



Florida Department of Corrections

Growth Orientation Inc.

Personal Development Program

(GODEV)

at

New River Correctional Institution

**A Psychological Measure of
the GODEV Effectiveness**

February, 1992

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Growth Orientation Inc. Personal Development Program (GODEV)

At New River Correctional Institution: A Psychological Measure Of The GODEV Effectiveness

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Executive Summary

This report presents the results of a psychological measure used in an outcome evaluation of GODEV program at New River Institution. In a pretest-posttest study the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) was used to measure the psychological impact of the program. This test measures different dimensions of a person's personality such as Obsessiveness, Depression, Hostility, Anxiety, Paranoid, and Psychoticism. The results of this study indicate that there were significant improvements in inmates psychological symptoms after their participation in GODEV program. These improvements were particularly noticeable in the areas of Depression, Hostility, and Paranoid Ideation.

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Introduction:

ACQUISITIONS

The Growth Orientation Inc., Personal Development Program (GODEV) is designed to respond to the needs of inmates returning to society after a period of incarceration in Florida's prison system. GODEV provides a structured training program, which prepares the inmates for their return to the community, through teaching social and functional skills required for productive functioning. This program is currently in operation at New River Correctional Institution and is conducted in two phases. The first phase is an inmate orientation period consisting of 4 weeks of full time assignments. The second phase consists of 6 weeks of daily work combined with personal development programs which are designed to improve inmates' social, communication, and vocational skills.

The effectiveness of the GODEV program may be studied from several perspectives using different measures. Obviously the best indication of a program success is the favorable performance of the inmates in their communities after their release. Because of the difficulty of controlling the factors influencing inmates performance in their communities, it was suggested to conduct a psychological study of the inmates involved in the program.

One of the available psychological measures suitable for this study is The Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI). Because of the short amount of time required for its administration and its sound statistical characteristics the BSI was found to be a reliable measure for use in correctional settings. Following is a description of this test and its indices:

What Is BSI ?

The Brief Symptom Inventory is a self reporting inventory designed to reflect the psychological symptom patterns of psychiatric and medical patients as well as non-patient individuals.

The BSI contains 53 items that are rated on a 5-point scale of distress (0-4), ranging from "not at all" (0) at one pole to "extremely" (4) at other. The BSI is scored and profiled in terms of nine primary symptom dimensions and three global indices.

BSI Primary Symptoms Dimensions

Nine primary symptom dimensions have been evolved through a combination of clinical/rational and empirical/analytic procedures. They are as follows:

I. Somatization (Som.)

This dimension reflects distress arising from perception of bodily disfunction. Items focus on cardiovascular, gastrointestinal and respiratory complaints.

II. Obsessive-Compulsive (Obs-Com.)

This dimension reflects symptoms that are often identified with the standard clinical syndrome of the same name. This measure focuses on thoughts, impulses, and actions that are experienced as unremitting and irresistible by individual, but are of an ego alien or unwanted nature.

III. Interpersonal Sensitivity (Int-Sen.)

This dimension centers on feelings of personal inadequacy and inferiority, particularly in comparison with others. self- depreciation, feelings of uneasiness, and marked discomfort during interpersonal interactions are characteristic manifestations of this syndrome.

IV. Depression (Dep.)

This dimension reflects a representative range of the indications of clinical depression. Symptoms of dysphoric mood and affect are represented as are the signs of withdrawal from life interest and lack of motivation, feelings of hopelessness, suicidal ideation.

V. Anxiety (Anx.)

The anxiety dimension is composed of a set of symptoms and signs that are clinically associated with high levels of anxiety. General signs such as nervousness and tension are included in the definition, as are panic attacks and feelings of terror. cognitive components involving feelings of

apprehension, and some somatic correlates of anxiety are also included.

VI. Hostility (Hos.)

The hostility dimension indicates thoughts, feelings or actions that are characteristics of the negative affect state of anger. the items included in this index reflect qualities such as aggression, irritability, rage and resentment.

