



The effect of reminiscence therapy on the adaptation of elderly women to old age: A randomized clinical trial

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ABSTRACT

Background and aim: The changes and limitations that occur in the aging process effect people's adaptation to old age. This study aimed to assess the effect of reminiscence therapy on the adaptation levels of non-institutionalized elderly women to old age.

Methods: We used a randomized controlled trial design. We conducted the study with 50 elderly women, including 27 women in the intervention group and 23 women in the control group. Study data were recollected by using an introductory information form, Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) and Assessment Scale of Adaptation Difficulty for the Elderly (ASADE). Reminiscence therapy was applied to the participants in the intervention group through individual sessions for 8 weeks by making house visits once a week.

Results: At the end of reminiscence therapy made through weekly house visits, we compared the mean ASADE and MMSE scores of intervention and control groups and found that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean ASADE and MMSE scores of the participants in the intervention group ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions: This study found that reminiscence therapy increased the elderly women's adaptation to old age and cognitive level.

1. Introduction

Today, changes and developments in technology and lifestyles have lengthened average life span and increased the elderly population. The physical and cognitive changes, health problems, new roles such as being retired or widowed and economic losses come one after another for the elderly, and this turns the old age into a period full of difficulties. The difficulties experienced in this period introduce problems related to the adaptation of the elderly to old age.¹

Adaptation is defined as the harmony built by an individual between his own needs and the expectations of the people around.² When the elderly do not know the changes occurring in old age, have chronic diseases and diminished physical and cognitive functions, experience limitations in joining exercises and performing daily activities, their adaptation to old age is affected. In addition, negative events such as losing a spouse and children leaving home, which occur frequently in this period, and having negative attitudes towards old age also negatively affect their adaptation to old age.^{1,2} When the elderly adapt well to the changes in the aging process, they perceive aging as a positive experience.³ Being unable to adapt to the existing problems lead to a loss in self-confidence,⁴ getting isolated from environment and

occurrence of depressive symptoms.²

We found a limited number of studies in literature on adaptation to old age. The study by Jeste et al,⁵ which assessed adaptation to old age in the scope of active aging, reported that majority of the elderly adapted to the changes occurring in old age. It also reported that adaptation to old age was related to age, cognitive, physical and mental health.⁵ Another study reported that adaptation to old age was lower among women and poorly-educated people.⁶ The study by Şişman and Kutlu reported that, as age increased, adaptation to old age decreased and men had a higher adaptation level than women.⁷

It is important for people to adapt to ever-changing life events so that they can lead happy lives.⁷ The first condition of a healthy and problem-free old age is to accept and adapt to old age.⁸ Therefore, the purposes of nursing care cover ensuring an individual's adaptation to old age and its changes, which is the last development phase of life. Nurses identify people's behaviours and the causing stimuli and try to empower their coping mechanisms through nursing practices so that they can fight the stimuli. If people can cope with the stimuli with the help of nursing practices, their adaptation level increases.⁹

When we looked at the literature for the studies on increasing the elderly people's adaptation to old age, we found the study by Şişman

