Writing the feelings: Emotional maturity and thoughts improvement among students through journal writing

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study was to check the effect of journal writing on emotional maturity and negative thoughts. This study was quasi-experimental in nature, for this study, a sample of early adulthood (age 17 to 25) was taken. Individuals were selected from the campus of Lovely Professional University. Out of 40 participants, 20 were in experimental group and 20 were taken in control group. In this study, free style journal writing was used as an intervention. To assess the emotional maturity of subjects Emotional Maturity scale developed by Dr. Yashvir Singh and Dr. Mahesh Bhargava was use. And to measure the negative thoughts, Automatic Thoughts questionnaire developed by Philip C. Kendall and Steven D. Hollon was applied. The data were analyzed by the Paired Sample t-test. Writing practitioners report reduction in automatic negative thoughts and improvement in emotional maturity. Analysis of the study reveals the significant difference between writing practitioners and non- practitioners' group. The study clearly shows that journal writing improves emotional maturity and reduces automatic negative thoughts.

Key Words: *Emotional Maturity, Thoughts, Journal Writing.*

Introduction

Journal writing is a tool to personal growth and goal achievement technique. It is a mode to context with dreams.Journalwriting is a state where mental creation happens. Achieving highly specific goals becomes predictable because when idea quickly becomes reality, it continuously growing loop the confidence. It is a record of own thought, insights and inspiration, because while writing we begin to think deeply about our own insight and ideas and where we strategies them and plan the execution of those insights and ideas. It makes the thoughts more flexible, clear and crystallized insight and ideas. Gratefully knowing the outside characteristic playing a role and helps in strategic formulation to convert thoughts into reality.

***Pennebaker and befall* (1986),** examines the benefits of writing emotional expression. This study helps them to gain insight, physical and psychological health benefits. It allows the participant to express their emotion and gain catharsis. More positive words in writing linked to greater health improvement. In consideration to negative emotion words, there is a curvilinear path. Participant who use moderate amount of negative emotion words were least likely to benefits from writing.

In day to day life, most people are addicted to technology and work. Hence, psychological researches are finding the importance of psychologically detaching from work on daily basis. Only those who truly detach-mentally, emotionally and physically re-attached when they start working again. So, when to get away from busy life and allow some time to reset. Try to writing journal because it helps in rephrasing thoughts and gives a new view point to resolve different problems. When you start writing about positive emotions, you are going to spend next few hours diving deep into planning, visualizing, learning and recovery. While writing you feels a position of self-confidence, hope and expectation. This mental circumstance determines the quality and depth of ideas and emotions you experience while writing. It makes the thoughts and activities more powerful than earlier, while writing about ideas, you will get a tone of creative break thoughts that will enables you to do amazing work.

Journaling and reflective writing lets in you to be sharing in to your very own mind and emotions and be in a better position to control and cope with stress. It is a safe, self-directed space to explicit and unravel emotions and facilitates decide whilst and a way to specific feelings past journaling and reflective writing. Studies say that all alternate start right here with self-consciousness. Journaling or writing reflectively offers you a better degree of self-recognition and know-how of your strengths and weaknesses.

Two of the principle kinds of journal writing which are used for writing or innovative writing are (1) Freestyle Journaling and (2) Structured or Guided Format Journaling

Freestyle Journaling: Is wherein you operate a clean writing journal, notebook or sketchbook to document your journal entries. Whether you use journal writing prompts or pick your own subject matter for the day. You basically exercise your creativity through allowing your mind to breeze freely out of your mind and onto the page.

Structured or Guided Format Journaling: Includes recording records, mind, or ideas within a chain of fill-in-the clean type journal entries. You fill the responses to a variety of questions, regularity related to one topic or season of existence.

Estering, Abate, Murray, and Pennebaker (1999) defined in empirical foundation for psychotherapy and writing interventions: mental and physical health outcomes that in psychotherapy the activity of writing increases alone and conjunctionally as the year passed. This research can be summarizing the writing efficacy about previous disturbing events on physical and mental health outcomes. Research demonstrates that writing about own thoughts and feelings can be mentally and physically beneficial. It can improve emotional maturity as well. Studies found that therapeutic outcomes would also be determined by written disclosure. Cooper et al. (2012) is a meta-analysis type of study in which results of Pennebaker's studies were analyzed. The result of Pennebaker's (1993) study the impact of writing or physical and mental health on undergraduate college students. The study shows significant results that writing can positively affect mental and physical health. In the revised model of Pennebaker (1997) study, there were also positive outcomes of writing on depressive patients. After the analyzes of both the studies it was found that writing may be an effective technique in rehabilitation and therapy of people suffering with depression.

Thought is a covert symbolic response to stimuli that can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Thinking or thought deemed to mediate between inner mental processing and outer stimuli. Most of the thoughts are just reflection of your emotion, feeling or ideas that you don't choose. Also, we are more inclined to engage more deeply with certain emotions as a result our mind starts producing negative thoughts. Thought processing is a cognitive activity which involves any of the mental procedure like part interpretation, remembering, imagining, problem solving, reasoning and decision making. Studies found that there is unconscious brain process work behind for experiencing a conscious thought.

