

The Effectiveness of Emotion Management Training on Social Skills and the Sense of Competence in School Students

La efectividad de la capacitación en el manejo de las emociones en las habilidades sociales y el sentido de competencia en los estudiantes de la escuela

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of emotion management training on social skills and the sense of competence in school students. This quasi-experimental study was conducted in a pretest-posttest with control group design. The statistical population of the study comprised all elementary school students in Tehran district 2 during 2017-2018, which among them 30 students were selected by purposeful sampling and randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. The experimental group received 8 sessions per week of emotional management training for three weeks, while no training for the control group. All students completed the Matson Evaluation of Social Skills with Youngsters and the Sense of Competence Questionnaires before and after the training. Data were analyzed using covariance analysis by SPSS-18. The results indicated that emotional management training improved the sense of competence and social skills of students in the experimental group after 8 sessions, while no improvement in the control group. According to the findings, emotional management training has a significant effect on the sense of competence and social skills of students. Therefore, it is suggested to use emotional management training in schools.

Key words: Emotion management training, social skills, sense of competence

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RESUMEN

Este estudio investigó la efectividad de la capacitación en el manejo de las emociones en las habilidades sociales y el sentido de competencia en los estudiantes escolares. Este estudio cuasi experimental se realizó en una prueba previa a la prueba posterior con el diseño del grupo de control. La población estadística del estudio comprendió a todos los estudiantes de escuelas primarias en el distrito 2 de Teherán durante el período 2017-2018, de los cuales 30 estudiantes fueron seleccionados por muestreo intencional y asignados al azar a los grupos experimental y de control. El grupo experimental recibió 8 sesiones por semana de entrenamiento en manejo emocional durante tres semanas, mientras que no hubo entrenamiento para el grupo de control. Todos los estudiantes completaron la Evaluación Matson de Habilidades Sociales con Jóvenes y los Cuestionarios de Sentido de Competencia antes y después de la capacitación. Los datos se analizaron utilizando el análisis de covarianza por SPSS-18. Los resultados indicaron que la capacitación en manejo emocional mejoró el sentido de competencia y las habilidades sociales de los estudiantes en el grupo experimental después de 8 sesiones, mientras que no hubo mejoría en el grupo de control. Según los hallazgos, la capacitación en gestión emocional tiene un efecto significativo en el sentido de competencia y habilidades sociales de los estudiantes. Por lo tanto, se sugiere utilizar la formación en gestión emocional en las escuelas.

Palabras clave: entrenamiento en gestión de emociones, habilidades sociales, sentido de competencia.

RESUMO

Este estudo investigou a eficácia do treinamento em gerenciamento de emoções em habilidades sociais e o senso de competência em estudantes de escola. Este estudo quase experimental foi conduzido em pré-teste pós-teste, com delineamento de grupo controle. A população estatística do estudo compreendeu todos os alunos do ensino fundamental no distrito 2 de Teerã durante 2017-2018, dos quais 30 foram selecionados por amostragem intencional e aleatoriamente designados para os grupos experimental e controle. O grupo experimental recebeu 8 sessões por semana de treinamento em gerenciamento emocional por três semanas, enquanto nenhum treinamento para o grupo controle. Todos os alunos completaram a Avaliação Matson de Habilidades Sociais com Jovens e os Questionários de Senso de Competência antes e depois do treinamento. Os dados foram analisados por meio de análise de covariância pelo SPSS-18. Os resultados indicaram que o treinamento em gerenciamento emocional melhorou o senso de competência e habilidades sociais dos alunos no grupo experimental após 8 sessões, enquanto não houve melhora no grupo controle. De acordo com os resultados, o treinamento em gerenciamento emocional tem um efeito significativo no senso de competência e habilidades sociais dos estudantes. Portanto, sugere-se a utilização de treinamento em gestão emocional nas escolas.

