



21
June 2020

Gaetano Domenici

Editoriale / *Editorial*

Politica, Scienze dell'uomo e della natura, Tecnologia: 11
una nuova alleanza per la rinascita durante e dopo il coronavirus
(*Politics, Human Sciences, Natural Sciences and Technology:
a New Alliance for a Rebirth During and After the Coronavirus*)

STUDI E CONTRIBUTI DI RICERCA

STUDIES AND RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

Saiful Prayogi - Ni Nyoman Sri Putu Verawati

The Effect of Conflict Cognitive Strategy in Inquiry-based 27
Learning on Preservice Teachers' Critical Thinking Ability
(*L'effetto della strategia cognitiva del conflitto sull'apprendimento
centrato sull'abilità di pensiero critico degli insegnanti in formazione*)

Anna Serbati - Debora Aquario - Lorenza Da Re

Omar Paccagnella - Ettore Felisatti

Exploring Good Teaching Practices and Needs 43
for Improvement: Implications for Staff Development
(*Esplorare le buone pratiche didattiche all'università e i bisogni
di miglioramento: implicazioni per lo sviluppo della formazione dei docenti*)

- Patrizia Ghislandi - Juliana Raffaghelli - Albert Sangrà
Giuseppe Ritella*
The Street Lamp Paradox: Analysing Students' Evaluation of Teaching through Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches 65
(Il paradosso del lampione: analizzare, attraverso approcci qualitativi e quantitativi, la valutazione di un insegnamento accademico da parte degli studenti)
- Islam M. Farag*
Perfectionism and English Learners' Self-efficacy 87
(Perfezionismo e autoefficacia degli studenti nell'apprendimento dell'inglese)
- Leena Holopainen - Doris Kofler - Arno Koch - Airi Hakkarainen
Kristin Bauer - Livia Taverna*
Ci sono differenti predittori della lettura nelle lingue che hanno un'ortografia trasparente? Evidenze da uno studio longitudinale 111
(Do Predictors of Reading Differ among Transparent Orthographies? Evidence from a Longitudinal Study)
- Mohammad Tahan - Masume Kalantari - Tabereh Sajedi Rad
Mohammad Javad Aghel - Maryam Afshari - Azam Sabri*
The Impact of Communication Skills Training on Social Empowerment and Social Adjustment of Slow-paced Adolescents 131
(L'impatto della formazione delle abilità comunicative sull'empowerment e l'adattamento sociale degli adolescenti «a ritmo lento»)
- Cristina Coggi - Paola Ricchiardi*
L'empowerment dei docenti universitari: formarsi alla didattica e alla valutazione 149
(Empowerment in Higher Education: Training in Teaching and Assessment)
- Irene Dora Maria Scierri - Federico Batini*
Misurare l'omonegatività: validazione italiana della Multidimensional Scale of Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men 169
(Measuring Homonegativity: Italian Validation of the Multidimensional Scale of Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men)
-

PARTE MONOGRAFICA

E-learning per l'istruzione superiore: nuove indagini empiriche

MONOGRAPHIC SECTION

E-learning for higher education: new empirical investigations

Massimo Margottini - Francesca Rossi

Processi autoregolativi e feedback nell'apprendimento online 193
(*Self-regulation Processes and Feedback in Online Learning*)

Valeria Biasi - Anna Maria Ciraci - Daniela Marella

Innovazioni per la qualificazione degli ambienti virtuali 211
di apprendimento e della didattica online nella formazione
terziaria: una indagine esplorativa

(*Innovations for the Qualification of Virtual Learning Environments
and Online Didactic in Tertiary Education: An Exploratory Survey*)

Giovanni Moretti - Arianna Lodovica Morini

L'utilizzo del podcasting nella didattica universitaria 233
(*The Use of Podcasting in the University Teaching*)

Antonella Poce

A Massive Open Online Course Designed to Support 255
the Development of Virtual Mobility Transversal Skills:

Preliminary Evaluation Results from European Participants

(*Un MOOC progettato per sostenere lo sviluppo delle abilità trasversali
di mobilità virtuale: risultati preliminari di valutazione
dai partecipanti europei*)

Gabriella Aleandri - Emanuele Consoli

Metodi autobiografici e coding per lo sviluppo 275
dell'autoconsapevolezza e delle competenze trasversali

(*Autobiographical Methods and Coding for Increasing Self-awareness
and Transversal Skills*)

Lucia Chiappetta Cajola

E-learning inclusivo e studenti con DSA a Roma Tre: dati 301
di ricerca e prospettive di sviluppo

(*Inclusive E-learning and Student with Specific Learning Disorders
at Roma Tre University: Research Data and Development Perspective*)

<i>Fabio Bocci - Gianmarco Bonavolontà</i> Sviluppare ambienti inclusivi nella formazione universitaria online: esiti di una ricerca esplorativa <i>(Develop Inclusive Environments in Online University Education: Results of an Exploratory Research)</i>	325
--	-----

NOTE DI RICERCA
RESEARCH NOTES

<i>Concetta La Rocca</i> Open Badge a scopo formativo: resoconto di una esperienza didattica in ambito universitario <i>(Open Badge for Educational Goals: Relationship of a Teaching Experience at University)</i>	343
--	-----

