

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

GUIDELINES FOR THE TRAINING OF TRAINERS (TOT) MODEL:
GROUP-BASED PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC MODULES TRAINING IN
PAKISTANTania Qamar[✉], Nabisah Ibrahim

School of Applied Psychology Social Work & Policy, University Utara-Malaysia

Background. A detailed set of guidelines is needed for the Training of Trainers (TOT) model, which aims to include cultural awareness and values in group-based psychotherapeutic training. This will allow for the development and use of effective and culturally appropriate mental health care interventions in Pakistan. The current study aims to develop a TOT model with the goal of adding cultural values and sensitivity by training trainers and setting basic rules and guidelines that mental health professionals will follow as they are taught the group therapy modules, one step at a time.

Methods: The TOT model for the step-by-step use of the group therapy module was developed in this study in several stages by using multiphase approach. **Results.** The findings reveal that this study developed a nine-step TOT model. Further explored was the relevance of these TOT programs for trainees to prepare them as literate trainers in group therapy interventions. In addition, the findings of the current study provided extensive knowledge of TOT guidelines and outlines and their further implications for psychotherapy training in Pakistan. The TOT model improves the skills and knowledge of trainers so they can continue to use the TOT model, which can then be used to teach others. It also helps find effective group-based psychotherapeutic interventions that can be used in Pakistan in the future. **Conclusion.** The results conclude that the guidelines for the TOT model emphasise how important it is to be culturally competent when conducting group therapy modules. These guidelines could be helpful in building up group-oriented modules among trainers who prepare or develop such training programs, which would ultimately be helpful for mental health professionals with varying cultural traditions.

Keywords: Guidelines; Group Therapy; Training of Trainers (TOT) Model; Cultural Sensitivity; Psychotherapy Module; Pakistan

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INTRODUCTION

A Training of Trainer (TOT) model is a 'transmissive' cascade model since it incorporates a cohort of experts. The experts receive new learning in concepts and skills and later on share or impart this new learning to others. Thus, TOT imparts the required skills and competencies to the experts so that they effectively train others in a particular subject or field. It enables the sharing of knowledge and standardising the training delivery.^{1,2} A general TOT procedure defines an exchange between varied individuals originally known as 'experts' and trainees who become 'new experts' with regard to the specified form of new treatment.³ An important component provides guidance on group-based psychotherapy to mental health professionals, enabling them to practice their skills and utilise these modules. Indeed, literature confirms that group therapy constitutes an effective way to treat a range of mental health disorders.³ It involves advantages such as social support, interpersonal learning, and acceptance among group

members. However, the structure of activities in group therapy leads to the existence of specialised techniques and skills that extend beyond individual treatment. They involve the effective management of group dynamics, conflict resolution, and the build-up of friendship among group members.^{3,4} Although it is understood that mental health professionals who haven't been trained in group therapy may not have the right skills to run a group therapy session properly, group-based psychotherapy modules may not produce satisfactory results.

Second, a well-organised Training of Trainers (TOT) program helps spread practices that have been shown to work while maintaining the validity of treatment across different facilitators.^{5,6} Therefore, mental health professionals must be provided with a TOT guideline to be equipped with the in-depth knowledge and practical expertise required to develop a standardised framework before delivering group-based psychotherapy modules. Thirdly, mental health professionals require TOT guidelines to improve mental health service delivery by enhancing

quality and consistency through a multifaceted approach to enhance cultural sensitivity in Pakistan. The TOT guidelines focus on cultural competence-based training for trainers. This means that it involved a general understanding of cultural beliefs, values, and practices concerning mental health care.^{7,8} Moreover, emphasis should be placed on specific learning opportunities such as case studies representative of different cultures, conferences, role-playing, and discussions so that the mental health professional is exposed to different cultures. This exposure can enhance cultural sensitivity and promote empathy for clients from diverse backgrounds.^{9,10} Furthermore, the TOT training empowers health professionals to contemplate their strengths and cultural biases.¹¹

This exposure assists during reflection in that it positions the mental health professional and trainee more towards the humility and self-awareness needed to work well with clients of varying cultural backgrounds. In Pakistan, mental health professionals should be trained to be able to run effective group-based psychotherapeutic interventions that are always respectful, inclusive, and responsive to the clients' diverse sociocultural backgrounds. In TOT, dealing with culturally sensitive issues should be seen as a top priority.