Palavras-chave: formação em gestão de emoções, habilidades sociais, senso de competência

Introduction

Today, it has well proved that many human personality features are formed in childhood, and if these features develop properly, the foundation of society are well founded; for this reason, in order to have a healthy personality in children, it is important to develop both mental and emotional and as well as physical development, so family and community play the most significant role (Bjorklund & Causey, 2016). Despite the fact that nutrition and health are essential for children's body and their mind, but it is not enough. The role of education and the development of many skills, including social skills, is essential and vital. Social skills are a complex set of skills that are essential to adapt and cope with different social situations. These skills develop healthy relationships and affect person's performances (Merrell & Gimpel, 2014). Social skills are considered observable, definable and acquired behaviors that help person to achieve positive outcomes of his/her function in a situation, and to show behavior that is acceptable by community (Vidoni & Ward, 2011).

Researchers believe that social skills are acquired through learning, which include the ability to initiate appropriate and effective communication with others as well as useful and relevant responses. Social skills have an interactive nature, including effective and appropriate responses and is influenced by the features and the environment in which the skill is indicated (Modafferi et al., 2016). These skills are usually aimed at improving children's emotional-social skills and enhancing the proper interactions, and include the ability to emotions management, empathy, problem-solving and self-control. A child who knows how to communicate with others, to adapt to the environment and to observe laws and regulations, meaning displays socially reasonable and rational behaviors, he/she feels more secure in the school and does not feel anxiety or worry. On the other hand, given the fact that such skills are acquired, parents can be educated for effective communication with children in homes, then strengthened and completed in social situations (Waugh & Peskin, 2015).

In addition, many researchers consider social skills as a subset of social equity structures and believe that those children who suffers from lacking high level of social skills not only have unsuccessful interactions with their peer, but also experience more problematic internalized and externalized behavior. Moreover, the high level of social skills completely predicts future academic successes (Trentacosta & Fine, 2010). Therefore, considering the importance of social skills, appropriate educational and therapeutic approaches are needed to try to improve the social skills in children, and these educational strategies need to be started at the young age along with the first interactions to achieve the best results. Therefore, elementary school years are the best time to develop these interactions because the individual begins to interact with his or her peers.

In addition to social skills, sense of competence has a great impact on social and personality development. Sense of competence or self-efficacy is one of the five dimensions of empowerment. The sense of competence, in fact, is the feeling of ability to perform tasks with high skills (Cohn, May-Benson & Teasdale, 2011). When empowered, individuals feel self-efficacy and ability to do successfully. The empowered individuals not only feel competent, but also feel confident to do with competency. They feel personal excellence and believe they can learn and develop to meet new challenge (Elliot & Dweck, 2013). Some researchers believe that this feature is the most important aspect of empowerment, because having a sense of competence determines whether individuals try to do difficult works? In fact, the sense of competence is a personal belief that individuals think they can successfully carry out the assigned tasks (Rantanen, Eriksson & Nieminen, 2012). This concept is closely related to the Bandura's concept of self-efficacy (Schwarzer, 2014). Three conditions for having self-efficacy are: 1) the person believes that he/she is capable to do something; 2) he/she believes that is able to make an effort; 3) the person believes

there is no external barrier in their path to doing the job. In other words, when individuals develop self-efficacy with minimum skills and ability, enthusiasm and without major obstacles to success, they feel empowered and self-competence (Bandura, 1997).

Personality theorists believe that competency plays an important role in the development of healthy people and a healthy mental life develop by self-worth as well as a positive sense of competence; so that the person empowered to cope with the basic issues of life, such as acquiring practical skills in the future. So, self-worth is the essential need of everyone to lead him/herself in the outside world, with ups and downs. Sense of competence acts as a secure system of self-awareness and provides the necessary power for recovery to increase coping strategies and flexibility against difficulties. In addition, having and fostering a sense of competence for children is very important, because when the child feels he/she is deserved and able to do various works, his/her confidence increases and will be able to reach goals seriously (Nese, 2012).