COMMENTI, RIFLESSIONI, PRESENTAZIONI,
RESOCONTI, DIBATTITI, INTERVISTE
COMMENTS, REFLECTIONS, PRESENTATIONS,
REPORTS, DEBATES, INTERVIEWS

<i>Barbara De Angelis</i> E-learning e strategie inclusive: uno studio per rilevare le opinioni dei docenti dell'Università Roma Tre <i>(E-learning and Inclusive Strategies: A Study Designed to Detect Teachers' Opinions of the Roma Tre University)</i>	357
--	-----

<i>Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies</i> Notiziario / News	367
--	-----

Author Guidelines	371
-------------------	-----

The Impact of Communication Skills Training on Social Empowerment and Social Adjustment of Slow-paced Adolescents

Mohammad Tahan¹ - Masume Kalantari² -
Tahereh Sajedi Rad³ - Mohammad Javad Aghel⁴
Maryam Afshari⁵ - Azam Sabri⁶

¹ Islamic Azad University - Birjand Branch - Department of Clinical Psychology (Iran)

² Islamic Azad University - Tehran Branch - Department of Psychology and Education of Exceptional Children (Iran)

³ Islamic Azad University - Ghaenat Branch - Department of Psychology (Iran)

⁴ University of Birjand - Department of Psychology and Educational Sciences (Iran)

⁵ Islamic Azad University - Birjand Branch - Department of Educational Psychology (Iran)

⁶ Islamic Azad University - Birjand Branch - Department of Psychology (Iran)

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.7358/ecps-2020-021-taha>

t.mohammad2@gmail.com

L'IMPATTO DELLA FORMAZIONE DELLE ABILITÀ
COMUNICATIVE SULL'EMPOWERMENT E L'ADATTAMENTO
SOCIALE DEGLI ADOLESCENTI «A RITMO LENTO»

ABSTRACT

The present study was an attempt to investigate the effect of communication skills training on social empowerment and social adjustment of so-called «slow-paced» adolescents (ie those who need psychological, physical and emotional drivers to actualize their potential abilities). The research method was a control-Group Pretest-Posttest Quasi-

Experimental design. The population of the study consisted of all slow-paced female students aged 13-15 years in Ghaenat city (South Khorasan Province) during 2019. 24 samples selected from the population through convenient sampling were randomly assigned to two experimental and control groups (12 individuals in each group). Teachers or parents of both subject groups were asked to fill the questionnaires (pre-test). In the next step, the experimental group was presented with ten 45-minute sessions on communication skills, and the control group did not receive any training. In the end, both groups responded to the research instrument (post-test). Vineland social maturity scale was used as the data collection instrument. The collected data were analyzed through covariance analysis using SPSS software version 22. The results showed that communication skills training has a significant impact on social empowerment ($F = 15.47, p = 0.001$) and social adjustment ($F = 49.64, p = 0.001$). In other words, it can be argued that the experimental and control groups significantly differ from each other in terms of the communication skills training impacts on social empowerment and its components as well as social maturity. In conclusion, communication skills training significantly improves the social empowerment and social maturity of slow-paced female adolescents in the experimental group.

Keywords: Communication skills; Iran; Slow-paced adolescents; Social adjustment; Social empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Intellectual disability is a universal problem in any country. This phenomenon is not only a medical problem but also an educational, psychological and social problem (Jadal, 2012). Currently, the term «mental retardation» is obsolete and the term «intellectual disability» has been approved by all scientific centers, organizations and scientific associations, including American Association of Psychiatric (APA) in the fifth revised edition of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in the International Classification of Diseases, 11th revision (ICD-11) (American Psychiatric Association, 2014; Kalantari *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, the term «slow pace» is a better equivalent with better motivational load in line with Iranian human values and culture. This term that views mental retardation from a more positive viewpoint, replaced the term «mental retardation» in the Islamic Republic of Iran and was finally approved by the WHO in 2007 (Afrooz, Ashouri, & Ghasemzadeh, 2016). According to the American Association on Intel-

lectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), intellectual disability is a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates before the age of 18 (AAIDD, 2011).

The studies conducted by Sadock *et al.* (2015), Angold, Costello and Erkanli (1999) indicate that other mental disorders are associated with intellectual disability. Prakash, Sudarsanan and Prabhu (2007) showed that behavioral problems are more prevalent in slow-paced individuals. The estimated prevalence of social-adjustment disorders in slow-paced individuals is 13-75 percent (Farisabadi, Khosravi, & Sabahi, 2015). Slow-paced children may have reduced motor, communication, and social skills and have lower cognitive functioning than their typically developing peers. This may lead to fewer opportunities to participate in recreation, leisure and sporting activities. Lower levels of participation in activities among these children may encourage sedentary behavior, social isolation, anxiety, and shyness that are commonly reported in this group. (King *et al.*, 2013).

Slow-paced adolescents need psychological, physical and emotional drivers to actualize their potential abilities and become an active and acceptable member of their community. To achieve this goal, they need more opportunities and specific training techniques. On the other hand, the communication problems of these children, as well as their other problems with the actualization of educational methods, play a vital role in this field. Therefore, the training courses considered for these children are mainly meant to help them acquire a level of skill that enables them to communicate effectively with others and their environment. Lack of social adjustability is one of the problems that slow-paced adolescents are facing. Considering the increase in social communications with peers and reduced dependency on parents during adolescence, social adjustability is of vital importance in this period. Social adjustability is the recognition of self and others' rights and responsibilities, making friends, teamwork, moral judgment, and gaining independence (Kafi *et al.*, 2013).

Therefore, one of the main objectives of slow-paced student training courses is to promote social adjustment, development of useful and effective relationships with others, and assumption of social responsibility. Most psychologists believe that social skills are a set of accepted and acquired behaviors that enable one to effectively communicate with others and avoid unreasonable social reactions (BehPajouh *et al.*, 2010). lack of social competence (social empowerment) is another problem slow-paced students usually face. To successfully pass through the adolescence stage, one needs to be socially competent in four components of

competence and ability (behavioral skill, cognitive skill, emotional competence, and motivational competence). The lack of these skills is the major cause of adjustment and adaptation problems (Motamedi, Babaei, & Biglarian, 2012).

Empowerment is associated with normal performance and the enhancement of living standards. Therefore, to achieve empowerment and social adjustment, slow-paced adolescents are required to acquire a variety of skills, including communication skills. On the other hand, different studies have shown that recognition of slow-paced adolescents and employment of appropriate strategies can contribute to the improvement of their skills and reduction of their problems. The relevant literature in this field have proven the impact of social skills training on adjustment improvements in students with intellectual disability (Estler & Goldbeck, 2011). The impact of communication skills training on improvements in adjustment behavior and academic performance of female students with intellectual disability (Farisabadi, Khosravi, & Sabahi, 2015); the impact of communication skills training on impulsivity of adolescent girls with conduct disorder (Hatami, Sadeghiarad, & Hassani, 2015); the impact of communication skills training on social adjustment, aggression and academic achievement (Hosseinian *et al.*, 2016) is effective. The training courses considered for slow-paced students are meant to prepare them for social life and help them acquire the skills that are necessary for leading an independent life with the least dependence on others. Fully-applied programs are required to achieve this goal (Seif Naraghi *et al.*, 2009). These programs include communication skills training. Communication skills are part of life skills that help individuals engage in interpersonal interactions and communication processes (Hossein-Chari & Agha Dellavarpour, 2006).

Communicative skills are of much more importance for slow-paced children because their success in social and occupational life is dependent on communicational and social skills. Unfortunately, a large number of slow-paced children are dealing with communication and interaction challenges that are mostly associated with their skills. Aside from their limited verbal communication skills, they are mostly plagued with a lack of non-verbal communication skills. They usually have problems with the initiation of positive and effective social communications and the continuation of them. Their interactions and communications with peers and family members are associated with aggression (Oluwaseun & Tahan, 2018). They usually show inappropriate behaviors and are ultimately shunned by their peers. Considering the communication problems the slow-paced children are plagued with and the impact on these problems on the social and occupational aspects of their lives, attempts should be made to employ

some techniques to improve and enhance communication skills in these students (Shahi, Afrooz, & Mir Zamani, 2009).

Communication is an interaction between at least two individuals sending and receiving messages to achieve a goal. Adequate communication is one of the basic skills of social life. Communication skills are behaviors that help one correctly express their emotions and needs and achieve interpersonal goals. These skills are so important that their deficiency could lead to a sense of loneliness, social anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and academic and professional failures (Williams & Zadiro, 2001). In other words, communication skills are the abilities that lead to positive and adjustment behaviors and are necessary for having a sense of success, ability, and happiness in everyday life (Adib & Fardanesh, 2003).

Sticker *et al.* (2003) concluded that communication skills can effectively reduce social anxiety, increase problem-solving skills, and improve self-esteem and social interaction among students. In a study titled «the effectiveness of life skills training on self-empowerment of male students with math disorder» Pour-Mohammadreza Tajrishi *et al.* (2013) found that life skills training can improve the social self-empowerment of male students with math disorder. In a research titled «The effect of social skills training on social adjustment and academic performance of late students», Behpajouh *et al.* (2010) found that interventional programs can significantly improve the social adjustment of unapt male students in the experimental group.

The success of adolescents in social life, occupation, and academic fields is dependent on their social and communicational skills (Soleimani Nejad & Shaetrola, 2008). Moreover, almost all psychologists and education experts believe that adolescence is the most sensitive, critical and important period of every person's life. In this period, individuals reach maturity, try to discover their identity, seek independence and wish to put an end to their childhood dependencies. That's why adolescents mostly have no stable mental status, and usually face the most severe behavioral problem (Asadi, 2012). Aside from changes in adolescence, this period is characterized by challenges and disabilities such as intellectual disability that could cause or even aggravate behavioral problems for adolescents. In other words, adolescents' disability to adjust themselves to new conditions leads to more behavioral problems in this period (Helstela & Sourander, 2001). Thus, considering the effectiveness of the communication skills training program in social empowerment and adjustment of slow-paced adolescents and the lack of relevant domestic literature in this field, in the present study attempts are made to evaluate the impact of communication skills training on social empowerment and social adjustment of the slow-paced adolescents.

