal and professional lives and how it has impacted their group work. The researcher recorded the interviews which were later used for analysis.

The group cohesiveness was also measured by a neutral observer. The participants were assigned to a group task and the observer measured some contents which will show their group cohesiveness through the checklist. The contents of the checklist are whether they can agree on plan, work promptly, and share responsibilities with others or not. Also showing respect to each other, listening to others' opinion and taking mutual decision, appreciating each other, handling stressful situation were measured. Other things in the checklist include displaying assertiveness, evaluating others in a positive way, motivating others and asking for help and taking collaborative decisions. The observer measured these entire components in four areas to understand the group cohesiveness while the participants were engaged in the group works. The measured areas are: all members, most members, some members, and few members.

The trainers who gave the training in Transactional Analysis and Psychodrama have training in Transactional Analysis and Psychodrama. The trainer was supervised by the supervisor about the module and training program.

RESULTS

The results of the present study are divided into three categories as shown Figure 1:

Personal changes:

Question: How have the contents and learning from this training helped you to bring changes in your personal life?

How have these changes created impact in your life?

The interview data and observation of the participants can be clustered in four areas where they saw marked personal changes in their family with family members and friends.

Increased sharing: The participants opined that they could share their feelings with others more than before which helped them to improve their relationship with their family members and friends. As a result, sharing emotions with close ones made them feel relieved and relaxed.

"I have improved communication with my wife. I communicate with her over phone four times in a day. I feel much relieved than before".

"Now I can understand that giving quality time to my family members is very important. I can share my feelings with others".

Empathetic understanding: Almost all the participants reported that this training assisted them to understand others' feelings and they felt empathetic towards others. From the aspect of Transactional Analysis theory, they

Table 1: Training Session

Sessions	Topics
Session 1	Session 1- Opening and Social capital Session 2- Introduction and Expectation using Psychodrama method Session 3- Exploring self -strength Session 4- Positive affirmation to self and each other- stroke practice (Transactional Analysis)
Session 2	Session 1- Review and Reflection of Day 1 Session 2- Loco gram to increase group bonding (Psychodrama) Session 3- Role reverses for empathetic understanding (Psychodrama) Session 4- Giving Stroke (Transactional Analysis)
Session 3	Session 1- Review and Reflection of Day 2 Session 2- self journey exercise to explore self through Ego state (Transactional Analysis) Session 3- Understanding self through Ego state (Transactional Analysis) Session 4- Role play (Psychodrama)
Session 4	Session 1- Review and Reflection of Day 3 Session 2- Communication (Transactional Analysis) Session 3- Rules of Communication (Transactional Analysis) Session 4- Meditation
Session 5	Session 1- Review and Reflection of Day 4 Session 2- Asana and Pranayama, Relaxation and Meditation (Relaxation techniques) Session 3- Stroke Economy (Transactional Analysis)
Session 6	Session 1- Review and Reflection of Day 5 Session 2- Practicing stroke economy (Transactional Analysis) Session 3- Closing the session
Session 7	Review of all the session

stated that they could use Positive Nurturing Parent ego state to help them understand their partners' feelings, prioritize others' feelings and communicate by using Nurturing Parent ego state".

"After doing this training, I can understand others' feelings and thoughts better than before".

"Now I try to understand others' problems by considering their own viewpoints. Besides, now I first listen to my family members before taking a decision".

Changes in communication: Participants observed and shared their significant changes in communication during the one year period of the training program. The changes are like; they could say "No" assertively. They have been giving quality time to their children and family members. Moreover, they said that they could distinguish between

their professional and personal lives much better.

"Before delivering speech to others, I think about the content now. I do not make comments to others if I do not know about the event in detail. This realization helped me to keep a stable relationship with my family members and friends".

"In my family, now I take any important decisions by using my Adult Ego state. It helped me to create a healthy environment in my family. I can say 'no' whenever necessary. Besides that facilitator's facilitation, discussion about the topic in details has helped me to become aware about their communication to improve relationship with my family members."

Appreciate others' positive qualities: Another remarkable change was they had developed family members. They