Overall, it is clear that social skills and sense of competence are important in personality traits, and social and educational performance of students. Also, teachers report only and the greatest challenge is that the majority or all of children do not acquire all or some social skills, self-worth and self-competence, which seem are necessary for academic achievement. These children, despite their appropriate intelligence, are not able to meet the school's social and behavioral expectation and are rejected by the teacher and peers and then frustrated. So, education and learning are not possible, and lead to children's academic failure (Whitted, 2012). Therefore, finding preventive strategies for these problems in children is one of the main fields of study. In an effort to find the most effective ways to improve social skills and competence, several studies have examined the effectiveness of different methods; in general, these methods can be categorized into a series of preventive, community-based, school-centered, and child-centered approaches (Farmer et al., 2002).

In addition to what has been said, today a wide range of research suggests that emotions can affect a wide range of everyday life processes and emotional symptoms are a prominent aspect of life that can affect the nature of relationships among people (Blair et al., 2004). Emotion regulation is an evolving process that involves responding emotionally so that is socially acceptable and consistent with the context (Graziano et al., 2007). Emotion regulation skills reflect the use of several cognitive or social and non-social skills of functional exposure (such as behavioral inhibition, attention flexibility) in order to correct response to emotion and proper adjustment with the environment, and proper use of emotions can be an important factor for physiological and psychological development as well as increasing the person's competence, but emotion dysregulation patterns that impede the competence, can be symptoms of a disorder. They can put the child at risk of a disorder or problematic interpersonal relationships, and inability to interpersonal skills. For example, difficulty in regulation of negative emotions is related to internalized disorders such as anxiety or depression (Lopes et al., 2005).

One of the new emotional-based educational methods which have had a positive impact on a wide range of behavioral and clinical problems is emotion management training. Emotion management is considered as internal and external processes that are responsible for controlling, evaluating and modifying emotional responses to achieve goals, therefore any difficulty and defects in emotion management can make the person vulnerable to mental disorders such as anxiety and depression (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006). The ability to cope with emotions enables the person to recognize emotions in his/herself and others and knows how emotions influence behaviors, then he/she can react appropriately (Gross, 2007). According to researchers, it is important that how an individual's cognitive system evaluates when dealing with a negative event (Goldin & Gross, 2010). Emotion management, in the form of evaluation before events, prevents reduction of cognitive resources. Results, from various studies, have shown that emotion management has a relationship with behavioral problems and education of this cognitive process leads to improving the communicative, social and behavioral function of children and adolescents in different developmental and social stages (Satterfield & Hughes, 2007). On the other hand, the

basic purpose of any educational system is to educate people with the necessary skills in life so that they can play a useful role in society as an effective member.

As mentioned earlier, two of these skills are required for social skills training and the sense of competence. Often children and adolescents learn spontaneously social skills in communicating with their associates such as parents, sisters, brothers and peers, but there is still a lot of people with developmental and emotional problems and receive negative feedbacks (Powless & Elliot, 2001), which it is necessary to use the appropriate teachings to increase social skills and competence in children. Given to this as well as the benefits of learning from emotional management teachings, the aim of this study was to investigate whether emotion management training affects students' social skills and competence.

Method

The present study is an applied and quasi-experimental study was conducted in a pretest-posttest with control group design. The statistical population of the study comprised all elementary school students in Tehran district 2 during 2017-2018, which among them 30 students, according to the inclusion criteria (lack of mental and physical problem, informed consent, parents' consent, age range 11-12) were selected by purposeful sampling and randomly assigned to the experimental (N=15) and the control group (N=15).

Following instruments were used for data collection:

Matson Evaluation of Social Skills with Youngsters-Teacher Form. This measure developed in 1983 by Matson et al., to assess social skills of individuals between 4-18 years old and is completed by teachers. This is a 5-item scale that assesses the following factors: 1) appropriate social skills that consists appropriate social behavior, such as having a visual relationship with others, being polite, using the name of others and enthusiasm to interact with others in a useful and effective way (question 1). 2) Striving for superiority and self-confidence, including behaviors for show-off, pretending to know everything and superiority to others (question 2). 3) High self-confidence (superior to others) (question 3). 4) Inappropriate social behaviors such as lying, fighting, and blaming or humiliating others (question 4). 5) Aggression and impulsive behaviors, such as getting angry and headstrong (question 5). This is a 5-Likert scale measure, 1 (never) to 5 (always), and a total score, with a minimum score of 5 and a maximum score of 25. The reliability of this scale using Cronbach's alpha methods was reported 0.86, with good validity, in an Iranian sample (Yousefi & Khayer, 2002).

