The effect of Humanities Education Program on Self-esteem Life Satisfaction of Korea’s Elderly

Yun-Jeong Kim¹, Hyeo-Kyung Choi²

¹Dept. of the Elderly Welfare, Hanseo University
46, Hanseo1-ro, haemi-myun, Seosan-si, 356-706, KOREA
twoyun21@hanmail.net
²Division of Consumer Studies, Ewha Womans University, Seoul 120-750 Korea

Abstract. This study was conducted between May and June 2015 at the six senior welfare centers in Chungnam Province, South Korea, to evaluate the effects of a humanities education program on the self-esteem and life satisfaction of the elderly. First, the humanities education program can be regarded as having positively affected the experimental group’s self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Keywords: Humanities education program, self-esteem, life satisfaction, Korean elderly, senior welfare center

1 Introduction

Lifelong education is an active process of growth, restoration, and reconstruction. The learning achieved in adult education is a whole-life process by which the unified and holistic changes in a learner’s experience are obtained internally. The foundation of many types of learning requires an existential and reflective understanding of human beings, including understanding ourselves, as much as perceptions of the world. The programs whose main curricula include courses with humanity at their center, such as humanism, human rights, and humanities fill the core of adult education[1-3].

Therefore, these education programs are expected to increase the elderly’s self-esteem and their levels of life satisfaction, and, correspondingly, humanities education programs targeted at the elderly were launched. For instance, in 2009, an education program was carried out at the Seoul City Senior Welfare Center, funded by Seoul City[4], and today in 2015, programs are underway at senior welfare centers across the nation, with the Senior Welfare Center Association at the core of the movement, that are funded by the Community Chest of Korea. However, very few empirical studies have investigated the effectiveness of humanities education programs. In sum, the effectiveness of humanities education programs has been proven for different groups, but very few studies have looked at their effects among the elderly.

In aging Korean society, it is necessary to develop humanities education programs for seniors and to evaluate their effectiveness in order to change the distorted images of the elderly. The aim is to enhance their abilities so that they can live among us as productive “senior citizens” rather than as “just old people.” In line with this, this study
aimed to implement a humanities education program for the elderly and to evaluate both its effectiveness and the participants’ satisfaction with the program.

2 Organization of the Program

2.1 Program Characteristics and Participants

The first six weeks of the program, of a total of 12 weeks, were funded by the Community Chest of Korea as a senior citizens training program. As a joint project among the eight provinces nationwide, this study recruited from the six senior welfare centers in Chungnam Province and used a pre- and post-program questionnaire survey.

The experimental group comprised 35 elders who completed both pre- and post-intervention questionnaires after the first six weeks of the program. The control group consisted of 58 elders who were in different programs at the same senior welfare centers as those in the experimental group, and they also answered both questionnaires.

2.2 Program Objectives

Program Objectives
To increase self-esteem and life satisfaction in the elderly through a humanities education program.

2.3 Program Development and Contents

This program consists of six sessions of humanities education and six sessions of suicide prevention education. The study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the humanities program, which was developed, reviewed, and modified in consultation with professors who specialized in seniors’ welfare and with the staffs at the senior centers.

The first session, quality education for seniors, focused on the virtue and knowledge required for the elderly in an aging Korean society. The second session, successful aging, looked at the cognitive changes in old age and Baltes’ SOC theory, applying the theory to the participants’ real-world abilities. The third session, leadership education, used leadership theory to present life as a leader in old age. The fourth session, social participation, considered leisure, volunteering, and education in old age. The fifth session, diagnosis of personalities, aimed to help the participants understand their own personalities and preferences through MMP or art therapy. The last session, interpersonal relationship education for a successful old age, focused on interpersonal relationships—e.g., husband and wife, adult children and parents, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law—and how to maintain positive relationships.
3 Program Evaluation Instrument

Self-esteem was measured using Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale, a brief, widely used 10-item scale [5] that rates each item on a five-point Likert-type scale; a higher score indicates greater self-esteem. The pre-intervention Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was .729, and the post-program alpha was .658.

Life satisfaction was measured using the Diener Satisfaction with Life Scale [6], a scale of five items that are also rated on a five-point Likert-type scale. The pre-program Cronbach’s alpha was .800, and the post-program alpha was .846.

4 Results

4.1 Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Humanities Education Program

Once homogeneity was verified (no table), a paired t-Test was carried out to examine the effectiveness of the humanities education program. Above all, those in the experimental group showed improved self-esteem and life satisfaction after participation in the program. In contrast, there were no meaningful differences in either self-esteem or life satisfaction in the control group, and in fact, the average values for both decreased for this group. Thus, a positive effect of this humanities education program on the self-esteem and life satisfaction of the elderly was demonstrated (Table 1, Figure 1, Figure 2).

Table 1: Effectiveness of the Humanities Education Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M(SD)</td>
<td>Paired t-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>3.25(.41)</td>
<td>-2.494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>3.47(.43)</td>
<td>-2.494</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>3.62(.47)</td>
<td>-2.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>3.83(.49)</td>
<td>-2.142</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P<.05

5 Discussion

Study outcomes can be summed up as follows.
First, whereas those in the experimental group showed increased self-esteem and life satisfaction after participation in the program, their counterparts in the control group showed no meaningful differences in either category. Consequently, the humanities
education program can be regarded as having positively affected the experimental group’s self-esteem and life satisfaction. Few studies have assessed the effectiveness of humanities education programs for the elderly even though there has been an argument that humanities education can have positive effects such as increased self-esteem[3][4], enhanced interpersonal skills[8], and motivation to pursue new lives[3]. Against this background, this study demonstrated that humanities education is suitable for the elderly by verifying that a humanities education program improved their self-esteem and life satisfaction.

References