In addition, a persistent issue for determination is designing the Training of Trainers (TOT) model to embed diverse socio-cultural realities across Pakistan that enhance both effectiveness and integrity at each stage of training. At first, it's important to carefully plan a therapeutic module that covers a range of important areas in group therapy, such as ethics, cultural competence, and theoretical foundations.¹² Second, they often are updated by experts with evidence-based practices in therapeutic modules and shaped by the people they will be working with and the various contexts. Thirdly, the TOT guidelines insisted on including hands-on training opportunities such as role plays, case discussions, and supervised practice sessions toward skill acquisition and retention among the trainees.^{13,14} Besides, TOT programs must be targeted to prepare mental health professionals to train others in group-based psychotherapy and further increase the better cultural orientation toward accountability and continuous improvement. These practices can be helpful in contributing a great deal to maintaining treatment consistency across various contexts and the wider incorporation of evidence-based practices, which can increase mental health professionals' confidence, skills, and knowledge in delivering group-based psychotherapeutic sessions.

There are some empirical and practical gaps in the literature on training for group-based psychotherapeutic treatments. It's not clear what the

basic elements and standard procedures are for Training of Trainers (TOT) in group therapy.^{12,14}

Though it has been seen that a lot of TOT programs boost cultural competence and diversity in an inappropriate way, even though these are important parts of providing therapy to people from different backgrounds.¹⁵ As a result of these challenges, the trainers are unable to meet the cultural and background requirements of the group members.

Therefore, there is a dire need for more qualified trainers to conduct group therapy; however, the number of trained mental health professionals is limited. These limitations not only limit access to appropriate mental health services but also compromise the standards and effectiveness of group therapy programs. These problems and gaps make it even more important to develop a TOT model for creatively training mental health professionals, especially to make up for the lack of qualified leaders for psychotherapeutic group modules. So, the main goal of this study is to develop and provide TOT guidelines for training mental health professionals on group-based psychotherapeutic modules. This study aims to establish the TOT model as culturally relevant and applicable in Pakistan.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The current study used multiphase approach and implemented several phases to develop step-wise guidelines for the Training of Trainers (TOT) model aimed at optimizing cultural value and sensitivity to group-based psychotherapeutic module training in Pakistan. The methodology had three phases: literature review, guideline formulation, and expert validation and refinement.

Phase one involved a thorough review of pertinent texts to identify suitable practices, rules, norms, and frameworks for culturally sensitive psychotherapeutic training. This study summarises a review of the cross-cultural and sociocultural backgrounds of psychotherapy in Pakistan. The current study simultaneously reviewed peer-reviewed journals, applicable texts, and policy documents using databases like PubMed, PsycINFO, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate.

The literature review provided insights into the process of draughting the initial Training of Trainers (TOT) model training guidelines. The current study undertook this primarily to determine the relevance of cultural sensitivity training, which aims to comprehend Pakistani cultural and religious norms in psychotherapy. It also internalizes all communication modes that translate therapeutic methods into personalized ones for people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Besides, group therapy practices incorporated culturally sensitive approaches like

storytelling, metaphor therapy, and metacognitive methods. The trainer has also used the structure of the TOT model as selection criteria for the identification of culturally competent, experienced therapists. Also included are plans to make the training modules fit with Pakistani social and cultural norms and a way to evaluate how effective the trainers are at providing culturally sensitive psychotherapeutic training.

An iterative expert review process was conducted to ensure the relevance, applicability, and effectiveness of the guidelines in the Pakistani context. A two-round Delphi technique was used to refine the guidelines. Experts provided feedback on cultural appropriateness, feasibility, and clarity. Adjustments were made based on consensus-driven modifications. Adjustments in language and cultural references to enhance local relevance. Inclusion of case-based discussions to Pakistani social dynamics. Incorporation of Islamic psychotherapy elements, ensure alignment with Pakistani belief systems. The final Training of Trainers (TOT) model guidelines were structured into a step-by-step manual, ensuring cultural sensitivity, practical applicability, and effectiveness for group-based psychotherapy training in Pakistan (see Results section).