Kovac and Range (2002) mentioned in their study "does writing about suicidal thoughts and feelings reduce them?" writing effects on reduction of depression or suicidal thoughts. They took the sample of 121 undergraduate students. They were divided into 3 groups. Participants were asked to write on 4 days for 20 minutes over 2 weeks. They were assigned to write and rewrite their traumatic events and drastic emotions, or to about gentle topics. Through this study researcher found that all the groups were similar on depression and suicidality but they were reported lesser automatic negative thoughts, with the participants who wrote about traumatic emotions, over the period of 2 weeks. The study revealed that, in writing intervention, suicidal and depressive thoughts may be more impervious in comparison to physical health.

Our mind state has a specific method or flavor based largely on the types of thoughts we think. Thoughts are the outcome of thinking. If you see the thoughts of a depressed people, you would catch at least one discouraging thought afterward others. They regret, when they look glimpse of their past. When they look at future, they become anxious and permissive.

Steppen (1997) investigated expressive writing moderated the relation between depressive symptoms and intrusive thoughts. The study examines that whether reducing intrusive thoughts and desensitizing can helps people to cope with emotional adaptation to stressful and drastic events. Participants who showed depressive symptoms asked to write about theirwarm/deepest thoughts and emotions about their exams. He found that frequency of intrusive thoughts cannot be affected by expressive writing but it can moderate the impact of intrusive thoughts on depressive symptoms.

In the present era, something is often unsatisfactory. The insight or outlook by which they are used to see themselves, others and the universe has a dark grayness to it. They are adversity from automatic negative thought. These thoughts are cheerless, clouded, ironic, sarcastic and complaining. That just seems to keep coming and troubling them again and again. The automatic negative thoughts can keep people depressed and dejected, which have a complex effect on their lives. They people already convince themselves that they cannot perform certain kind of job. This type of thinking limits a person to enjoy his or her life. They people mostly avoid that kind of work which makes them feel uncomfortable. Pennebaker (1993) mentioned in his study "putting stress into words: health, linguistic and therapeutic implication" about the effect of writing on health and therapeutic implication. After analyzing the result, it was found that subjects who wrote more about negative emotions instead of positive emotion words were show higher improvement in health. Evidences of this study also seen in specific link between word production and immediate nervous system activity. It was concluded from the study that expression of negative emotions in writing works as a therapeutic technique.

Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs) have an illogical good judgment. By bringing them into the open and inspecting them on a conscious stage, you could see for yourself how little experience it clearly makes to think those sorts of matters to yourself. You take lower back manage over your personal life instead of leaving your destiny to hyperactive limbic conditioned poor thought styles.

EMOTIONAL MATURITY

Smithson (1974) defines, "Emotional Maturity is a process in which the personality is continuously striving for greater Sense of emotional health, both intra- psychically and intra-personally."

Emotional maturity is referred to as how good you are able to react to situations, control or command your emotions and show them properly in an adoptable manner when dealing with someone. Emotional maturity means to control our emotions, instead of allowing our emotions to handle us. That also doesn't mean to hide or repress our emotions, thought processing. There are many ways toreduce their intensity like muscle relaxation, writing, guided imagery and other relaxation tool.

Emotional maturity is highly required to lead an effective and better life for an individual. It is the need of time to study the emotional maturity of children as to smooth their normal lives. In the present scenario, students, additionally their harsh life, are facing amplify difficulty because of high degree of competition, parental expectation, relationship issues, and so on. These difficulties lead to psychosomatic problems in their life such as tension, anxiety, frustration and emotional upset. Emotions are high impelling forces through the life span of human affecting aspiration, thoughts and action of a person.

Duncan, Thomson, and Johal (2002) conducted a study on writing emotional expression and wellbeing: results from a home-based study to looks for effect of writing on emotional maturity. The subject of their study includes 47 male and 99 female psychology students. The participants were classified into 3 groups the first emotive writing group were asked to write for 3 days about their pre-assigned superficial topics. Emotional expression writing group were asked to write about the previous undisclosed personal and emotional events for 3 days and the control group did not write. The study found that written emotional expressions were more allied with short term negative physical health effects and less considerable to long term mental health benefits.

Pennebaker (1997) in his study "Writing about emotional experiences as a therapeutic process" commence that writing aboutemotional experiences demonstrate substantialphysical and mental health improvement. That helps in better prediction of health implications for theory and treatment. The study concluded that writing about emotional experiences positively changes cognitive and linguistic processes.

Emotions are top mark motivating forces during the period of human existence; affecting theaspirations, goals, actions and mind of man and woman. Thus, necessitating, the rationale to comprehend the importance of values and feelings which make a contribution substantially in the improvement of an influential personality. Emotions are vital in every level of lifestyles, but they play the most position for the duration of the formative year length. Teens reach cognitive maturity a way more quickly than they reach emotional maturity in line with new research that tested teens' development (John, 2009).

Negative thoughts, inaccurate beliefs and ideas are the factors which highly affect this domain of personality within an individual. Emotional maturity is ansignificantphase in development and growth of a human being. It is an effective determinant of personality.

