

## **The Use of Postmodern Feminist Empowering Counseling to Heal the Psychological Wounds of Abused Women: Working Together for Health Security**

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### **Abstract**

**Background:** The process of postmodern feminist empowering counseling (PFEC) is a powerful means of helping abused women because of its focus on systemic sources of oppression and supremacy. **Objectives:** To propose the process of PFEC and the evaluation of the abused women following the counseling. **Methods:** Embedded design, mixed methods research was used for the current study. First, the data from in-depth interviews and observation of 10 participants were analyzed to identify the process of counseling. Next, the proposed process was tested with 6 abused women. The counseling outcome was evaluated by in-depth interviews and the use of an empowerment questionnaire developed by the researcher. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. **Results:** 1. There are 5 steps in the process of PFEC: a) establishing and modeling an egalitarian relationship, b) consciousness-raising or developing awareness, c) decision making and choice, d) acting or social liberation, and e) making the conclusion and evaluation. 2. The results of the counseling were found as follows: The content analysis shows that the abused women who received counseling had developed self-reliance, believed that there would be a way out of the situation and felt increased hope and energy. The average score on perceived empowerment in the abused women before receiving the counseling was at a low level (6 women) and after receiving the counseling to a high level (1 woman) and at the highest level (5 women). **Conclusion:** The process of counseling can remove abused women of their oppressive beliefs about being abused. The changes indicating better adjustment to their lives can be explained by perceived empowerment developed through this counseling process. This study is within the process parameters that ensure health security for abused women. **Recommendations:** To help the abused women change from feeling powerless to being empowered, the necessary counseling process for the change outcome must be facilitated. In doing so, the counselor should be able to identify with gender perspectives and the postmodern feminist viewpoint.

**Keywords:** abused women, postmodern feminist empowering counseling, PFEC, empowerment.

### **Background:**

In 2011, the incidences of violence related to children, women and domestic violence in Thailand were markedly increasing.<sup>1</sup> In all, 916 occurrence were reportedly subjected to violence. The violence was perpetuated by males (645 cases or 86.23%) more than by females (86 cases or 11.50%). The number of cases which were not identified by gender was about 2.27%. Those abused within the family were predominantly females (87.18%) more than males (10.28%) and the number of violent incidences which were not identified by gender was around 2.54%. However, the violence to some individuals was done repetitively. The physical, psychological, and sexual violations represented 61.29%, 27.54% and 4.95%, respectively.<sup>1</sup>

Violence against women has been rooted in gender-power relations and is shaped by cultural inequality between the sexes. In other words, violence against women is gender-based violence because it is women who are subjected to the violence.<sup>2-3</sup> Males typically have power over females. Females are at a disadvantage in areas such as disrespect, oppression, domestic violence, and social status. Thus, abused women always lack power.

According to the results of domestic violence research studies, domestic violence agencies, offering a wide range of services for abused women such as counseling, have proliferated. However, there have been very few empirical studies examining the efficacy of counseling for abused women, and no studies have proposed the process of postmodern feminist empowering counseling. The existing evaluation studies of counseling services for abused women suggested that supportive and psycho-educational shelter in a community based on an individual and group counseling, may be an effective model for improving self-esteem, emotion (anxiety, depression, and hostility), assertiveness, social support, locus of control, coping abilities, and self-efficacy.<sup>4-11</sup>

Therefore, the process of PFEC is aimed at helping abused women to bring about consciousness-raising awareness and to realize their ability to change perceptions in order to gain power and thereby live happily.

### **Objectives:**

To propose the process of postmodern feminist empowering counseling (PFEC) and the subsequent participant evaluation following the counseling.

### **Methods:**

The embedded design, mixed methods research<sup>12</sup> was used in this study. The collecting data for resulting evaluation were divided into 2 phases:

*1<sup>st</sup> Phase*, qualitative research was used to explore aspects of abused women in order to bring experiences and opinions to the development of the counseling process.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Phase*, both qualitative and quantitative research were utilized to bring abused women to participate in the counseling process and to evaluate resulting changes of participants.

### **Setting:**

The setting was a tertiary hospital located in the lower northern area of Thailand. The hospital provided services for sophisticated patients and offered remedial, specialist help for patients who were transferred from a network of health care services. The One Stop Crisis Center (OSCC) is for abused women who are in critical crisis from violence.