1. METHOD

1.1. *Study design*

The present study is a control-Group Pretest-Posttest Quasi-Experimental study. The population of the study consisted of all slow-paced female students aged between 13-15-years who were studying at the exceptional schools in the city of Ghaen during 2019. 24 students selected from the population through convenience sampling (census) were randomly assigned to control (12 individuals) and experimental (12 individuals) groups.

The inclusion criteria were: lack of familial damages induced by divorce or death of parents, 13-15 years age limit, willingness to participate in research, slow-paced girls (IQ: 50-70), informed consent of parents. The exclusion criteria included: reluctance to participate in the study and acute physical or psychological diseases.

1.2. *Data collection instruments*

The following instruments were used to collect data:

A. *Social competence scale*. The social competence scale was used to assess the social empowerment of students. The scale was developed based on Fellner's social adequacy scale (1990) to investigate the capacity profile of children and adolescents and was used to evaluate social empowerment in the experimental and control groups (Laktarash, 2019). This scale consisted of 47 items and four scales used to measure cognitive skills, behavioral skill, emotional competence, and motivational set. Subjects responded the test questions based on a 7-point scale covering completely disagree (1), I disagree (2), fairly disagree (3) I have no idea (4), fairly agree (5), agree (6), and totally agree (7) Questions 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 21, 25, 26, 28, 32, 36, 37, 38, 43, 44 and were scored in reverse order. In the present study, the correlation between each question and the total score of the questions associated with the same subscale was calculated to determine the validity of the questions. The results showed that the correlation coefficient was significant for all questions. Parandin and Karami (2012) reported the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.88 for this questionnaire, and the reliability coefficient of 0.94 was obtained for the questionnaire in the present study.

B. *Vineland's social maturity scale*: This scale was developed by Edgar in 1953 and was later revised in 1965 (Sparrow, 2011). This scale is one of the evolutionary scales that measure the ability of an individual to meet his practical needs and assumption of responsibilities. The scale is applicable for different ages ranging from newborns up to 25 years of age. Nevertheless, it's proven that the scale is most effective for lower age ranges, especially in the intellectual disability groups. This scale consisted of 117 items that are divided into eight classes: general self-help items, self-help in eating, self-help in dressing, self-direction, occupation, verbal communication, locomotion, and socialization. In each item, the information needed to determine the individual's maturity rate in each of the eight classes was obtained directly through the tester observations, participation in the test, or interviewing individuals that are acquainted with the subject. The scale is meant to determine the things one could do in everyday life. The individual scores could be used to measure social age (SA) and social quotient (SQ) of the subjects (Zadashir, Estaki, & Emami Pour, 2009). Of the eight domains of social maturity, only the socialization domain was studied and analyzed in the present study. The socialization domain consisted of 17 items. To evaluate the validity of the questions, the correlation of each item with the total score of the items associated with the same scale (socialization) was calculated. The results showed that the correlation coefficient is significant for all the items. Jalilvand and Ghobari Bonab (2004), Zadashir (2009), Karami (2011), reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.73, 0.68, and 0.92 for this scale respectively. The reliability coefficient obtained for the scale in the present study was 0/89.

1.3. *Procedure*

After the selection of samples, subjects' teachers or parents filled the social competence scale (social empowerment) and Vineland's social maturity scale. The experimental group was presented with ten 45-minute communication skills training sessions. The control group did not receive any training though. Afterwards, the participants filled out the questionnaires once more (posttest). Regarding ethical consideration, the control group will receive education after final tests. The study was registered with the Clinical Trial Number ISRCTN51125209.

SPSS 22 was used to analyze the collected data. The mean and standard deviation were used in the descriptive level and the covariance analysis was used to compare the mean score of groups in the post-test (*Tab. 1*).

Table 1. – Communication skill training package based on the communication skills training guide presented by Kayvand, Shafi Abadi and Sudani (2009).

SESSION	
<i>Session 1</i>	An introduction to the goals, elaboration of some social communication techniques, statement of goals
<i>Session 2</i>	Starting and termination a useful communication, barriers to effective communication, elaboration of the communication model.
<i>Session 3</i>	Non-verbal language and interpretation of that, physical characteristics and environmental factors in non-verbal communication
<i>Session 4</i>	Different types of listening, barriers to listening, mastery of listening skills during a communication
<i>Session 5</i>	Reflection of emotions and concepts, verbal sympathy and presentation of decisive but flexible responses.
<i>Session 6</i>	Different types of Self-Assertiveness, their benefits and functions, social communication techniques.
<i>Session 7</i>	Having the courage to say «No». the six stages of self- Assertiveness, power enhancement
<i>Session 8</i>	Conflict and its different types, personal and group conflict prevention and inhibition.
<i>Session 9</i>	Collaborative Problem solving technique and its applications problem solving traps.
<i>Session 10</i>	Honesty, sympathy and love, formulation and implementation of a commitment letter for employment of communication skills

2. RESULTS

According to the descriptive statistics, a total of subjects was 24 were selected. 12 out of the 24 subjects were assigned the experimental group and the other 12 were assigned to the control group. The mean score of social empowerment and social maturity variables was almost equal in the pre-test of the experimental and control groups. The mean score, however, increased in the experimental groups post-test. Pretest score obtained for social empowerment and social maturity in the experimental and control groups were 250.25 (SD 8.91) and 241.50 (SD 8.83) respectively. After the communication skills training, the post-test scores obtained for social empowerment and social maturity were reportedly equal to 294.41, and 12.33 in the experimental group and 237, 33 and 9.8 in the control groups respectively.