Sense of Competence Questionnaire. This measure was developed by Javdan in 2016, based on the level of person's competence in doing homework, self-evaluation, and others' feedback, the ability to do things, self-worth, self-care, responsibility, self-knowledge, empathy and humanity. This is a 36-item paper-pencil self-reporting scale with a total score of 0 to 144. A high score indicates a high sense of competence and a low score indicates a low sense of competence in adolescents. Scores below 36 indicate a very low level of competence, scores of 37 to 71 shows a low sense of competence, 72 to 107 is a sign of a moderate sense of competence, and scores above 108 indicate a good sense of competence. The questionnaire is scored on a 4-Likert scale (0=never, 1=rarely, 2=sometimes, 3=often, and 4=always). Items 3, 5, 8, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26, 29, 34, and

36 must be recoded. The reliability of this scale using Cronbach's alpha and the Spearman-Brown's formula, and Gottman methods was reported 0.91, 0.89 and 0.88, respectively. Content validity has also been confirmed by experts as well as correlations between the score of each item and the total score of the test in all items was positive, which indicates this is a valid measure for measuring the sense of competence in children and adolescents (Javdan, 2016).

Procedure

At first stage, the researcher provided the necessary permissions for the study and selected students, according to inclusion criteria then divided them into experimental and control group. All participants were asked to complete the two measures as pre-test. In the next step, the researcher briefed a summary of the education and regulations of the study for the experimental group. Then the experimental group received eight 2-hours thrice a week emotion management training based on Gross's emotion regulation package (Gross, 2007), while the control group received no training. A summary of the training is indicated in the table 1.

Session	Content
1	1-Introducing members; mutual communication between the leader (psychologist) and members; 2-expressing the main and the secondary goals of the group and the discussion about personal and collective goals; 3-the logic and the stages of intervention; rules and regulation of sessions.
2	Situation selection; goal: emotion education; agenda: understanding emotion and triggers through training different function of emotions, information about different dimensions of emotions and their short and long-term effects.
3	Situation selection; goal: assessing vulnerability and emotional skills of members, agenda: discussion about emotions' effects on human adjustment and their advantages, the role of emotions in communication and subsequent effects, organizing and triggering human behavior, along with real experiences.
4	Situation modification, goal: changing emotions triggers; agenda: a) preventing social isolation and avoidance; b) problem-solving training c) interpersonal relationship training (discussion, assertiveness, And conflict resolution skills).
5	Attentional deployment, goal: shifting attention: agenda: a) stopping rumination and worry, b) attention training and focusing methods on the situation and positive and negative response related to this situation.
6	Cognitive appraisal, goal: changing cognitive appraisals; agenda: a) identifying inappropriate appraisals and their effects on emotional states, b) reappraisal training and redefining the situation from different angels.
7	Response modulation, goal: changing behavioral and physiological consequences of emotions, agenda: a) identification of the amount and the manner of using the inhibition strategy and its' emotional consequences, b) exposure, c) assertiveness training, d) behavior modification through changing environmental reinforcements, e) catharsis, relaxation and opposite action.
8	Assessment and application: reassessment and removing application barriers; agenda: a) assessing the achievement of individual and group goals, b) applying skills learned in natural environments outside the sessions, c) reviewing and removing obstacles to doing homework.

After completion of the training, all the participants completed all measures at post-test.

Findings

This study was conducted on 30 fifth grade girls (15 in the experimental group and 15 in the control group). The age average of the experimental group was 11.26 and the control group was 11.85.