### **Participants:**

The researcher selected key informants from different groups as follows:

*1<sup>st</sup> Phase*, key informants were the abused women (n= 10) who were former OSCC patients having experienced physical, psychological, and sexual abuse.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Phase*, the participants in the counseling process were abused women (n=6). These women were first-time visitors to the OSCC service or had been referred from other hospitals. For the purposes of this study and to ensure anonymity, they were given aliases.

In both phases, the women were at least 18-years-old; they were able to communicate and give information and; they were willing to participate in this research. For the latter phase, see Table 1.

**Table 1** Characteristics of abused women in the counseling process

Alias	Age (Year)	Status	Education	Career	Income (Baht/month)	Period of living together with husband	Number of children	Family type	Type of abuse
Chandra	35	Married	Prathom 4	Employee	No income	5 months	2	Single	physical
Kanokporn	47	Married	Prathom 6	Vendor	10,000	18 years	2	Extended	physical
Bungar*	48	Married	Prathom 4	Employee	3,000	26 years	3	Single	physical
Chat*	36	Married	Prathom 6	Farmer	5,000	6 years	1	Single	physical
Anong	43	Married	Matthayom 6	Housekeeper	No income	23 years	2	Single	physical and psychological
Jane	51	Divorced	Matthayom 3	Vendor	5,000	24 years	2	Single	physical and psychological

\* These participants didn't complete the counseling process.

### Measures:

**1<sup>st</sup> Phase**, in-depth interview were employed to understand and analyze factors that facilitate or impeded abused women. Additionally, the survey gained the participants' perception of the counseling service and their perceived meanings of being abused.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Phase**, there were 2 instruments as follows:

Firstly, the empowerment questionnaire was developed by the researcher following a literature review<sup>13-16</sup> and created according to the concept of empowerment.<sup>17</sup> The questionnaire has 30 questions, 4 Likert scales, and was used to measure empowerment in abused women. The questionnaire has been examined for content validity by 7 qualified people. The value of content validity index was 0.93 and after that, the researcher added 6 more questions because the experts suggested that 36 questions in 5 aspects: power (10 items), gender relations (6 items), identity (6 items), social structure (7 items), and structural oppression (7 items). The questionnaire was then tested by samples which had the same characteristics as key informants for 30 people. The value of reliability calculated by Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.89. Score analysis of the questionnaire was identified as following: The values of powerful feeling of the highest, high, low, and lowest abused women ranged between 3.41 – 4.00, 2.61 – 3.40, 1.81 – 2.60, and 1.00 – 1.80, respectively.

Secondly, the questions posed in in-depth interviews were used to evaluate the counseling process after completion.

### Data Collection:

The researcher sent the letter, issued by the Faculty of Nursing, Khon Kaen University, to the hospital in order to ask for permission to do research on their premises. Then the researcher met officers responsible for female abuse treatment at OSCC to explain the purpose and the methodology of the research. Duration of the research was from 1 February, 2011 to 31 October, 2011. The data collection was in 2 phases;

**1<sup>st</sup> Phase**, qualitative research was performed. The in-depth interviewing was used to collect data from 10 abused women, 1 hour 30 minutes – 2 hours each. The interviews were recorded. The collected data was then concluded to be the counseling process.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Phase**, quantitative research was performed. Before participating in the counseling, the abused women were asked to complete the empowerment questionnaire. After that, there were 6 abused women participating in the recorded counseling during the process of 60 – 90 minutes per interview and 2-3 times per person. The duration of counseling process was about 2-3 months per person.

After each session of counseling was finished, the results and the outcomes were evaluated. The evaluation was done by asking for thoughts and feelings, and observing participants' behavior during and after each interview. The researcher recorded this data. The researcher used the recorded data and evaluated the results to plan for the next counseling session. When the participants felt that they had achieved a level of empowerment and wanted to terminate the counseling process, they were asked to complete the empowerment questionnaire.

Finally, the counseling and in-depth interviews were used to evaluate the counseling process on its completion.

### **Data Analysis:**

The data were analyzed in 2 phases;

**1<sup>st</sup> Phase**, content analysis was used to develop the counseling process.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Phase**, the counseling results were analyzed each time and the content used to continually improve the process. The empowerment questionnaire was analyzed by comparing the scores of the participants before and after the counseling process to evaluate any positive changes of attitude and perception in the abused women. Content analysis was used to evaluate the counseling process results.

