

Mental Health & Human Resilience

July 14-15, 2016 Cologne, Germany

A pilot study of positive psychotherapy in Ethiopian immigrants in Israel

Rachel Bachner-Melman and Rafi Youngmann
Ruppin Academic Center, Israel

The emerging field of positive psychology (PP) focuses on positive experiences, cognitions, affect and attributes and proposes short interventions to foster them. Over the past twenty years, PP research has evaluated the effectiveness of Positive Psychotherapy (PPT) in clinical and non-clinical populations, but not investigated the feasibility of this approach in immigrant populations, especially those from different cultural backgrounds from PP's founders. The aims of this study were: To examine the feasibility of a group PPT protocol for Ethiopian immigrants in Israel; to adapt the tools presented in the protocol to the culture of the participants; and to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. Fourteen Ethiopian immigrants, aged 30-50, registered in an academic training program participated in the study. They were divided into two groups, each receiving six sessions of PPT. Transcripts of the sessions were recorded and analyzed. Two major themes emerged: A hybrid Jewish Ethiopian-Israeli identity and Tikkun (repair/rectification) of experiences with discrimination & exclusion. Several cultural adaptations were made to the PPT protocol, for example the adoption of less written and more oral tasks. Participants saw great potential for integrating aspects of PP into their community work with parents and families. Noting the positive alongside the negative can give meaning to past difficulties and increase post-immigration well-being and PP can encourage emotional expression that is strongly inhibited in Ethiopian culture. Although questionnaires evoked significant resistance, qualitative assessments of the PPT support the feasibility and effectiveness of PP in this population.

Biography

Rachel Bachner-Melman is a Clinical Psychologist specializing in the research and treatment of eating disorders, other psychopathology and positive psychology. She is a Senior Lecturer in the MA Clinical Psychology Programs of the Ruppin Academic Center and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She has published over sixty articles and book chapters and is active in the leadership of the Academy for Eating Disorders and the Israel Association for Eating Disorders, of which she is President Elect.

rachel.bachner@mail.huji.ac.il

Notes: