The effect of life skills training on physical and verbal aggression male delinquent adolescents Marginalized in Karaj

Atena Naseri*, Narges Babakhani

*Department of psychology, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

This study with purpose Prevention of social injuries, investigates the effects of life skills training on aggression (physical and verbal) male delinquent adolescents Marginalized in Tehran. The experimental design using pre-test, post-test with control group is applied. Three randomly selected regions were marginalized in Tehran adolescents examined with aggression questionnaire (AGQ) pre-tests. 60 persons of the delinquent adolescents who received score above the average (45) in test aggressive adolescents were randomly replaced in experimental and control groups. During treatment experimental group received life Skills instruction (included of: rage control, decision making, problem solving, self-knowledge, stress strategies and connection skills) in 14 sessions of 90 min in three month. Then both experimental and control groups are measured with (AGQ) post-tests. The results of covariate and repeated measures analysis shows that life skills training has leaded to decreasing total aggression (F=4.92, p<0.05), physical aggression (F=3.15, p<0.05) and verbal aggression (F=5.02, p<0.05) in delinquent adolescents.

Keywords: life skills, aggression, Verbal aggression, physical aggression, delinquent adolescents

1. Introduction

Adolescent delinquency is a social phenomenon and is perceived differently based on governing laws and regulations of every society. Generally, however, delinquency is defined as crimes liable to prosecution. Studying delinquency and factors influencing adolescent delinquency is of significant importance. On the one hand, this phenomenon prevents the individual’s cognition, sentiment, and mental-physical growth, and on the other hand, by affecting the family and society, threatens social health and results in waste of social assets. Victims of delinquency are mainly marginal settlers whom perform acts of delinquency and aggression due to different reasons such as undesirable living conditions and cultural and social conflicts (Hatami, 2008). Studies show that adolescents living in marginal settlements are more prone to delinquency and crime due to their social class gap and lack of facilities (Hatami, 2008; Ahmadi et al., 2005, Sotoodeh, 1997; and Bani Fatemeh et al., 2007).

The majority of adolescents lacking life skills including anger management, stress relief strategies, self-cognition, problem-solving and decision-making skills, when facing failure, tend to show their anger, resentment and aggression easier than others (Jack Bush, 1993; Pepler et al., 1995, Middleton and Cartlege, 1995).

Aggression may appear in different forms including bodily or physical, active, passive, direct, and indirect forms. Physical aggression imposes damage through physical actions including pushing, hitting, kicking others, destroying private property; and verbal aggression damages others through physical aggression threats, naming people, and hostile joking (Berek, Translated by Seyyed Mohammadi, 2008, p. 465).

The majority of anger management methods are based on cognitive-behavioral treatments from Bandora’s theory, which generally emphasize on perceptions, feelings, and behavior. Research results show that cognitive-behavioral strategies training leads to reduction of adolescent aggression (Qavami, 2008; Mohammadi, 2009). Moreover, social and inter-personal communication skills training results in reduction aggression (Corrigan & Liberman, 1994; Middleton and Cartlege, 1995; Almasian, 2002; Vahidi et al., 2008; E’rabi, 2001). Confrontation skills training affects change of encountering from excitement-oriented to problem-oriented method in adolescents, and influences improvement of their mental health (Movaghar, 2004). Teaching problem-solving skills and manifesting existence results in reduced aggression and reduced behavioral disorders (Mohammadi, 2002; Almasian, 2002; Ashouri et al., 2008).

Generally, it can be concluded that life and social skills training reduces violence, aggression, and destructive behavior in adolescents (Jack Bush, 1993; Pepler et al., 1995, Middleton and...
In addition, life skills training results in adjusting to excitement and interpersonal functions (Dardens et al. 1996; Grist and Nelson, 1998), self-knowledge, self-respect, and self-efficiency (Pick et al., 2003; Reineeke, Dattilio & Freeman, 2003; Naderi et al., 2009; Nazari et al., 2009; Pourahmadi et al., 2009), confronting stress (Rezaei et al., 2009), and improving mental health (Khodabakhsh et al., 2010; Karimi et al., 2009) in adolescents. Therefore, the present study attempts to examine the effect of life skills training on overall, physical, and verbal aggression in preventing delinquency in adolescents.