Covariance analysis was used to analyze the effect of communication skills training on social empowerment and social maturity of subjects.

First, the normal distribution of data was analyzed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical test.

Table 2. – The results obtained from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (normal distribution of variables).

VARIABLES	t	DF	P-VALUE
Cognitive skills	-1.87	23	0.04
Behavioral skills	-3.63	23	0.001
Emotional competence	-2.04	23	0.04
Motivational	-.245	23	0.02
Social empowerment	-3.23	23	0.004

According to the results presented in *Table 2*, the significance of social empowerment and social maturity variables is greater than 0.05; thus, it can be argued that the variables' scores are normally distributed.

The results presented in *Table 3* indicate that the pre-test scores associated with social empowerment and its components are significant (the slope of the regression line is not the same). Thaw results also show that communication skills training has a significant impact on social empowerment and its components. In other words, it can be argued that the two experimental and control groups are significantly different in terms of the impact of communication skills training on social empowerment and its components. The adjusted means are presented in *Table 4*.

Table 4 shows that the adjusted mean of the experimental group is significantly lower than that of the control group. This means that communication skills training has had a significant impact on social empowerment and its components among slow-paced female adolescents.

Table 5 shows that the scores obtained from social maturity pre-test ($F = 136.86$ and $p = 0.001$) are significant (the slope of the regression line is not the same). The results also show that communication skills training can significantly affect social maturity ($F = 49.64$, $p = 0.001$). In other words, it can be argued that the experimental and control groups significantly differ from each other in terms of the impact of communication skills training on social maturity. The adjusted means are presented in *Table 6*.

The results presented in *Table 6* show that the adjusted mean of the experimental group is significantly lower than that of the control group. Thus, it can be argued that communication skills training has had a significant impact on social empowerment and its components among slow-paced female adolescents.

Table 3. – The covariance analysis results obtained for the effect of communication skills training on social empowerment and its components.

Source of changes	Variables	Total square	DF	Mean square	F	P-Value	Squared eta breakdown	Power
MODIFIED MODEL	Cognitive skills	51.45	2	25.72	3.34	0.05	6.69	0.56
	Behavioral skills	5471.18	2	2735.59	20.09	0.001	40.18	1
	Emotional competence	46.96	2	23.48	4.44	0.02	8.88	0.69
	Motivational	164.04	2	82.02	7.34	0.001	14.68	0.90
	Social empowerment	8339.240	2	426.92	12.63	0.001	25.55	0.99
ASSOCIATED VARIABLE (PRE-TEST SCORES)	Cognitive skills	51.07	1	51.07	6.64	0.01	6.64	0.69
	Behavioral skills	5054.51	1	5054.1	37.12	0.001	37.12	1
	Emotional competence	37.58	1	3758	7.11	0.01	7.11	0.72
	Motivational	162	1	162	14.50	0.001	14.50	0.95
	Social empowerment	8079.86	1	8079.86	23.90	0.001	23.90	0.99
TRAINING EFFECT (EXPERIMENTAL-CONTROL)	Cognitive skills	21.05	1	21.05	2.73	0.01	2.73	0.68
	Behavioral skills	2120.87	1	2120.87	15.57	0.001	15.57	0.96
	Emotional competence	7.20	1	7.20	1.36	0.02	1.36	0.69
	Motivational	120.39	1	120.39	10.77	0.001	10.77	0.87
	Social empowerment	4304.26	1	4304.26	12.73	0.001	12.73	0.92
ERROR	Cognitive skills	161.50	21	7.69				
	Behavioral skills	2859.31	21	136.15				
	Emotional competence	110.99	21	5.28				
	Motivational	234.58	21	11.17				
	Social empowerment	7099.38	21	338.06				
TOTAL CORRECTED SUM	Cognitive skills	212.95	23					
	Behavioral skills	8330.50	23					
	Emotional competence	157.95	23					
	Motivational	398.62	23					
	Social empowerment	15638.62	23					

Table 4. – Adjusted means of social empowerment and its components in covariance analysis.

Group	Variables	Means	SD
EXPERIMENTAL	Cognitive skills	13.90	0.89
	Behavioral skills	164.55	4.74
	Emotional competence	14.36	0.86
	Motivational	31.19	1.31
	Social empowerment	220.13	8.131
CONTROL	Cognitive skills	16.18	0.89
	Behavioral skills	196.94	4.74
	Emotional competence	16.05	0.86
	Motivational	38.55	1.31
	Social empowerment	271.61	8.13

Table 5. – The covariance analysis results associated with the impact of communication skills training on social maturity.