Table 1 indicates the mean and standard deviation of social skills and the sense of competence for participants in both groups.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of social skills for the experimental and control group

Group		Experimental group (n=15)				Control group (n=15)			
Variable	Step	M	SD	Max	Min	M	SD	Max	Min
Social skills	Pretest	10.86	2.41	8	16	10.46	2.32	8	16
	Posttest	14	2.56	8	18	10.20	2.14	8	15
Sense of competence	Pretest	87.80	12.71	71	108	93.13	13.35	68	114
	Posttest	98.86	11.96	80	121	91.93	13.91	72	121

To investigate the effectiveness of emotion management training on social skills and the sense of competence in students, the one-way ANCOVA was used. In this analysis, group (the experimental and the control groups), as between-subject factor, social skills and the sense of competence were considered as a control variable and dependent variable at pre and post-test, respectively. The results of this analysis are presented in table 3.

Table 2. One-way ANCOVA

Dependent variable	Sources	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Social skills	Pretest	105.02	1	105.02	55.196	0.001
	Group	89.79	1	89.79	47.19	0.001
	Err	51.37	27	1.09		
	Total	4657.70	30			
Sense of competence	Pretest	2570.51	1	2570.51	32.39	0.001
	Group	845.33	1	845.33	10.65	0.01
	Err	2142.15	27	79.33		
	total	278108.00	30			

The Levin's test for homogeneity variance was not statistically significant for social skills ($F=3.17_{(df\ 28, 1)}$, $p>0.01$) and sense of competence. So the one-way ANCOVA was used to compare the two groups. Results in table 3 shows that the effects of pretest scores for the social skills ($F=55.196$, $p>0.001$) and the sense of competence ($F=32.39$, $p>0.001$) were significant; this means that there is a significant relationship between pre and posttest scores of social skills and the sense of competence. Also, the results indicate after controlling the pretest scores, the group effect was significant on posttest scores of social skills ($F=47.19$, $p>0.001$) and sense of competence ($F=10.65$, $p>0.01$). In other words, there is a significant

difference between participants of the two groups at posttest. According to the table 2, these differences show the posttest scores in the experimental group are significantly more than the control group, and emotion management training has improved social skills as well as sense of competence in students.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of emotion management training on social skills and the sense of competence in school students. The results indicated that emotional management training improved the sense of competence and social skills of students. These findings are consistent with Ratcliffe et al (2014), Arngi (2014), Song et al. (2010), Dimirchi et al. (2016), and Foladchan & HasanNia (2015), which indicated the effectiveness of emotion management training on social skills and the sense of competence.

In explaining the effectiveness of the emotion management training on social skills, it can be noted that emotion management training makes it possible for the person to identify the emotional meaning and emotional situations. This activity, in addition to increasing the likelihood of correct and realistic recognition of emotions and meanings, increases the ability of prediction and applying the effective coping strategies against stressful situations. According to this, emotional management improving the quality of social relationships by predictive mechanisms, control and effective coping strategies. According to Mayer (2000), emotional intelligence and emotional management can be a coping strategy in some situations, as a set of individual abilities in perceiving, managing and acting out emotions. According to White (2004), many components of emotional regulation and management, understanding others' emotions, regulating and controlling emotion, controlling stress and other abilities, are associated with appropriate social skills and making an effective and constructive relationship with others. Therefore, people with high emotional intelligence and management are expected to have better relationships with others. In addition, it can be said that emotion regulation is a method by which the person finds emotional stability.