2. Research Hypotheses

- Life skills training reduce physical aggression in delinquent adolescents living in marginal settlements.
- Life skills training reduce verbal aggression in delinquent adolescents living in marginal settlements.

3. Methods

The method of research considering subject and objectives is of test type, and is conducted using a pre-test and post-test with two control and experimental groups. The diagram of this plan is given in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Life skills training</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>T2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>T2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1. Statistical groups

All delinquent adolescent boys living in marginal settlements of Karaj city, Alborz province, Iran. Research Sample: Test-takers of this study were 60 delinquent adolescent boys living in marginal settlements of Karaj city who had obtained a higher than average (45) score in the AGQ aggression test. These adolescents were randomly assigned to two Experimental (30 persons) and Control (30 persons) groups.

3.2. Instrument

In this study were used of AGQ Aggression Questionnaire. Arnold Boss and Mark Perry’s AGQ Aggression Questionnaire comprises 30 clauses, which 14 clauses measure anger, eight clauses measure aggression, and eight clauses measure the revenge factor. The overall score range of this questionnaire (0 to 90) is obtained by summation of all question scores. Individuals in this scale with a score of lower than average have low aggression, and those with a higher than average score are highly aggressive. From total 30 questions, 12 including question numbers 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 30 measure aggressive behavior; seven questions including numbers 6, 8, 9, 18, 21, 22, and 29 examine aggressive thoughts, and 11 questions including numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 measure aggressive feelings. Reliability of the AGQ questionnaire was measured by Najjarian et al. (1996) and Allahyari (2007) and obtained a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.85.

3.3. Procedure

After choosing the desired locations, in the pre-test stage, the AGQ aggression questionnaire was handed out to the adolescents of marginal settlements, and after explaining the aim of the study and method of completing the questionnaire, test-takers were placed under direct supervision and equal conditions. After collecting the questionnaires, adolescents whom obtained a score of more than 45 in the AGQ aggression test were randomly distributed in two experimental and control groups of 30 persons each. Then, the experimental group according to the defined program was taught life skills comprising anger control, problem solving and decision-making, self-cognition, encountering stress, and communication skills. This program was taught to the experimental group in 14 sessions, two sessions a week, each session for duration of 90 minutes, for a period of three months. Then, a post-test was conducted for both groups in equal conditions.

4. Results

In order to examine the effect of life skills training on aggression of adolescents living in marginal settlements, the average scores of the experimental and control groups in the pre-test and post-test of physical and verbal aggression were examined and compared according to Table 2. Comparison between averages in pre-test and post-test of the experimental group shows that the average scores of physical and verbal aggression of adolescents in the experimental group have reduced in the post-test, compared to the results of the pre-test, whereas the control group did not exhibit any significant changes. In order to test the introduced hypotheses, the most suitable method – covariance analysis – was used. One of the fundamental conditions of using the covariance is equal condition of
variances. According to Table (2), Leon’s test results for calculating the equality of variances shows that all three variances of dependent variables in studied groups are statistically equal (P ≥ 0.05). Therefore, the required conditions for executing the covariance test are met.

Table 2. Average and standard deviation of pre-test and post-test of overall, physical, and verbal aggression in both experimental and control groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Equality of variances test (Leon’s)</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal aggression</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>11.80</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>10.80</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>8.53</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>10.93</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical aggression</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>10.13</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>7.26</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>0.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>10.46</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First Hypothesis: Life skills training reduce physical aggression in delinquent adolescents living in marginal settlements. Comparison of physical and verbal aggression post-test performance of test-takers of the experimental and control groups were carried out separately using a one-way program between test-takers, which was tested in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

Table 3. Results of within and between subjects effects (dependent variable: physical aggression)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change sources</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Average of square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>9.340</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.340</td>
<td>3.148</td>
<td>0.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.153</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups * Pre-test</td>
<td>3.689</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.180</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0.889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>236.220</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9.085</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As observed in Table (3), the zero hypotheses based upon lack of difference of the physical aggression variable in both control and experimental groups are rejected (F=3.148, P≤0.05). In other words, after adjusting the pre-test scores, between subject’s effects of the groups is significantly effective. Life skills training reduce verbal aggression in delinquent adolescents living in marginal settlements. Hence, we can conclude that significant difference exists between performance of the two groups in the physical aggression post-test, and life skills training reduces physical aggression of delinquent adolescents in the experimental group.