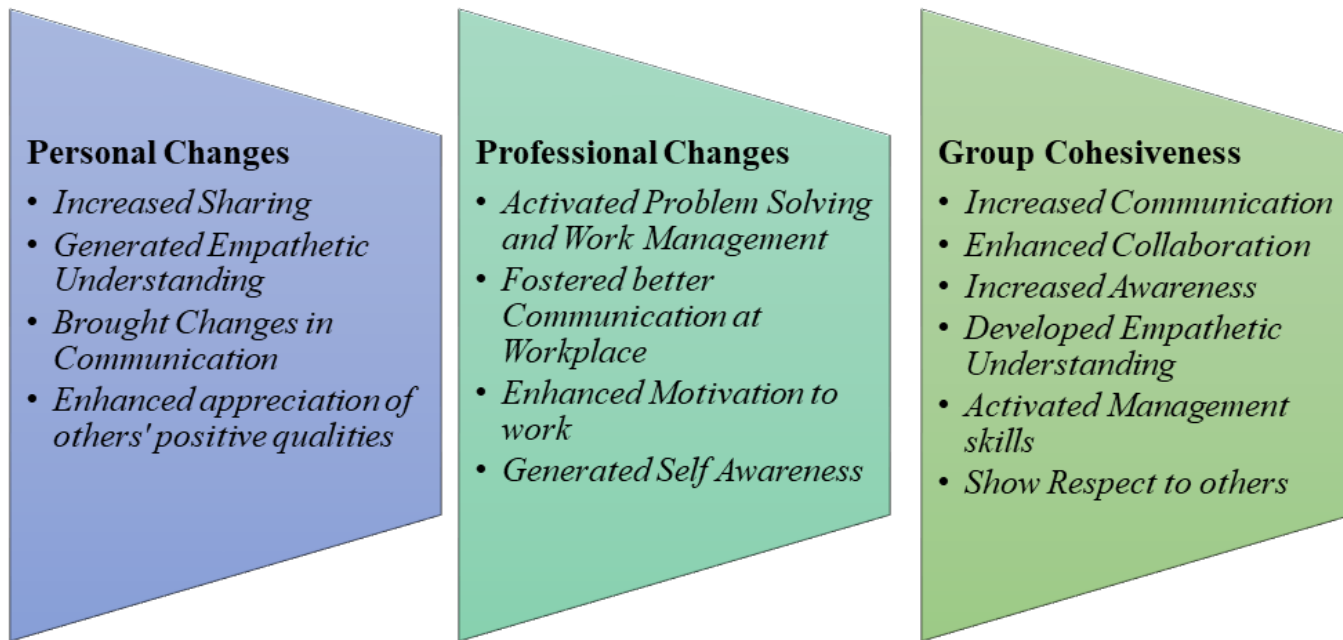


Figure 1. Overall Changes after Training

Table 2. Areas of personal changes after doing this training

Areas of personal changes	
<p>Increased sharing</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing quality time 2. Developing sharing feelings 3. Improving communication 4. Improving relationship 	<p>Empathetic understanding</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding others' thoughts and feelings 2. Realizing others' viewpoint
<p>Brought change in communication</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resolving conflict 2. Increasing Parenting skill 3. Being Conscious about own words 4. Changing communication style with family members 	<p>Enhanced the ability to Appreciate</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Positive Qualities of Self and Others 2. Knowing about unconditional positive stroke 3. Increasing self-stroke 4. Strengthening positive quality 5. Appreciating others

said that giving recognition enhanced their family bonding and intimacy as well as in their relationship. *"I give unconditional positive stroke (recognition) to my family members and now she also gives me positive stroke. It has helped us to improve our relationship and intimacy than before"*.

"After this training, I realized that I am a happy human being and I am thankful to God. I used to self-stroking me this way. When I think about my positive qualities, I also do self-stroking myself for my patience."

The significant area of changes has been mentioned in Table 2.

Professional Changes: Question: How have the contents

and learning from this training helped you to bring changes in your personal life?

How have these changes created impact on your life and workplace?

The interview data and observation of the participants can be clustered in two areas where they saw marked personal changes in their family with family members and friends.

Problem analysis and work management: There was significant change found from the participants' sharing, which was to identify and clarify the source of problems and then find out the solution. Besides that, they now could handle workloads in any stressful situation and

Table 3. Areas of professional changes after doing this training

Professional changes	
<p>Problem analysis and work management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identifying problem •Clarifying problem by using Adult Ego State •Taking prompt decision •Understanding others frame of reference •Stopping argument and improving thinking before saying 	<p>Communication in workplace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Developing communication skill by shifting Ego States •Improving Adult-Adult communication. •Enhancing knowledge about Communication skills and Personality Pattern •Increasing assertiveness •Improving listening skills •Managing workload in stressful situation •Improving interaction and developing intimacy
<p>Motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Widening the level of satisfaction •Expanding inspiration towards my workplace •Inflating motivation towards the job •Achieving success in work •Improving realization about the importance of job responsibilities 	<p>Self-awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Being aware about my emotion- anger and managing it •Growing empathy towards others' feelings •Widening respect to colleagues and organization •Increasing sharing •Understanding self and others' personality pattern •Progressing realization about self-care •Achieving ability to set boundary between personal and professional life
<p>Appreciation Giving, receiving and accepting positive stroke (Recognition) at the workplace</p>	

work collaboratively at work.

"I try to understand the students' frame of reference and their perspectives. As a result, I can handle students more effectively and understand their needs."