Inability in the timely expression of emotional skills can threaten mental and physical health of the individual and challenge their adjustment with others, especially in learning and social skills (Schuppert et al., 2012). Bekendam (2001), also showed that people with high emotional skills, interpret events more positive and show more adaptive behavior. Therefore, it is expected that students who have received emotional skills will have better relationship with others. Skills training and emotion management, enable children to practice and apply social strategies in all real situations, by providing opportunities and experiences that increase social interaction. They also understand the social rules of peer groups and make a strong relationship with family and community members, and show a high level of social adjustment (Parker et al. 2004). Also, emotion management training is a technique by which people learn how to relate appropriately to the appropriate management of emotions in different situations. Most researchers agree that social skills are acquired using emotion management training, because children who are raised in inappropriate environments have inappropriate social behaviors and unable to speak effectively and usefully. Emotion management training is a part of behavioral adjustment and is used to modify maladaptive behaviors. The development of social skills is a part of the socialization process, and any training

in this field should be made in line with socialization such as emotion management techniques (Milburn & Cartledge, 1986). The findings of Gresham et al. (2006) suggest that training emotional-social management skills increases its components, including anger, friendship assertiveness and communication. In explaining these findings, Gresham et al. (2006) suggest that children and adolescents learn the peer groups' rules using social-emotional skills and make strong relationships with family and community members, and also have a high level of self-esteem.

On the other hand, in explaining the effect of emotional management training on sense of competence it can be said that the training increases emotional skills and comprehension, and a person with a high emotional comprehension make a more appropriate relationship with others and mutually calls their supports and feels more efficient and competent. According to researches, those who are unable to accurately understand their own emotions and others', have a poor social adjustment, which in turn leads to decreased social support and sense of competence. According to Bandura, A., Freeman, W. H., & Lightsey (1999) one of the factors for increasing self-efficacy and, therefore, the sense of competence is others' encouragement and validation. In other words, people who have the ability to understand and regulate their own emotions and others', can make stronger social support networks and, therefore, feel more empowered. In fact, young students need much more validation and supports. By training emotional skills to children, they can communicate better with peers and teachers, therefore, receives others' support and validation and reach a higher degree of self-worth and sense of competence (Spinrad et al. 2006).

Moreover, evidence suggests that failure in emotion management (increased anxiety and maladaptive stress) often leads to a decrease in self-efficacy and therefore a sense of competence (Mayer et al. 2008). People who do not trust their own ability, fall into desperate in risky situations and the likelihood of effective actions will be decreased. Such people are afraid of confronting challenging issues and, consequently, their performance will be decreased, which in turn leads to decreased self-efficacy (Maddux & Kleiman, 2012). On the other hand, severe anxiety leads to decreased performance and consequently a decreased sense of competence. Thus, a person with a high emotional intelligence will, when necessary, control his own feelings and deal with issues appropriately. Therefore, it can be concluded that using emotion management training we can increase self-efficacy and, consequently, decrease disappointment and increase success. These factors lead to an increased sense of competence in students (Ohan et al. 2000). Moreover, if competence cannot be called as an emotional aspect and emotional intelligence, at least their overlaps cannot be ignored. It can be said that feeling empowerment and emotional intelligence are closely related and mutually reinforcing each other. Most philosophers and psychologists agree that the sense of control over behavior, environment, thoughts and feelings is the basis of happiness and well-being (Maddux, 2002). When a person perceives the world controllable and predictable, he/she can better to deal with challenges and make a healthy relationship with others. And have a sense of competence, empowerment and self-efficacy. The responsiveness and availability of the mother provide a secure base for the child, under which the child can organize his/her own experiences and learn ways to deal with the helplessness and increase the sense of competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the other hand, the lack of emotional warmth and frequent rejection by parents may convince the child that the world is an insecure place,

and he/she cannot do much to change the negative states and situations. In such atmosphere a feeling of inefficiency may develop and the person is susceptible to mental and social disorders. In sum, conditions such as emotion management training that increases emotional availability as well as emotion regulation of the child, provide a good atmosphere for the child to express his/her own feelings and gain more self-efficacy and competence.

In conclusion, the results indicated that emotion management training had a positive effect on social skills and sense of competence of the participants. Despite the applied findings of the present study, due to some limitations such as self-report measures and small sample size, the result must be generalized by caution. It is suggested that future studies use the functional measure such as the Emotional Stroop test and Classic Stroop. Also, it is suggested to embody the emotion management skills from kindergartens to the early years of the university.

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