Second Hypothesis: Life skills training reduce verbal aggression in delinquent adolescents living in marginal settlements.

Table 4. Results of within and between subjects effects (dependent variable: verbal aggression)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change sources</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Average of square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>14.007</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.007</td>
<td>5.019</td>
<td>0.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>0.290</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.290</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>0.754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups * Pre-test</td>
<td>3.689</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.689</td>
<td>1.279</td>
<td>0.268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>74.969</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2.883</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As observed in Table (4), the probability of accepting zero hypothesis for comparing performance of the experimental and control groups in the post-test of the verbal aggression variable is less than 0.05 (F=4.92, P≤0.05). In other words, after adjusting scores of the pre-test, the between subject’s factor of the two groups is significantly effective. Hence, we can conclude that significant difference exists between performance of the two groups in the physical aggression post-test, and life skills training reduces verbal aggression of delinquent adolescents in the experimental group.
5. Conclusion

In this study, witness shows that physical and verbal aggression of adolescent boys significantly reduced because of life skills training, which included anger control, problem solving and decision-making, self-cognition, confronting stress, and communication skills. This result conforms to results obtained by (Qavami, 2008; Mohammadi, 2009; Corrigan & Liberman, 1994; Middleton and Cartlege, 1995; Nazer, 1994; Almasian, 2002; Vahidi et al., 2007; E’rabi, 2001; Mohammadi, 2002; Ashouri et al., 2002; Jack Bush, 1993; Pilper et al., 1995; Rezaei et al., 2009). Life skill training effectiveness bears both cognitive and behavioural aspects, in a sense that test-takers both cognitively changed their attitude toward life skills problems, and expressed this change in their direct and open behaviour.

Delinquency among marginal settlers is considerably high. This shows that adolescents from marginal settlements due to social class gap and lack of facilities are exposed to delinquency and crime; this result conforms to studies conducted by (Hatami 2008; Ahmadi et al., 2005; Sotoodeh, 1997; Bani Fatemeh et al., 2007). Studying the family history of delinquent adolescents of marginal settlements shows that internal and external family factors affect formation of delinquency in adolescents, and these individuals are exposed to incorrect training methods, thus, making them incapable of using correct strategies in confronting problems and stressful situations, and resulting in their inability in solving their own social and non-social problems. Considering their non-access to supportive resources, they inevitably choose incorrect solutions for their problems, which are anti-social and against the norms of the society; hence, making them inclined to any delinquency, felony, and crime in the society.

In addition, adolescence period as one of the critical periods of life provokes adolescent aggression through physiological and mental aspects. Aggressive persons lack social and life skills. Aggressive adolescents when encountering failures, express different forms of hostile behaviour. Lack of anger control and aggression in adolescents, especially delinquent adolescents causes problems in their communications with others, in a way that when experiencing failure in their interactions, they respond with aggressive or passive behaviour. Non-acceptance by others and sense of disvalue, reduces self-respect and self-image in delinquent adolescents. Therefore, not valuing themselves, they are involved in destructive and anti-social behaviours. Hence, providing effective communication and social skills training as one of pillars of life skills, can help improve their relationship with others. Special training accompanied by suitable techniques in course of compensating for shortcomings and training deficiencies, helps these people in better adaptation. Life skills training helps them gain a positive opinion regarding their surrounding problems, realize the reasons behind their incorrect or sometimes unwelcome behaviour, and learn the methods of coping with critical situations. In fact, these skills enable them to know what to say (suitable expression of anger), how to choose, and how to behave in different situations; and finally, life skills training can act as a preventive measure for social problems and prove useful and effective in creating better economic, security, and social conditions in the society.

References