"I have decided to distribute my works with my colleagues who have become helpful for me to complete our official tasks smoothly and collaboratively."

"Previously, I used to debate with my colleagues about few illogical issues. Now, I have realized the usefulness of it and have stopped arguing. I can think before saying anything to others."

Communication in the workplace: The participants shared that now they could communicate with others in healthy ways, like dealing with their supervisors by responding from Adult ego state, share and express feelings with colleagues, they could think before saying anything to others, improved behavior style with students.

"Now I can use proper way of communication according to the theory of Transactional Analysis and can apply that. My intimacy with my colleagues at the workplace is developing day by day."

"My dealing with my boss has become comfortable after doing this workshop. When my boss gives feedback to me, I do not reply quickly. I think about the feedback and communicate with the boss later by using Adult ego state."

Motivation: The participants shared that their motivation

in workplace has improved. They can enjoy their success and their work rate has increased which is expressed through the following statements.

"I feel Inspiration towards my workplace more than before."

"My success in work has been increasing."

Self-awareness: Their self-awareness has increased through their understanding of controlling emotion and behavior.

"I can understand my colleagues with my empathy and feel their situation. I also try to understand others' feelings, moods as well and then discuss about any issues. My empathy has developed toward others."

"I was introvert in nature. I could not share my feelings with others. Now I can share my feelings with my colleagues. Whatever I think, I can express."

Appreciation: Giving and receiving stroke has increased in the workplace situation. Thus relationship with colleagues has improved and it has increased their positivity.

"Now I can give strokes to my boss which is a significant change in me and also I can give positive stroke to my colleagues as well."

"Stroking was helpful for my professional and personal life."

The overall changes are given Table 3.

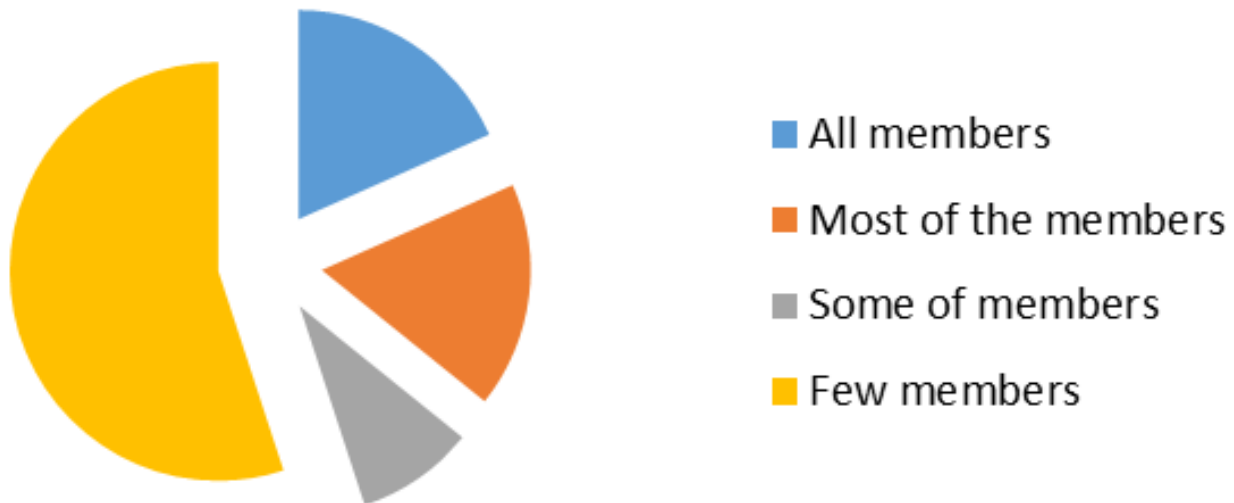


Figure 2. Participants involvement in group work. *All members' involvement- 40%; *Most of the members' involvement- 38%; *Some of the members' involvement- 20%; *Few of the members' involvement- 2%;

Group Cohesiveness

Question: How did this training help you to work in a group?

The participants informed that this training helped them to realize the problems from others' frame of reference develop collaboration within the group, develop positive and holistic attitude about the workplace and organizations goals, increase problem solving ability and sharing. In addition to that, their communication style changed a lot in positive manners which have created great impact to enhance their potentiality and motivation toward the organization. Their dropout from the organization has decreased and the team spirit has increased. They have been willing to adjust with their colleagues and can manage their emotions like stress, anger, performance anxiety much better than before. From the theory of Transactional Analysis, they have learnt to apply shifting Ego States, Stroke Economy, Giving Stroke (Recognition), Rules of Transaction Table 4.

From the checklist, the observer find out the level of involvement of the participant in the group activity and the following information was obtained Figure 2.

From the observer's view point it has also come out that all of the members involved in group work is high, which is 40%. That means most of the group members work in their group.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the research showed that the psychological training has brought positive changes in both personal and professional lives of the participants.