RESULTS

Results revealed that this study developed the nine-step model of Training of Trainers (TOT) guidelines and showed the significance of the TOT model in order to prepare mental health professionals for the use of innovative group-based therapeutic interventions. In addition, culturally sensitive training for mental health professionals in Pakistan improved significantly. It has been shown that the validated TOT model helps people understand and value sociocultural differences and makes group-based psychotherapy more effective and caring. The drafted guidelines highlighted a variety of interactive and experiential learning methods, including but not limited to case studies, role-playing exercises, and real-life situation applications. Expert feedback during validation indicated that the step-by-step guidelines of the TOT model could increase the therapeutic confidence and ability of mental health practitioners to effectively learn and utilize innovative, culturally sensitive forms of group-based psychotherapy in Pakistan. Moreover, those trainers using culturally tailored training materials with interactive sessions do become more competent and use environmentally sensitive approaches. These findings emphasize the validation of the TOT guidelines, which enhance the culturally competent psychotherapeutic training for more inclusive and effective mental health care in Pakistan.

The Training of Trainers (TOT) model is important as it enables experts to deliver their

specialized training with enhanced effectiveness and efficiency. The present study is beneficial for experts because it provided an opportunity for mental health professionals in a group therapy setting (in the role of group leaders) to assess their strengths and weaknesses and develop ideas that are more engaging, original, and creative. The guidelines of the TOT model (see Figure 1) enabled mental health professionals (group leaders) to effectively deliver content, respond to participants' questions, and conduct activities that reinforce positive behaviours due to the styles of TOT. In addition, the use of the TOT model ensures that mental health professionals (group leaders) learn to find the right resources, lead productive discussions, listen carefully, observe clearly, and resolve problems. Group leaders also gain knowledge about the importance to maintain eye contact, be friendly, speak clearly, use effective gestures, retain interest, and clarify any misunderstandings. However, Fig-1 provided the complete process and step-by-step guidelines of the TOT model.



Figure-1. Step-by-Step Guidelines of Training of Trainers (TOT) Model

Figure 1 illustrates the detailed instructions provided by TOT to facilitate training in the use of the group-based psychotherapeutic treatment module.

The development of the training manual is the first and an important aspect of the Training of Trainers (TOT) model for group-based psychotherapeutic modules. It enables mental health professionals to practice evidence-based treatments that successfully address the specific needs of group members in a group therapy setting. This ultimately leads to significant therapeutic improvements and develops a structured training manual that covers the group dynamics of group therapy, includes theory, practice, facilitation approaches, cultural competence, intervention, and ethical considerations.

The second step of the Training of Trainers (TOT) model involves a comprehensive needs assessment, where mental health professionals engage in an innovative semi-structured interview as part of the assessment protocol. An assessment ensures that the trainers can be specific about the content and procedures of training such that they focus on areas of knowledge where mental health professionals tend to be deficient and the cultural aspects. It enhances the effectiveness and applicability of the training, and at a higher level, it pinpoints the precise skills, knowledge, and abilities that mental health professionals require to implement effective group-based psychotherapeutic interventions. The assessment takes into account cultural diversity, the targeted demographic, and the compatibility of various group therapy techniques.

The time frame represents the third phase of the Training of Trainers (TOT) model. The ideal duration for the TOT is two months, as it provides enough time to cover all the necessary ground, such as theoretical principles, practical methods of facilitation, and culturally sensitive training. The time allocation provides room for guidance in practice, external evaluation, and continuous professional development support for carers and mental health professionals. The program includes specific goals aimed at improving the implementation, effectiveness, and quality of care for culturally relevant group therapy interventions. Thus, its establishment will also contribute to enhancing the quality and accessibility of group psychotherapy treatment. The time frame for administration work, practice, evaluation, and supervision has been very helpful for courses that look at the empirical basis of interventions, how well they work, how they are structured, and how to be a good facilitator. This has led to the relative improvement of the TOT model through a balance between learning and performance.

The fourth step of the Training of Trainers (TOT) model is Dos and Don'ts. Here, mental health professionals learn and perform to adhere to some ground rules related to a specific group-based psychotherapeutic treatment. This step is used to ensure that the TOT is effective and that mental health professionals (group leaders) and clients (group members) maintain ethical standards and enhance a cooperative learning environment that values and shares different perspectives in a group therapy setting. In order to encourage constant growth, it is essential to give opportunity to mental health professionals (group leaders) to practice and learn innovative skills about the use of new group-based psychotherapeutic treatment, which included the facilitation process, receive helpful feedback, and reflect on their own performance. In addition, in this step, the culturally sensitive training is also important

because it emphasizes the need to include cultural considerations in all aspects of group therapy.