### **Ethical:**

This research was considered by and endorsed by both the Khon Kaen University Ethics Committee for Human Research and the study venue.

### **Results:**

#### **1. The process of PFEC:**

There are 5 steps in the process of PFEC including 1) establishing and modeling an egalitarian relationship 2) consciousness-raising or developing awareness 3) decision making and choice 4) acting or social liberation and 5) making the conclusion and evaluation.

##### **1.1 Establishing and modeling an egalitarian relationship**

The counselor introduces herself, giving an orientation of the counseling services, duration and goals. The participant is made aware that she will play a part in defining and evaluating the result of counseling. The counselor also gives a chance to the participant to get to know her and make a decision about receiving counseling and sharing experiences.

##### **1.2 Consciousness-raising**

This process starts by asking the participant to share experiences in order to enable the counselor to understand the participant's perception of being abused. The counselor can thus understand what factors caused the participant to feel oppressed, and the participant decides what to talk about first.

Generally, the issues of conversation in the consciousness-raising step involve power analysis and disclosure in women, discovery of supporting sources for inner/outer power, gender-roles, and the structure of social oppression towards the participant. The counselor asks questions so that the participant examines her old beliefs in order that the beliefs can be changed. Moreover, the participant has to learn by herself about gender-roles through the counselor asking the participant to share the situation in which she was abused, to

share her thoughts and feelings at that time, and to share the solutions to such situations in her daily life to take forward to the next counseling session.

The techniques used in feminist counseling differ to techniques used in general counseling and include: 1) therapy-demystifying strategies are focused on self-disclosing, making decisions, skill sharing between the counselor and the participant to bring about an egalitarian relationship. 2) sex-role analysis is used to understand the impact of social expectations about sex roles. This method can help the participant to clarify changes in her understanding about gender-roles. 3) social analysis is used when the participant feels that she is discriminated against socially and she begins to be hesitant. 4) power analysis is helpful for women to analyze why power is different between females and males in society, and what conditions oppress or lead the male to have more power than the participant so that she feels powerless.

After talking about these issues, they could lead to heightened consciousness-awareness by the participant that leads to learning new roles and empowerment.

### 1.3 Decision making and choice

This step is used when the participant realizes that something is oppressing her but she cannot make a corrective decision. The counselor asks the participant to choose the best option for her life and that she can choose power or use power to bring about changes herself.

### 1.4 Acting or social liberation

The counselor gives an opportunity for the participant to learn, practice and develop everyday communication skills by asking the participant to share or learn to speak about her personal experiences. If such a situation reoccurs, how will she handle it?

### 1.5 Making the conclusion and evaluation

The participant can choose to terminate the counseling when she gains greater empowerment through feeling independent, self-confident, self-respect, etc.

The counseling process consists of such steps by using some specific techniques to bring the participant to an empowerment feeling like the details in Table 2.

**Table 2** The summary of purposes, techniques and results of the counseling process

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Technique</b>	<b>Result</b>
1. Establishing and modeling an egalitarian relationship	- therapy-demystifying strategies - listening - reflecting - questioning	- established - trustworthiness - possibility to make a decision - self-disclosure - relax
2. Consciousness-raising		
2.1 to understand the perception of meaning of being abused	- listening - reflecting - questioning to examine thoughts/beliefs	- the counselor and the participant know the oppressing factors
2.2 to search for inner power and power supporting sources	- power analysis - listening - questioning to examine thoughts/beliefs - reflecting	- perceive the power source that is able to help - can search for inner power - have a positive thinking towards oneself - can do anything by oneself
2.3 to analyze sex role	- sex-role analysis	- understand impacts of social

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Technique</b>	<b>Result</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- listening</li> <li>- questioning to examine thoughts/beliefs</li> <li>- reflecting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>expectations about sex role</li> <li>- have a positive thinking towards oneself</li> </ul>
2.4 to analyze the structure of social oppression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- social analysis</li> <li>- listening</li> <li>- questioning to examine thoughts/beliefs</li> <li>- reflecting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- feel confident that not being socially discriminated</li> <li>- think that she has the same rights as her husband</li> </ul>
3. the participant has the power to make a decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- listening</li> <li>- questioning</li> <li>- reflecting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- having power to make a decision</li> <li>- can choose to think and take action</li> </ul>
4. the participant is trained for communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- listening</li> <li>- questioning</li> <li>- reflecting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be able to live a full life</li> </ul>
5. the participant decides to terminate the counseling process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- listening</li> <li>- questioning</li> <li>- reflecting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- feel independent</li> <li>- feel free</li> <li>- feel in control</li> <li>- determined mind</li> <li>- feel powerful</li> <li>- be confident</li> <li>- not suicidal</li> <li>- being herself</li> <li>- think that she can do anything</li> <li>- think independently</li> <li>- think that being abused is not about fate or a belief in a 'former life' existence</li> <li>- think that a she is not a possession of her husband for him to abuse</li> <li>- think that a good wife doesn't need to succumb to being abused by her husband</li> </ul>