Besides, their working ability within the group has also significantly increased after the training. Moreover, participants' motivation towards the organization is enhanced which decreased their dropout rate from residential campus of BRAC University.

In personal level, it was found that remarkable changes in different areas, such as increase of sharing, empathetic understanding, and changes in communication, appreciates positive qualities of self and others and increase self-care etc have occurred.

Participants' empathetic understanding has developed from role reverses activity from the Approach of Psychodrama. They could perceive themselves, others and environment in a more positive way than before which has brought constructive changes in their communication styles. Besides, motivational words of the facilitators have helped them to become aware about their self-care both in physiological and psychological areas.

It is seen from the participants' reflection that tools from Transactional Analysis have helped them to bring some changes. Transactional analysis has helped them to face challenging and conflicting situations. Changing in ego state could help them cope with the conflicting situations with other people in the society. The study also showed that some techniques of TA, like ego state, have helped to understand the individuals' consistent pattern of feelings and behavior and also the root of these behaviors. It has helped one to realize how other persons think about him or her, and thus one could understand where to change. From Transactional Analysis, both the tools of types of transaction and rules of communication have helped them to understand their own communication style as well as others. This has helped them to know how to communicate which would lead to healthy patterns of communication (Stewart and Joines, 1987).

Table 4. Changing in group behavior.

Areas of changing in group behavior	
<p>Increasing communication</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adult –Adult communication increased in the group. 2. Broadening positive communication skills with group 3. Explaining self-limitation to other group member confidently 4. Applying Rules of communication and Types of transaction within group 	<p>Enhancement collaboration</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expanding collaboration 2. Cooperating with colleagues 3. Broadening communication 4. Creating supporting environment
<p>Awareness increase</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consciously practicing Stroke (appreciation) 2. Being responsive to cooperate colleagues and in collaboration 3. Being aware about the qualities of other members 4. Collaborating to achieve holistic success 	<p>Empathetic understanding</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing understanding others problems 2. Developing mindful listening abilities
<p>Working ability/motivation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expanding positive energy towards job 2. Developing adjustment skill 3. Taking responsibility 4. Increasing team spirit 5. Increasing adjustment ability in group 6. Increasing motivation of togetherness 	<p>Management skills/awareness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being aware of time management 2. Maintaining chain of command 3. Handling students appropriately 4. Taking right decisions 5. Involving in group activity, team work, problem solving
<p>Showing respect</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Giving priority to colleagues and students 2. Developing non-judgmental attitude 3. Taking initiative to share feelings 	

Self-awareness regarding emotion and behavior has also helped them to reflect on their overall personalities. Another significant finding is that they learn to appreciate each other. They have started to appreciate their self, colleges, students' positive qualities and accept others' appreciation willingly. It was found that learning about stroke could be a useful strategy to break the obstacles between two persons' communications and help them increase positive strength about self and others (Stewart and Joines, 1987).

In addition, this research revealed that, some of the strategies did help the participants resolve their professional conflicts and bring positive changes in the working environments of the residential campus. After this training, the participants analyzed the source of the conflict and started to take decision about their tasks management profoundly which they could not do before. Besides, communication in work place, motivation towards colleagues and the organization has helped them to create supportive environments at residential campus.

The most remarkable findings were their ability to develop group cohesiveness among themselves, members of the residential campus. In the interviews, participants shared that their communication within the group, collaboration with others, awareness about self

and others, empathetic understanding, working ability and motivation, management skills and showing respect have vastly increased. All these issues have improved their group cohesiveness.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to bring changes in both professional and personal lives of the staff and dorm supervisors at the residential campus of the BRAC University. Besides, it helped to enhance the group cohesiveness and empathetic transparent communication among themselves. From the interview data, it was found that the participants' professional and personal lives have undergone changes in few significant areas. As a result, their frame of reference, thinking pattern, behavioral responses have changed tremendously. The impact of the study was to develop healthy communication among the colleagues, to create collaboration in their work, to improve sharing and intimacy, quality of work, productivity, manage their stress and other emotions in healthy ways.

In future, the researcher can apply this research on other faculty members and staff group to improve their relationship. Besides, this data can be successfully used

to develop further training programs to enhance productivity and healthy environment in any professional setting.

Limitation

The limitation of the study was that, there was a lack of questionnaire and a viva session. Moreover, quantitative research can be done as a further extension of this research. This program also needs follow up sessions which would help participants to resolve and find out new ways of communication strategies.

Recommendation

Since this study was done with small sample, it is recommended to conduct more researches with larger population so that the outcome of the research can have strong reliability and validity and the results can be generalized. Comparative studies can be done to see whether there is any interest for counseling service and mental health support to improve the relationship and group cohesiveness.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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