Moreover, it is also important to learn to devote time and energy to learn mastery skills in the basics rather than try to rush and emphasize quantity over quality. It is imperative that during the TOT, experts consider extraneous variables, such as the impact of seasonal, political, and contextual factors.

The selection of mental health professionals (group leaders) is an important and fifth step of the Training of Trainers (TOT) model. The American Psychological Association (APA) and Corey provide guidelines on the selection criteria for group therapists.^{16,17} The group leaders should be selected based on their competence, experience in group therapy, efficiency in performing group therapy treatment, and capability to work with diverse groups.

The trainings constitute the sixth phase of the TOT model, which guides the development of group-based psychotherapy modules. In this phase, the Training of Trainers (TOT) expert gives session-wise training to the psychotherapists (the group leaders) on a wide variety of advanced skills and in-depth knowledge, enabling them to use different techniques and strategies in the group-based psychotherapeutic sessions. This leads to a cascading effect of specific knowledge and understanding, enhancing strong healing processes within therapeutic groups.

Additionally, the TOT conducts training on general methods and strategies of instruction, cognitive development, and the basics of worksheet use. From this phase, the experts will have the opportunity to use interactive exercises, case studies, role plays, and supervised practice sessions to scale up trainers' competence and skills in professional knowledge.

The seventh step in the Training of Trainers (TOT) model is culturally sensitive training, which aims at developing skills among mental health professionals in group leadership to help them in the most effective interaction with the members or individuals belonging to different socio-cultural backgrounds.

This phase is anticipated to incorporate cultural humility, self-awareness, and cultural integration into group-based psychotherapeutic modules. Training on this subject is important for the efficient implementation of group-based psychotherapeutic modules among mental health professionals. Group leaders understand culturally sensitive treatment better and deliver inclusive and effective interventions that enable them to understand the group members from the different socio-cultural backgrounds.

The other step is imparting supervision and support; this one's the 8th on the Training of Trainers

(TOT) model. In this step, experts' mentor in the process of providing support where mental health professionals (group leaders) build these training skills, receive valuable feedback, and build resilience so as to remain committed to offer competent, compassionate care to individuals in need. Moreover, experts of TOT ensure that during the training of group-based psychotherapeutic treatment, they provide constant support and supervision to group leaders in order to learn, improve, and enhance their skills in an innovative way.

The final and ninth step of the Training of Trainers (TOT) model is called evaluation and quality assurance. This part is the evaluation of trainers (group leaders) on their performance quality using an appropriate set of standards of assessment. In other words, during this final step, TOT experts will consider some critical factors to ensure the training delivery meets high standards in group-based psychotherapeutic treatment. These include feedback from group members, observation of the knowledge and performance of group leaders, updating training, and identifying areas of improvement. Such techniques can encourage innovative skills within group leaders when running an effective group-therapy session.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study primarily focuses on how cultural competence and sensitivity interplay with the Trainer of Trainers (TOT) model of group-based modules of training in psychotherapy. The TOT model consists of general guidelines to enhance the cultural competence and sensitivity of trainers in the field.

This model comprises major broad steps, such as training manual development, identification of assessment needs, provision of culturally sensitive training items, and others. All of these steps ensured that the TOT experts would be sensitive to the cultural differences of their clients and would lead group sessions in a way that would have been understanding and helpful if these cultural factors hadn't been taken into account.^{18,19} The TOT guidelines are based on standardized procedures that enhance the confidence of trainers (group leaders) and their ability to design psychotherapeutic modules across different cultural contexts. Of course, this is also supported by earlier studies showing an ever-increasing need for culturally relevant therapeutic modules and interactive workshops for improving trainers' capacities.²⁰ Cultural sensitivity is a significant component of training in psychotherapy since it identifies the diversity of backgrounds, beliefs, and values that are represented by the clients.