In this study, there were 6 participants with 2 participants deciding not to receive the complete counseling process. The remaining 4 participants experienced the complete process. The 2 participants who dropped out of the counseling process had already successfully completed Step 1 of the process and were already part-way through Step 2 which was, in effect, satisfactory proof of a positive result for the process.

Even though the counseling process for each participant differed according to individual factors, especially in the consciousness-raising step, all of the participants disclosed their personal experiences so that the counselor understood their situations in every dimension and understood in what areas the participants were oppressed. However, the

arrangement of the issues to talk about with each person was different in consciousness-raising dependent on participant choice.

The examples of consciousness-raising process by using sex-role analysis like the details in Table 3.

**Table 3** The examples of consciousness-raising process by using sex-role analysis

Issue	Content
general information	<p>This case study is of Jane, who is 51 years old. She is divorced, but lives in the same house with her husband. It was found that she was ashamed, felt powerless, and didn't dare to face the truth when others knew that she was abused. She was taught that a woman has to have only one husband, obey him, should not argue with him, and should not tell others about her family. Moreover, she was a Chinese whose belief was taught that a woman must be a follower, could not use her maiden name, and seemed to lack value in her parents' eyes, while a man, a genealogical descendant, is valued more as a son than a daughter. These words could reflect;</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“In the past, I was taught that a woman has to have one husband, obey him, if I have a husband, I must obey him. I can't argue with him. I was trained like that. It caused me to submit when I was abused. Because of this reason, I was abused like this. I hadn't faced anything like this in my parent family, but when I have a new family, I am in the different one I have never met. Because women were taught like this, it affects so much. For me, I think I am not strong. I don't dare to face the truth when others know. I am ashamed a lot. He knows that I am fear something like this, so he keeps doing it because he is not ashamed but I am ashamed to face others. If anyone asks me about my family, I just say “stop, stop”. I have to stop first. If I have to say, I just say very little, not much..... I think I should change my opinion like this (belief). A woman should be strong, not weak or submit under his power anymore. A woman can take care of herself.....”Jane P6 (July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011), the 2<sup>nd</sup> appointment, line 267 -271, 323 – 334.</i></p>
sex-role analysis	<p>The counselor used sex-role analysis with Jane by beginning with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) understanding Jane's sex role messages. It was found that Jane's family is Chinese and they value a son more than a daughter. She was not supported by her father to study or work because he believed that when she grew up, she would be married and only do housework. Her mother also behaved in the same way as her father and taught her to obey her husband and not argue with him because he would take care of her and that everything in the family is private.</li> <li>2) after that the counselor helped the participant to analyze how the old beliefs she was taught affected her life. Jane said that because she was taught like that, she was so ashamed to tell others about the abuse. She felt she was not strong. She didn't dare to face the truth with others about being abused, and it caused her to submit to his abuse.</li> <li>3) next, the counselor and the participant worked together to find messages that showed the sex-role had to be changed. Jane's result was that a woman should obey her husband, doesn't argue with him and caused her being abused.</li> <li>4) the counselor helped Jane decide whether her beliefs should be changed or not. It meant that the counselor accepted and gave a role of a decision maker to the participant by asking her who determined such beliefs, what such beliefs affected</li> </ol>

