



The UNIVERSITY *of* OKLAHOMA
Hope Research Center

**Stand in the Gap Ministries
Women in Transition
Brief Report 2019**

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Stand in the Gap Ministries with the results of a study designed to assess attitudes and perceptions of individuals in the Women in Transition (WIT) program. Women in Transition has three program components: (1) staff teach a course in Oklahoma prisons and jails, (2) upon release, women can choose a transitional living home to further facilitate a healthy lifestyle, (3) and volunteers provide prayer and mentoring to previously incarcerated women. A total of 39 women participated in the program. The average age of participants is 38.1 years.

Hope Theory

Hope theory is a major component of the present study. **HOPE** is the belief that the future will be better and you have the power to make it happen. Hope has two components that work mutually together so that an individual can reach a desired goal:

pathways and agency. **PATHWAYS** refers to the steps a

person should take to reach a goal. **AGENCY** refers to a person's willpower or motivation to pursue those pathways (Snyder et al., 1991). High hope individuals have both pathways and agency. Research has

demonstrated that higher hope individuals have greater satisfaction with life, better coping skills, a

Pathways + Agency = Hope

buffer against anxiety, and a greater sense of a

meaningful life (Bailey et al, 2007; Feldman & Snyder,

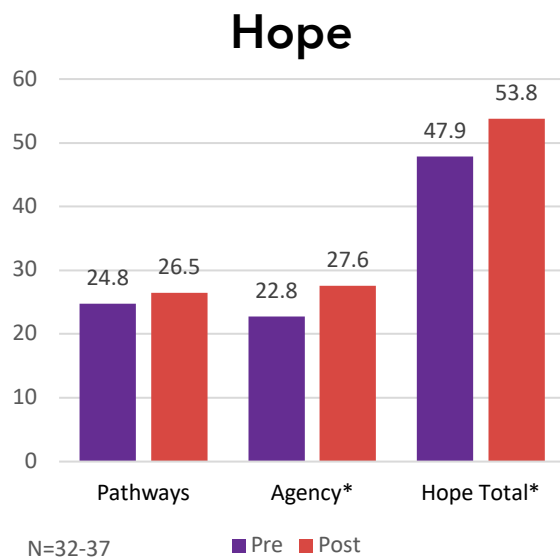
2005; Lopes & Cunhe, 2008). Results from the present

study show that individual's levels of agency and total

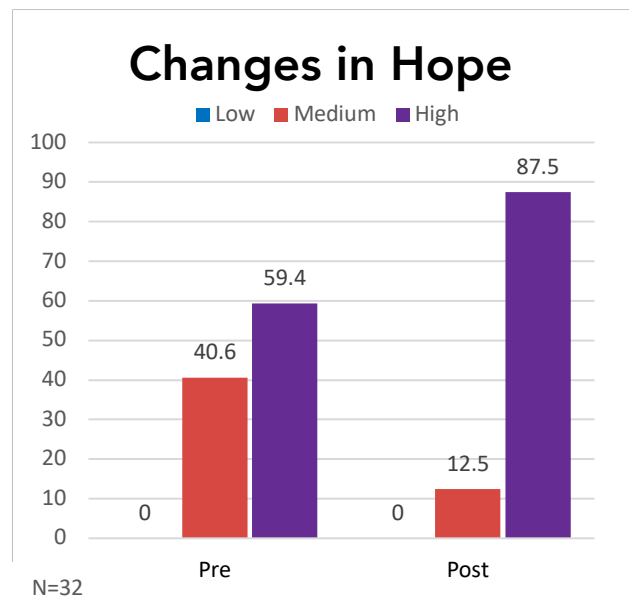
hope scores had a statistically significant increase

after participating in the WIT program [t (36) = -6.504;

p < .001]; [t (31) = -3.845; p < .01].



Hope was also categorized as low, medium, and high to examine changes in scores. The graph illustrates that there were no individuals in the low hope category at either pre or posttest. At pretest, 40.6% of individuals had medium levels of hope while 59.4% had high levels of hope. At posttest, 12.5% of individuals had medium levels of hope while 87.5% had high levels of hope. This means that, at posttest,



there were 28% more high-hope individuals than at pre-test.

Finally, additional analysis indicates that 75% of individuals had an increase in hope scores from pre to posttest.