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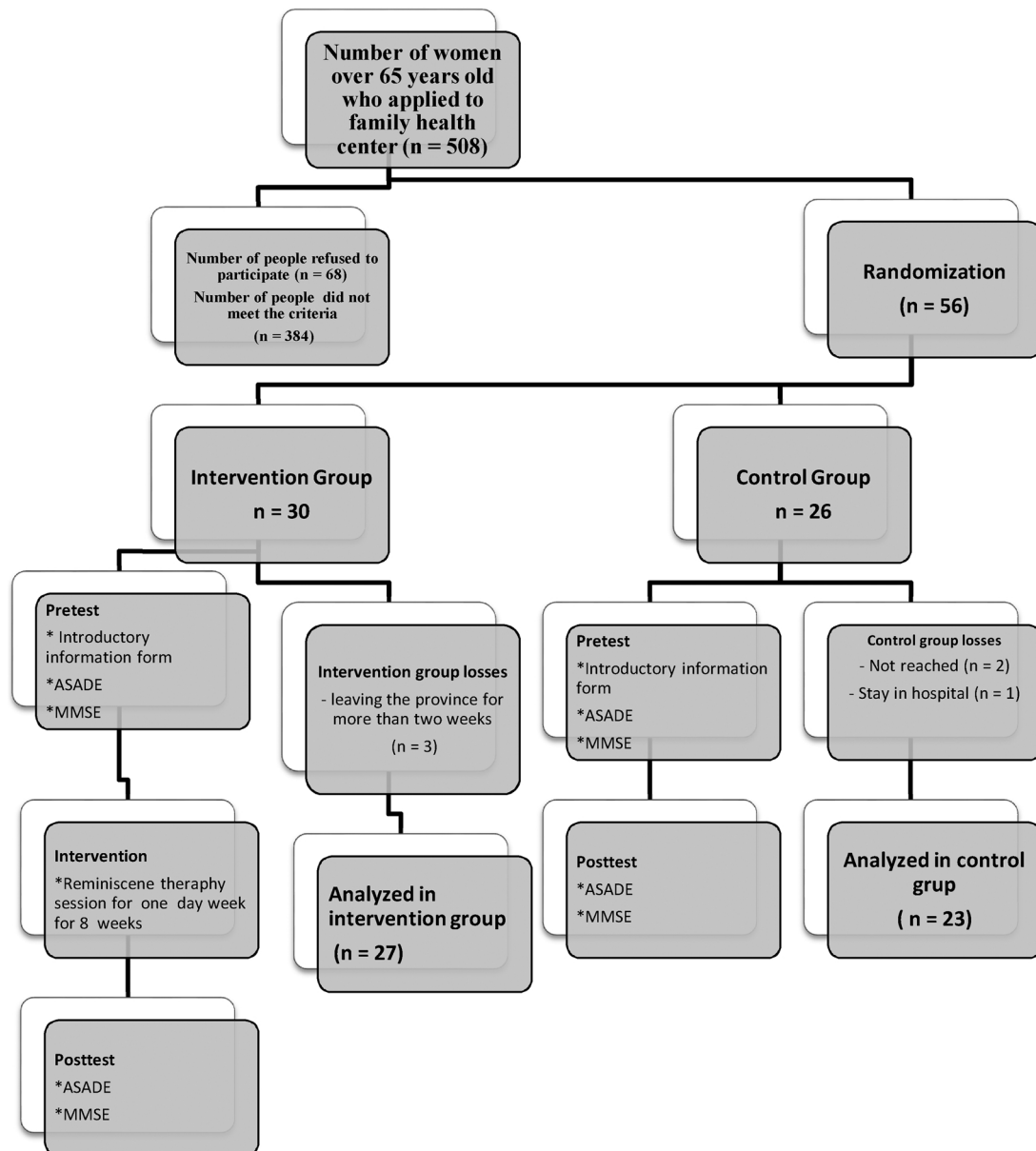


Fig. 1. Research chart.

and Kutlu that applied nursing care based on Roy Adaptation Model and study found that the nursing care based on Roy Adaptation Model increased the adaptation of the elderly to old age.¹ Nurses can positively change people's adaptation to old age by applying simple and economic non-pharmacological methods that are easy to apply. The non-pharmacological methods used in this study for elderly women included reminiscence therapy. Reminiscence therapy, which is an independent nursing intervention, is based on reminding the past events to the elderly to facilitate their adaptation to the present, and increasing their quality of life and adaptation to old age.¹⁰ The literature reported that reminiscence therapy had many positive effects on resilience and problem-solving coping,^{11,12} happiness,¹³ quality of life, attitudes to ageing, and depressive symptoms,¹⁴ self-esteem, integrity, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being.¹⁵ There was no study that assessed the effect of reminiscence therapy on adaptation to old age. While there was no study that reported the positive effect of reminiscence therapy on adaptation to old age, one study reported that reminiscence therapy would play an important role in people's adaptation by helping the elderly know which source of help they can use when

they encounter life events.^{11,12} In addition, it was thought that reminiscence therapy can facilitate adaptation by making the individual focus on his own internal sources and reminding the effective coping strategies he used in the past.¹²

Based on the results of the studies in literature, our study sample included the elderly women, whose adaptation level was lower than men. This study aimed to determine the effect of individual reminiscence therapy on the adaptation levels of non-institutionalized elderly women to old age.

The following hypotheses (H) were tested in this study:

H0. Reminiscence therapy has no effect on increasing the adaptation level of elderly women to old age.

H1. Reminiscence therapy has an effect on increasing the adaptation level of elderly women to old age.

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