SOURCE OF CHANGES	Total square	DF	Mean square	F	P-Value	Squared eta breakdown	Power
MODIFIED MODEL	82.91	2	41.45	68.46	0.001	136.93	1
ASSOCIATED VARIABLE (PRE-TEST SCORES)	82.86	1	82.86	13.86	0.001	136.86	1
TRAINING EFFECT (EXPERIMENTAL-CONTROL)	30.05	1	30.05	49.64	0.001	49.64	1
ERROR	12.71	21	0.06				
TOTAL CORRECTED SUM	95.63	21					

Table 6. – The adjusted mean of social maturity in covariance analysis.

GROUP	Means	SD
EXPERIMENTAL	33.10	0.25
CONTROL	44.7	0.25

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to investigate the impact of communication skills training on social empowerment and adjustment of slow-paced adolescents. The results showed that communication skills training improves social empowerment and social maturity in slow-paced female adolescents. The results are consistent with sticker *et al.* (2003), Pour-Mohammadreza Tajrishi *et al.* (2013), Kalantari and Tahan (2017), Behpajouh (2010), Tahan (2018). Farisabadi *et al.* (2015) showed that the interpersonal communication skills and social problem-solving training can improve social adjustment and academic achievement of students with intellectual disability. This study is also consistent with the present study. Except that, in the present study, social maturity and empowerment variables are taken into consideration.

Slow-paced Adolescents suffer from major limitations in intellectual functioning; adjustment behavior; conceptual, social and practical adjustment skills during their development (Afrooz, Ashouri, & Ghasemzadeh, 2016). In recent decades, many experts and psychologists investigating the children and adolescents problems have concluded that many of the problems adolescents and children are dealing with originate from the wrong analysis of their own and others' emotions, their perception of their position, lack of a sense of control over communications, appropriate attitude in the face of difficult situations, and lack of readiness to solve life problems in an appropriate manner (Ashouri & Jalil Abkenar, 2016). The slow-paced individuals suffer from social failure in their communications with others since childhood up to adulthood. Lack of appropriate communication skills and limited opportunities for making friends prevent social adjustment and even academic progress (Dodge, 2008).

Communication skill training can enhance social adjustment and mental health and also decrease stress and anxiety in individuals (Farisabadi *et al.*, 2015). Communication skills training improves children's adjustment and helps them control their emotions. In other words, increased adjustment can help them adequately control their behavior and emotions at the same time (Homayie, Kajbaf, & Siyadat, 2009). Communication skills training helped adolescents improve their behavior in terms of showing respect for others, participation in teamwork, effective social communication, anger management, showing respect for others' rights and expressions of interest, and prepare them for adjustment in life (Soleimani, 2011).

To make successful and fruitful adolescence, students with intellectual disabilities need to receive communication skills training to achieve

social empowerment and adjustment. Lack of these skills could be regarded as the main cause of maladjustment and adaptation problems. Thus, communication skills training programs can be used to improve the communication skills of adolescents in general, and slow-paced students in particular (Ahangari & Tahan, 2019).

The results of the present study can provide psychologists, consultants, Parents and instructors of normal and slow-paced students, as well as all the education experts with insights into the social problems of adolescents. Therefore, raising coaches, teachers and parents' awareness of the impacts of social empowerment and lack of social maturity on the individual and social life of individuals is of vital importance. The limitations of the studio include small sample size, specific age groups (adolescence) and specific geographic regions. Moreover, in the present study, self-report instruments such as social competence and social maturity scales were used. These scales were filled by slow-paced students' instructors. In this method, the responses given to the questions may be biased and consequently lead to a decline in the accuracy of the results. Thus, the generalization of these results should be made with care. Consideration of larger sample sizes, individuals in different age groups and different regions or provinces and finally comparison of the results obtained from different groups can be put forward as a suggestion for further studies. Aside from the questionnaire, authors are required to use, interviews and observations in data collection.

Ethical Approval and Consent to participate

All ethical considerations have been made. The study was registered with the Clinical Trial Number ISRCTN51125209.

Acknowledgements

The authors of the article need to thank the cooperation and assistance of all the loved ones who helped us in this research.

Availability of supporting data

Please contact the authorship team to enquire regarding access to material.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