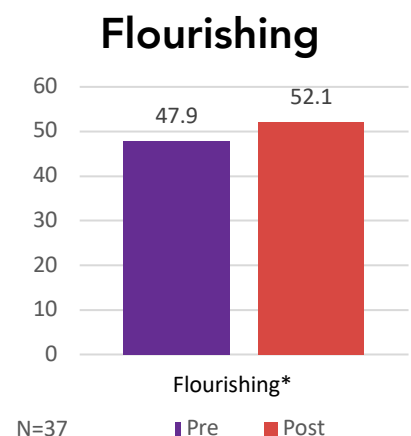
75%

of individuals increased their level of hope

Related Variables

Other wellbeing variables were measured. These include flourishing, codependency, coping skills (emotional-focused coping, problem-focused coping and avoidance-focused coping), and sense of connection.

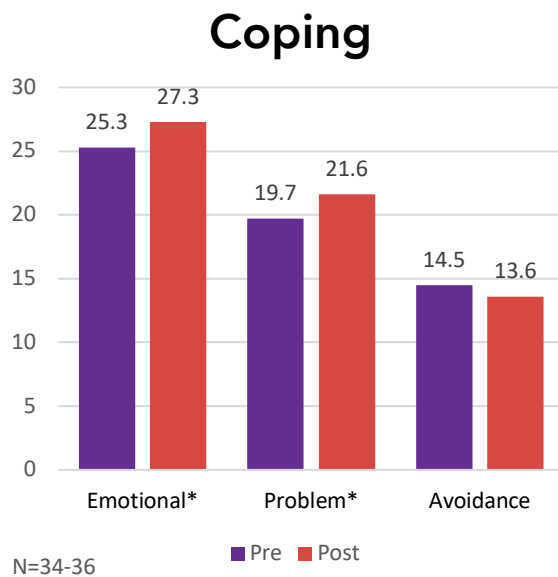
The **FLOURISHING** scale measures social-psychological prosperity (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2009). A high score indicates someone has many psychological resources and strengths. Findings from this study demonstrate that pre and posttest wellbeing mean scores had a statistically significant increase from 47.9 to 52.1 [$t(36) = -3.294; p < .01$]. Additionally, 65% of individuals increased their level of flourishing from pre to posttest.



CODEPENDENCY is a measure of a dysfunctional way of relating to others with an emphasis on focusing on others, lack of expression, and meaning derived from relating to others (Fischer, Spann & Crawford, 1991). In the current study, 68% of individuals decreased their level of codependency by the end of the program. Overall, pre and posttest means scores had a statistically significant decrease from 48.3 to 40.8 [$t(33) = -3.298$; $p < .01$] which shows improvement.

68% of individuals decreased their level of codependency

Coping (COPE Inventory; Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989) is known as the ways that individuals use behavioral and cognitive strategies to respond to stress. Three **COPING SKILLS** measured were the emotional-focused approach, problem-focused, and avoidance-focused. Emotional-focused



coping is an attempt for individuals to handle thoughts and feeling associated with stress (Litman, 2006). In the current study, **EMOTIONAL-FOCUSED** mean scores had a statistically significant increase from 25.3 to 27.3 showing improvement [$t(33) = -2.395$; $p < .05$]. Problem-focused coping occurs when people try to manage the source of the stress (Litman, 2006). In the current study, **PROBLEM-FOCUSED** mean scores had a statistically significant increase from 19.7 to 21.6

showing improvement [$t(35) = -3.435$; $p < .001$]. Avoidance-oriented coping occurs when individuals ignore or withdraw from the stress or feelings associated with it; this is a negative or maladaptive form of coping (Litman, 2006). In the current study, **AVOIDANCE-FOCUSED** mean score changes were not statistically significant [$t(35) = 1.280$; $p > .05$].

SENSE OF CONNECTION was examined to understand individual's feelings of connections to people in meaningful ways. Overall, mean Sense of Connection scores had a statistically significant increase from 24.9 to 27.1 [$t(37) = -3.315; p < .01$] which demonstrates an improvement. Furthermore, 63% of individuals had an increase in a sense of connection from pre to posttest.

63% of individuals increased their sense of connection

Overall, after participating in the Women in Transition program, there were positive changes in study variables. Statistically significant findings were observed for the following scores: Agency and Hope Total, Flourishing, Codependency, Emotional-Focused and Problem-Focused Coping Skills, and a Sense of Connection. When individuals begin to have hope, genuine change can occur in their lives.