VII. Phobic Anxiety (Ph-Anx.)

Phobic anxiety is defined as a persistent fear response to a specific person, place, object or situation which is characterized as being irrational and disproportionate to the stimulus, and which leads to avoidance or escape behavior. The items of this dimension focus on more disruptive manifestations of phobic behavior.

VIII. Paranoid Ideation (Par-Ide.)

This dimension represents paranoid behavior fundamentally as a disordered mode of thinking. Items selected for this measure represent the characteristics of projective thoughts, hostility, suspiciousness, grandiosity, centrality, fear of loss of autonomy, and delusions.

IX. Psychoticism (Psyc.)

This scale provides for a graduated continuum from mild interpersonal alienation to dramatic evidence of psychosis. Items indicative of withdrawn, isolated, schizoid lifestyle are included as are first-rank symptoms of schizophrenia, such as thought control.

Global Indices

Global indices have been developed to provide more flexibility in overall assessment of the individual's psychological status. These indices are:

1. Global severity index (GSI). This is the individuals average score on the whole test, the most sensitive score of the 3 global indices.
2. Positive symptom total (PST). This is the total score for all the positive (non-zero) responses to the questions.
3. Positive symptom distress index (PSDI). This is the ratio of the individual's overall score (grand total) over the Positive symptom total.

Methodology

Several groups of inmates attending the GODEV classes participated in this study. The BSI was administered before inmates were assigned to GODEV class and also right after they completed the program. A total of 135 sets of pretests and posttests were administered and collected by the program staff. These tests were then mailed to the DC's Bureau of Planning and Research for analysis.

The tests were inspected for respondent's random answering of the questions and any indication of inaccuracy. Pretest and posttest data for 127 inmates was coded and included in the study. This data was entered in the DC mainframe computer and analyzed.

The BSI is usually scored individually and respondents are compared to the norms already established by the BSI developers for diagnostic purposes. In this study our interest was in the collective effects of the GODEV program on inmate population.. The data was aggregated and inmates were scored as a group whose average score on the test and it's different dimensions were collectively calculated. The pretest and posttest means on these dimensions were then compared for differences.

The T-Test statistical analysis was employed to find out whether the differences were statistically significant. Following is the results of this analysis.

Results

Sample Characteristics:

The self-reported background data on inmates' tests revealed the following information about the sample group:

1. Inmates were all male with an average age of 32.5 years.
2. They reported an average 11.58 years of education.
3. Close to 57% of them were single, 19% were married and the remainder were either divorced, separated, or widowed.

Psychological Measures:

Table 1 displays the pretest and posttest scores on different dimensions of the BSI for the respondents.

TABLE 1

BSI Indices	Pretest \bar{X}	Posttest \bar{X}	Difference \bar{X}	T-Value
Som.	3.36	2.50	0.86	3.23**
Obs-Com.	4.46	3.72	0.74	2.56*
Int-Sen.	2.30	2.03	0.27	N.S.
Dep.	4.50	3.27	1.23	3.91**
Anx.	3.20	2.36	0.84	3.67**
Hos.	3.54	2.37	1.17	3.98**
Ph-Anx.	1.58	1.07	0.51	2.71**
Par-Ide.	5.16	3.98	1.18	4.26
Psyc.	3.50	2.60	0.90	3.16**
GSI	0.66	0.50	0.16	4.97**
PSDI	1.61	1.38	0.23	5.50**
PST	20.07	17.54	2.53	2.77**

Note: N.S. = Not Significant

* $P < .05$

** $P < .01$

The data displayed in Table 1 indicate a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores for all of the indices but the Interpersonal Sensitivity Index. These measures show a significant reduction in inmates' symptoms after their participation in the GODEV program.

Conclusion

According to the results of this test there is a difference between the inmates' psychological symptoms before and after the GODEV program. This data shows that the reduction in inmates' BSI scores after the program is not the result of chance, but statistically significant reduction that indicate the improvement in respondents' psychological profile. This progress specifically appears in the area of Depression, Hostility, and Paranoid Ideation. Given this information one can be encouraged with the effects of the GODEV program while not making a definite causal assumption. There are other variables to be controlled for if one would like to find such a relationship. There is also need for a control group to be used in the study.