Issue	Content
	<p>Jane’s life, whether Jane thought such beliefs should be changed or not.</p> <p>In this process, the counselor gradually helped the participant change her beliefs by helping the participant begin to realize consciousness-raising. This is illustrated as Jane said;</p> <p><i>“... I think that historically, people planted a mistaken belief, which did not help their children become strong. They didn’t help their daughters to be strong like my family. I am a half-blood, Thai and Chinese. It’s different for a man, very different. Because I was taught that women had to be followers, Chinese children..... a daughter could not use her maiden name. It’s like we have no value for our parents. Only a son has any significance. A daughter has to stay in the background. I was raised like this. I think it’s wrong. A daughter and a son should be treated equally in education or support, but it is taught that a son has to be strong, be mature. Daughters have to obey those sons. I was taught this by my parents. I have to sacrifice to men. I was raised up like this. I have to accept that men get more education because they are leaders and descendants, so women are always forced to remain dependent. Even in education, women have to sacrifice to the men first, so it caused me to be weak, ashamed. Because of this, I was not strong from the beginning, really weak. I confess. I was indoctrinated since I was young. A daughter doesn’t have to study much. If she has a husband, then she will live with him. She isn’t a direct descendant so she doesn’t have to study much, nothing, I always was taught like this. Even by studying more, there is no difference. If I have a child, I have to raise him up, no meaning, can’t descend because in the past only sons could descend. Women are not emphasized, are they? I am Chinese, I face this problem. If I study, I can study only to this level. I have to sacrifice to men. They are men, they are leaders. I was repressed like this.....It affects me so much because I always submit to men. There are a lot of effects. I submit to their speech. I was despised by men. I submit to being beaten without fighting back because I am ashamed” Jane P6 (July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011), 2<sup>nd</sup> appointment, line 341 – 366.</i></p> <p>5) finally, the counselor saw Jane’s recognition from her messages which said that such taught beliefs should be changed, “I think that I should change (belief). A woman should be strong, not weak and not submit under his power (husband). A woman can take care of herself.” Moreover, the counselor found that Jane’s facial expressions and voice were changed from the first time that she met when she had lacked self-confidence, but now she appeared confident. Her eyes seemed to show concentration and a hope to bring a change and a better life.</p>
summary	<p>The counselor helped the participant learn about her new sex role and gradually helped her to change her beliefs by making her realize belief and mind-changes by facilitating the consciousness-raising process and bringing change to the old beliefs so that the participant felt increased confidence.</p>

**2. The results of the counseling were found as follows:**

The content analysis shows that the abused women who received counseling had changes in their thoughts which enabled them to become self-reliant, believed there will be a way out of the situation and felt more hope and energy.



The average score on perceived empowerment in the abused women before receiving the counseling was a low level (6 women) and after receiving the counseling a high level (1 woman) and the highest level (5 women) (see Table 4).

**Table 4** The results of empowerment evaluation in each abused woman before and after the counseling

Alias	Before counseling		After counseling	
	Average	Feel empowering	Average	Feel empowering
Chandra	2.55 low	- feel controlled - is not convinced that she can take care of herself. - believe that women giving in to abuse because of destiny created to live together	2.77 high	- life is free - think that she can take care of herself - believe that abuse is not fate or destiny
Kanokporn	2.44 low	- feel that life is like being a slave - have to bear every feeling of her husband - feel controlled - believe that abuse is fate	3.97 highest	- feel that she can rely on herself - choose to decide - not being in anyone's control - believe that abuse is not fate
Bungar	2.41 low	- is not sure how life will go on - doesn't know who to ask for help when being abused - believe that abuse is fate	3.61 highest	- think that she can do by herself - know who to ask for help when being abused -believe that abuse is not fate
Chat	2.19 low	- believe that being a wife has to bear her husband's feeling and being a wife means that she becomes her husband's possession - feel controlled - feel that she is her husband's slave	3.63 highest	- think that she herself has to begin to change her thoughts - feel that life has options - think that she also has rights like her husband because of being human
Anong	2.47 low	- feel hellish - feel controlled - a good mother isn't allowed to be sick, absent, or ask permission	3.63 highest	- feel heavenly - feel free - feel relieved - be herself - think that life doesn't circulate around her husband - think that she doesn't need to stand abuse by her husband for the sake of being a good mother
Jane	2.52 low	- feel controlled - doesn't dare to say - afraid of her husband - bear to be abused by her husband - has to depend on him - feel like a weak one - think of suicide - feel like an insane one	3.58 highest	- feel relieved - can take care of herself - life is like a renewed life - think that a woman has to be strong, not weak. If she is weak, he will keep abusing forever - think that abuse is not fate

Alias	Before counseling		After counseling	
	Average	Feel empowering	Average	Feel empowering
		- believe that a wife has to obey her husband, can't argue with him, a woman has to give up - think that abuse is fate		

**Discussion:**

The process of PFEC has helped abused women change their beliefs and their power perception has been changed greatly from the low level of powerful feeling to the high and the highest level.