REFERENCE

- Adib, Y., & Fardanesh, H. (2003). The life skills required of middle school students. *Daneshvar Journal*, 10(3).
- Afroz, G. A., Ashouri, M., & Ghasemzadeh, S. (2016). The evolution of the slow-step definition in AAMR and AAIDD and its differences in DSM-IV-TR and DSM0V criteria. *Growth in School Counseling Education*, 12(1), 21-24.
- Ahangari, M., & Tahan, M. (2019). The effect of gardener therapists on behavioral problems in slow-step students. *Journal of Clinical and Developmental Psychology*, 1(3), 12-21. doi: 10.6092/2612-4033/01110-2130
- AAIDD – American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (2011). *Definition of intellectual disability*. <http://www.aidd.org/content>
- Angold, A., Costello, E. J., & Erkanli, A. (1999). Comorbidity. *Journal Child Psycho Psychiatry*, 40, 57-87. doi: 10.1017/S0021963098003448
- APA – American Psychiatric Association (2014). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC. doi: 10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596
- Asadi, E. (2012). *The relationship between parent-adolescent conflict and resilience with psychological problems of adolescents in Shiraz quadruple education and training areas*. Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht Branch, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology.
- Ashouri, M., & Jalil Abkenar, S. (2016). *Students with special needs and inclusive education*. Tehran: Farhang Roshd Publishing.
- BehPajouh, A., Soleimani, M., Afroz, G. A., & Lavasani, M. (2010). The effect of social skills training on social adjustment and academic performance of late students. *Journal of Educational Innovation*, 9(33), 163-186.
- Dodge, B. A. (2008, August). *Literature review of social skills training interventions for students with emotional/behavioral disorders: A research paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science in degree with a major school psychology*, University of Wisconsin-Stout.
- Estler, J., & Goldbeck, L. (2011). A pilot study of social competence group training for adolescents with borderline intellectual functioning and emotional and behavioral problems (SCT-ABI). *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 55(2), 231-241. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2788.2010.01369.x
- Farisabadi, L., Khosravi, M., & Sabahi, P. (2015). The effectiveness of interpersonal communication skills training and social problem solving on improving adaptive behavior and academic performance of female students with mental retardation. *Journal of Exceptional People*, 5(18), 102-121.
- Hatami, M., Sadeghiarad, S., & Hassani, J. (2015). The effectiveness of communication skills training on impulsivity of adolescent girls with symptoms of conduct disorder. *Journal of Research in Educational Systems*, 9(31), 227-254.

- Helstela, L., & Sourander, A. (2001). Self-reported competence and emotional and behavioral problems in finish adolescents. *Nord J Psychiatry, 55*(5), 337-341. doi: 10.1080/080394801317080846
- Homayie, R., Kajbaf, M. B., & Siadat, A. (2009). The influence of storytelling on child adaptation. *Psychological Studies of Al-Zahra University, 5*(2), 100-119.
- Hossein-Chari, M., & Aghadlavarpour, M. (2006). Are shy people lacking communication skills? *Iranian Psychology Quarterly, 10*, 123-135.
- Hosseinian, S., Behrangi, M. R., Ghasemzadeh, S., & Taziki, T. (2016). Effectiveness of teaching communication skills to mothers on their children's social adjustment, aggression, and academic achievement. *Modern Educational Thoughts, 12*(1), 10-25.
- Jadal, M. M. (2012). Social problems of mental retarded children and their parents. *Journal of Review of Research, 11*, 1-4.
- Jalilvand, M., & Ghobari Bonab, B. (2004). The role of performing arts in the social development of educable mentally retarded students. *Journal of Research in Exceptional Children, 4*, 63-78.
- Kafi, M., Zeinali, Sh., Khosro Javid, M., & Miah-Nahri, F. (2013). Comparison of behavioral and social developmental characteristics of children with and without learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 4*, 124-139.
- Kalantari, M., Tahan, M., Ahangari, E., Barati, F., & Afrouz, G. (2017). The effectiveness of teaching communication skills on willingness to communicate with others and preventing shyness of slow paced adolescents. *Empowering Exceptional Children, 8*(4), 95-103. doi: 10.22034/ceciranj.2017.70933
- Karami, A. (2011). *Translating the Vinland Social Growth Scale*. Tehran: Sina Institute of Behavioral-Cognitive Sciences Research (Psychodevelopment).
- Kayvand, F., Shafi'abadi, A., & Sudani, M. (2009). The effectiveness of communication skills on social anxiety in the secondary school students of Ahwaz Education District 4. *Knowledge and Research in Applied Psychology, 42*, 1-24.
- King, M., Shields, N., Imms, C. H., Black, M., & Ardern, C. (2013). Participation of children with intellectual disability compared with typically developing children. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 34*, 1854-1862. doi: 10.1016/j.ridd.2013.02.029
- Laktarash, M., Kalrozi, F., & Pishgooie, S. (2019). The effectiveness of social competence training based on felner model on communication skills and social adjustment of nurses in the psychiatric ward of selected hospitals of Aja. *MCS, 6*(2), 116-126.
- Motamedi, H., Babaei, H., & Biglarian, A. (2012). The effect of problem solving skills training on increasing social adequacy of female adolescents. *Social Research Quarterly, 14*, 17-29.
- Oluwaseun, E. S., & Tahan, M. (2018). Predictive effects of neuroticism and emotional intelligence on bullying behavior among male college students. *Avicenna J Neuro Psycho Physiology, 5*(2), 81-88. doi: 10.32598/ajnpp.5.2.81