The study described that mental health care professionals could get additional help in providing

efficient and ethically feasible care to clients of different cultures by combining cultural competence as an integral part of educational programs. The Training of Trainers (TOT) model also highlights the importance of entering cultural differences, communication, and social norms. This understanding creates a therapeutic environment built around trust, empathy, and cooperation among individuals within the group, which allows for positive outcomes in treatment. The TOT model is introduced in this study. This model was created to help people learn more about the ideas behind more widespread training in new types of group-based psychotherapy. Directive principles drawn by earlier studies support this idea.^{21,22} A previous study²³ raised certain concerns regarding how culturally sensitive TOT programs are responsible for the development of settings for therapy. In fact, these programs do not include all the information that's needed to deal with the wide range of cultural differences between groups. This could make training less effective and decrease the use of psychotherapeutic interventions.^{9,23}

In this article, the Training of Trainers (TOT) model provides a clear framework that outlines specific steps to improve TOT methods' efficiency and cultural awareness. This article seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the TOT model.

The previous study found that building trust and bonding among trainers and their team members during the TOT is significant in supporting learning and collaboration on such a process.²⁴ In addition, a prior study emphasized the importance of communication and conflict resolution skills for group processes within the context of TOT programs.²⁵ In this study, the TOT model provided ethical standards to follow, which encouraged a culture of mutual respect and cooperation that is essential for effective group facilitation. Literature confirmed and emphasized the significance of norm-building in TOT programs for the improvement of group cohesiveness and encouraged adherence to actions.²⁶⁻²⁸

The TOT model showed that experts capitalize on opportunities to strengthen ethical principles, set clear limits, and enhance a culture of professionalism in a group therapy setting. These norms prepared trainers with innovative techniques to improve experiential learning and skill enhancement within the TOT program.^{29,30}

At the end of the training, the experts from Training of Trainers (TOT) provide guidance to the group leaders on how to terminate the session. A study found that post-training support for group facilitators favours the long-term maintenance of competency and confidence.³¹ Literature also showed how important TOT was, such as how it balanced theoretical knowledge with the learning of practical skills and

training in how to be sensitive to different cultures.³¹ Besides the strengths and importance of the guidelines of the TOT model, the challenges are also discussed. Future studies planning to further use the TOT model need to consider the challenges and recommendations this study provided. For example, differences in culture and ways of expressing oneself can make it hard to communicate in cross-cultural treatment, which can lead to failed treatments or communication that doesn't work.

These problems in therapy end with disappointing results. This study showed that trained mental health professionals further strive towards creating an aura of cultural modesty, self-awareness, and continuous self-exploration.

The recommendations showed the importance of using group-based interventions to address the specific needs of different cultures. As part of treatment, culturally appropriate metaphors, rites, and strategies must be used along with being aware of any possible cultural taboos or sensitivities.

Therapists should understand their clients' experiences and therapeutic practices and explore their cultural biases and assumptions. Collectivist cultures value keeping the group together and building relationships more than letting individuals express themselves. Because of this, mental health professionals should change the format and structure of group sessions to accommodate different cultural preferences and ways of communicating. When group leaders give treatment through a lens of cultural values and beliefs, clients are more likely to engage actively in treatment, remain in treatment, and report higher satisfaction. It is concluded that the current study has successfully developed and validated the step-by-step guidelines for the Training of Trainers (TOT) model that increase the cultural competence and sensitivity within group-based psychotherapeutic modules.

The Training of Trainers (TOT) model involves nine steps, bringing about wide-ranging improvements in trainers' cultural awareness and facilitation skills. Experts confirmed that knowledge and appreciation of cultural diversity paved the way for better empathy that strengthened psychotherapy with effective results. The guidelines therefore help not only boost trainer confidence but also equip them with the know-how of modifying therapeutic practices to suit different social-cultural contexts. The incorporation of culturally adapted materials and interactive workshops was especially effective in refining the mental health professional's skills. This study emphasised the significant role of culturally competent training in improving inclusive and effective mental health care and highlighted the possibility of the worldwide application of these TOT

guidelines to strengthen psychotherapeutic outcomes in the context of Pakistani culture.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

TQ: Structured and designed the article; analyzed and interpreted the data; manuscript writeup. NI: Review Paper, Proofreading.

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Address for Correspondence:**Tania Qamar**, School of Applied Psychology Social Work & Policy, University Utara-Malaysia**Email:** taniaqamar56@gmail.com