



Gender Differences in the Effect of Resilience Training on Emotional Intelligence in At-Risk Students in Shiraz, Iran

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Abstract

Background: The current study examined the effectiveness of resilience training on emotional intelligence (EI) and assessed gender differences in this regard among adolescents living in the outskirts of Shiraz, Iran.

Methods: This pre-post study included 191 students and used an intervention consisting of nine resilience-training sessions. The evaluated outcomes were EI and its 15 components. The paired-samples and independent-samples *t*-tests were used to analyze the data.

Results: Out of 191 students, 88 (46.1%) were boys. Before and after the intervention, the mean EI score for boys was 312.52 ± 37.79 and 327.31 ± 37.75 , while for girls, it was 310.74 ± 30.05 and 312.20 ± 29.51 , respectively. Following the intervention, the scores of boys in problem-solving ($P = 0.007$), happiness ($P = 0.001$), emotional self-awareness ($P = 0.044$), optimism ($P = 0.029$), self-regard ($P = 0.046$), impulse control ($P = 0.013$), and social responsibility ($P = 0.042$), as well as the total score of EI ($P = 0.005$), increased significantly. However, only the optimism score ($P = 0.004$) rose significantly in girls post-intervention. In addition, there were significant differences in the mean of problem-solving ($P = 0.006$), happiness ($P = 0.001$), impulse control ($P = 0.042$), and the total score ($P = 0.035$) between boys and girls, before and after the intervention.

Conclusions: Resilience training may help moderate high-risk behaviors among adolescents living on the outskirts of Iran's major cities, particularly boys. Based on the gender differences in EI components, it was suggested that female adolescents required significantly more attention. Nonetheless, gender differences in EI components were contentious, and it was concluded that a variety of factors, including the socio-cultural context, may be involved.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Gender Differences, Iran, Resilience, Students

1. Background

As one of the most formative stages of life, adolescence is critical in shaping one's future personality (1). This stage of life can be full of threats, and most high-risk behaviors originate from this age (2). When compared to other stages of life, characteristics such as risk-taking and excitement can lead adolescents to engage in a multitude of high-risk behaviors (3). Marginalized or slum areas are suspected of being a source of such risks (3, 4). Therefore, adolescents living in these areas are more prone to high-risk behaviors (4, 5). Numerous studies have sought to identify the factors that can aid humans during traumatic events. Resilience is a critical human ability that enables individuals to adapt to

risk factors effectively (6, 7).

In general, resilience is a promising concept studied in social harms, such as violence (8) and high-risk behaviors (9), and encompasses the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual domains. The term "resilience" is used in this context to refer to children's positive development in facing adversity and the processes that assist individuals in avoiding harmful, self-destructive, or antisocial behaviors, as well as mental disorders and even threats to their physical well-being (10). In other words, resilience is a characteristic of those exposed to specific risk factors and capable of coping with risks and avoiding negative consequences, including delinquency and behavioral problems (11).