Reasons why the process of PFEC enables abused women to change their thoughts and empowering feeling are; It is found that physically and sexually abused women have the most problems about feeling controlled and lack the skills to handle their emotion, guilt, and shame. They don't dare to talk with others about being abused. These affect restoration and results of counseling.<sup>8</sup> This research shows that women can change their thoughts, beliefs and feelings, leading to empowerment from the underlying principle of the counseling concept. It is considered that a person is a socio-political part of society. It emphasizes the change process and models an egalitarian relationship which enables a search for power by consciousness-raising through the appreciation of the shared experiences of the women.<sup>13-16, 18</sup> Moreover, this counseling process has its belief and focus on an egalitarian relationship between a counselor and the participant.<sup>13, 15-16</sup>

The counselor starts the counseling by focusing an egalitarian relationship between the counselor and the participant from the first time of meeting until the end of the process. The counselor impresses on the participant, the need to make decisions since the decision to receive counseling and carry her life on in each situation, and in the process, there is a disclosure process to know and share skills, experiences, thoughts and beliefs with each other because it is very powerful and important in the part of establishing and maintaining an egalitarian relationship between the counselor and the participant because the participant is an expert in her life and experience. Besides these, the counselor has tried to bring about mutual empowerment. She began carefully by dressing casually and not wearing a uniform. She prepared her tone and facial expression, issued words of friendship, showed honesty and a desire to understand, listen and be a friend to the participant. This process is different from making a relationship in general counseling that involves making a relationship for trust. The counselor doesn't have to disclose herself for establishing and sharing experience, skill, and belief to the participant.

Moreover, the reason for belief change in the participant is because of the consciousness-raising process that helped the participant find her inner power because the counselor has tried to understand and perceive the meaning of being abused from the experience of the participant, so the counselor understands what factors affect the participant to submit and be abused. The counselor could evaluate what the participant is facing. After that, the counselor questioned challengingly to help the participant examine her belief that was the gradually belief-removing process of the participant. In addition, the counseling process is flexible because when the participant's oppression is evaluated, the participant will choose to start talking about their most important issue first. Moreover, the process is different according to the experiences of individual participants.

This counseling process uses some basic techniques in general counseling, but there are also different techniques used that lead to the goal of bringing about empowerment: therapy-demystifying strategies, power analysis, social analysis, sex-role analysis, and challenging questions which help participants to examine themselves and to change their

beliefs. However, even though successful, this process took time and it is time which must be spent with participants. When they were questioned during the initial use of each technique they often immobilized and confirmed that it's taught regularly to believe that wives should submit when their husbands are abusive. Then the counselor can ask who determined that a wife has to submit when her husband is abusive, so the counselor gradually helps to change their beliefs at each meeting.

Moreover, putting this process into practice, the counselor should not only know what the process is, but also has to understand the concept of gender and use the view of PFEC in order to effect changes to the benefit of the participant. Even though previously, research used the feminist concept, the quantitative result was aimed to focus on such topics as measuring self-esteem, quality of life, gender-role flexibility and involving social networks,<sup>19</sup> The perception of oppression and social structure,<sup>20</sup> in this research emphasized the results of thoughts, beliefs and perceptions of empowerment in the participant from data collected qualitatively and quantitatively to evaluate the results.

### **Limitations:**

Even though this counseling process was developed using a variety of abused women, the steps were practiced among women abused by their husbands and NOT women abused sexually. There were no sexually-abused women in the data collection sample.

Two participants decided not to receive the complete counseling process. Because of distance problems and because their houses were flooded during that time, they were able to be with their husbands without experiencing abuse (the information from phone follow-up by the counselor). However, they passed the consciousness-raising process enabling women to realize, examine their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings.

### **Conclusion:**

The process of counseling can remove participating women of their oppressive beliefs about being abused. The changes indicating better adjustment in their lives can be explained by perceived empowerment developed through the counseling process. This study is of the process that insures health security for abused women.

### **Recommendations:**

To help the abused women change their feelings from totally powerless to empowered, this counseling process should be used. In doing so, the counselor should be able to identify gender perspectives and the postmodern feminist viewpoints.

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