The relationship between emotional maturity, thoughts and journal writing has been the focus of attention of many researchers. To attain success and happiness in life, emotional maturity is a vital component. It makes a person able to take their own decisions, determines god social adjustments, in their extent they are said to be emotionally mature.

Baikie and Wilhelm (2005) studied the positive effects of writing on emotional and bodily health. Participants who wrote about stressful, traumatic and their emotional events on 3–5 times in a week for 15- 20 minutes, followed expressive writing pattern. Those who did so usually have significantly better mental and physical health outcomes in comparison to the participant who wrote about impartial issues. So, this study suggested that writing can be used as a healing method for patients with psychological problems.

Objectives

Ongoing research study begins with these objectives:

1. To ascertain the effect of journal writing on emotional maturity.
2. To investigate the effect of journal writing on thoughts improvement.

Hypotheses

In consideration of review of related literature and trends that emerged, the following hypotheses were generated:

1. There would be no effect of journal writing on emotional maturity.
2. There would be no effect of journal writing on thoughts improvement.

Scope of the study

This study is helping in finding out the benefits of journal writing to minimize or to deal with negative automatic thoughts and to enhance the emotional maturity in young generation. Journal writing provides the insight about the emotions, feelings and behavior people have related to the events, which helps them in reprocessing them in a positive way.

Research Methodology

Participants

The total number of participants taken was 40 students with the help of convenient sampling. Participants has divided into experimental (N=20) and controlled group(N=20). The age limit is of 17 to 25 years students. Data collection process done within the campus of lovely professional university and students has taken as sample.

Psychological Tools

Emotional maturity scale (developed by Dr. Yashvir Singh and Dr. Mahesh Bhargava. This scale consists of 48 statements and is divided into 5 categories- emotional maturity, emotional progression, social adjustment, personal integration, independence. The test-retest reliability of this scale is 0.75. The validity of the scale is 0.64).

Negative automatic thoughts scale. (This scale is developed by Philip C. Kendall and Steven D. Hollon). This ATQ consists of 30 statements that measure the frequency of automatic negative thoughts. The internal consistency of this instrument with alpha coefficient is .97. The items are significantly discriminated depressed from non-depressed participants. Has good concurrent validity, correlating with 2 measures of depression, the Back-Depression Inventory and the MMPI depression scale.

Statistical Techniques

1. Data will be analyzed by using following statistical technique;
2. Paired Sample t-test.
3. Descriptive statistics such as mean and frequency was also computed.

Results

Table 1: *Differences in pre-test and post-test scores of Emotional Maturity in Writing task in Experimental Group*

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value
Pre-Emotional maturity	20	123	33.45	19	3.43	0.003
Post-Emotional maturity	20	102.6	31.77			

Table 2: *Differences in pre-test and post-test scores of Automatic Negative Thoughts in Writing task in Experimental Group*

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value
Pre-ATQ	20	59.35	21.27	19	2.86	0.010
Post-ATQ	20	50.75	18.45			

Table 3: *Differences in pre-test and post-test scores of Emotional Maturity in Control Group*

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value
Pre-Emotional maturity	20	106.05	22.96	19	0.043	0.966
Post-Emotional maturity	20	105.9	21.87			

Table 4: *Differences in pre-test and post-test scores of Automatic Negative Thoughts in Controlled Group*

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value
Pre-ATQ	20	56.85	19	19	-.417	0.681
Post-ATQ	20	57.95	24.55			

Discussion

This study is very much inclined with the previous researches, which showed the benefits of writing a journal in improvement of the mental health of a person.

The present study results showed a significant improvement in emotional maturity and decrease in automatic negative thoughts of writing practitioners. It is also concluded that those who practicing writing are found to be better in physical and psychological facets. Previous researches have said Writing a journal have several benefits over mental health. While writing, Practitioner gets awareness about their rational and irrational thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Writing is a way to give form to the ideas and a root to gets the more lucid picture of emotions, thoughts and actions. Once the inner self or thoughts come into picture, it might make complex things easier to understand and later change. Practitioner group in this study seems to be happier after writing journal for 20 days. The suppressed thoughts which were hidden they came out on paper, by writing journal. The feedback from the subjects was positive and some would like to continue with this writing practice. Thus, it can be said that the approach of journal writing is having an important role in enhancement of emotional maturity and in decreasing the negative thoughts.

Conclusion

a. There exists a significant effect of journal writing on emotional maturity.
b. There is a significant effect of journal writing on thought improvement.

Limitations

Every research work always has some limitations. The researcher considered following limitations in the study.

1. The data has collected among university students only.
2. The sampling size which was taken during the study was small.
3. Majority of the sampling was taken from the female group.
4. Time duration of the interventions for participant group was less.

Suggestions

The results of present study reveal that journal writing has significant positive effect on emotional maturity and thoughts improvement. The investigator gave following suggestions:

1. Study can also be conducted on different ages, it is not limited to any particular age group.
2. Increase in time duration of the intervention will give more effective results regarding this study.

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