- Parandin, S., & Karami, A. (2011). *Translating the social competence test*. Tehran: Sina Institute of Behavioral-Cognitive Sciences Research (Psychodevelopment).
- Pour-Mohammadreza Tajrishi, M., Jalil Abkar, S., & Ashouri, M. (2013). The effectiveness of life skills training on social self-empowerment of male students with math disorder. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 2*, 1-11.
- Prakash, J., Sudarsanan, S., & Prabhu, H. R. A. (2007). Study of behavioural problems in mentally retarded children. *Delhi Psychiatry Journal, 10*(1), 40-45.
- Sadook, B. J., & Sadook, V. A. (2012). *Summary of psychiatry, behavioral-psychiatric sciences*. Translation of Puraphary. Tehran: Abar Publications.
- Sadock, B. J., Sadock, V. A., & Ruiz, P. (2015). *Kaplan & Sadock's synopsis of psychiatry: Behavioral sciences/clinical psychiatry*. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Seif Naraghi, M., Shariatmadari, A., Naderi, E., & Abtahi, M. (2009). Investigating the level of job empowerment in the curriculum of mentally retarded students from the point of view of staff experts, planning experts and relevant teachers. *Journal of Educational Sciences, 2*(5), 135-160.
- Shahi, Y., Afrooz, G. A., & Mir Zamani, M. (2009). Comparison of social skills and behavioral problems of students with down syndrome in primary school teachers. *Journal of Psychology and Educational Sciences, 1*, 23-40.
- Soleimani Nejad, A., & Shaetrola, A. (2008). Underlying social skill of student with special needs employment. *Journal of Special Education, 82*, 26-36.
- Soleimani, T. (2011). *The most beautiful story in the world. Special Issue of the 10th National Storytelling Festival*, Center for the Intellectual Development of Children and Youth in Tehran Province.
- Sparrow, S. S. (2011). *Vineland Social Maturity Scales*. In J. S. Kreutzer, J. DeLuca, & B. Caplan (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of clinical neuropsychology*. New York: Springer. doi: 10.1007/978-0-387-79948-3
- Sticker, G., Widiger, T. A., & Weiner, I. B. (2003). *Handbook of psychology*, Vol. 8: *Clinical Psychology*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Tahan, M., & Kalantari, M. (2018). The effectiveness of social skills training on reducing autistic children's behavioral problems. *Mediterranean Journal of Clinical Psychology, 7*(3). doi: 10.6092/2282-1619/2018.6.1827
- Williams, K., & Zadiro, L. (2001). Ostracism: On being ignored, excluded, and rejected. In M. R. Leary (Ed.), *Interpersonal rejection* (pp. 92-125). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zadashir, F., Estaki, M., & Emami Pour, S. (2009). Comparison of ethical judgment and social growth in nonprofit primary school students using quran teaching in a non-profit meanings. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 2*, 25-47.

RIASSUNTO

Il presente studio ha rappresentato un tentativo di studiare l'effetto della formazione delle abilità comunicative sull'empowerment e l'adattamento sociale degli adolescenti cosiddetti «a ritmo lento» (cioè coloro che hanno bisogno di driver psicologici, fisici ed emotivi per attualizzare le loro capacità potenziali). È stato adottato il metodo di ricerca quasi sperimentale Pre-test / Post-test con gruppo di controllo. La popolazione partecipante allo studio era composta da tutte le studentesse dal cosiddetto «ritmo lento» di età compresa tra 13 e 15 anni, abitanti nel 2019 nella città di Ghaenat (Provincia del Khorasan meridionale). 24 campioni selezionati dall'intera popolazione attraverso un campionamento sono stati assegnati in modo casuale a due gruppi: sperimentale e di controllo (12 partecipanti in ciascun gruppo). A insegnanti o genitori di entrambi i gruppi di studentesse è stato chiesto di compilare alcuni questionari (pre-test). Nella fase successiva, al gruppo sperimentale sono state offerte dieci sessioni di 45 minuti centrate sulle abilità comunicative mentre il gruppo di controllo non ha ricevuto alcuna formazione a tal proposito. Alla fine, entrambi i gruppi hanno compilato (post-test) la scala di Maturità Sociale di Vineland. I dati raccolti sono stati analizzati attraverso l'analisi della covarianza utilizzando il software SPSS versione 22. I risultati hanno mostrato che la formazione delle abilità comunicative ha un impatto significativo sull'empowerment sociale ($F = 15,47, p = 0,001$) e sull'adeguamento sociale ($F = 49,64, p = 0,001$). In altre parole, si può sostenere che i gruppi sperimentali e di controllo differiscono in modo significativo l'uno dall'altro in termini di impatto delle competenze comunicative sulla formazione dell'empowerment sociale e delle sue componenti, nonché sulla maturità sociale. In conclusione, la formazione delle abilità comunicative migliora significativamente l'empowerment sociale e la maturità sociale delle adolescenti dal ritmo lento nel gruppo sperimentale.

Parole chiave: Abilità comunicative; Adeguamento sociale; Adolescenti dal ritmo lento; Iran; Responsabilizzazione sociale.

How to cite this Paper: Tahan, M., Kalantari, M., Sajedi Rad, T., Javad Aghel, M., Afshari, M., & Sabri, A. (2020). The impact of communication skills training on social empowerment and social adjustment of slow-paced adolescents [L'impatto della formazione delle abilità comunicative sull'empowerment e l'adattamento sociale degli adolescenti «a ritmo lento»]. *Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies*, 20, 131-147. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.7358/ecps-2020-021-taha>