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Effectiveness of life skills training on increasing self-esteem of high school students

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Abstract

Objective This study designed to investigate effectiveness of training life skills on adolescents' students. **Method** This study is a pseudo-experimental study which accomplished on 160 students in Karaj city. Subjects of the study selected randomly from list of students in all of the schools of Karaj; then they divided randomly in two groups. Trained counsellors taught the life skills to students of the study group, and 80 reminder subjects assigned as control group. After educating the training program, subjects administered Cooper Smith self-esteem questionnaire (58-items version). **Results** Findings of the study indicated that life skills training lead to significant increase of self-esteem in study group in contrast to control group subjects. **Conclusion** Psycho education and mental health programs such as life skills training could cause to increase the necessary skills in students and decline school and educational problems.

Keywords: Life skills, Self-esteem, High School Students

Introduction

Almost 30 percent of children and adolescents experience a diagnosable psychological disorder during their life, and it might that 70 to 80 percent of them didn't receive suitable intervention. These disturbances usually make dramatic dysfunctions in school, home, and family performances which ultimately may influence educational drop out; and sometimes these problems act as a gate for delinquent behaviors in community (Evans, Mullett, Weist, Frans, 2005).

In recent years, many maladaptive behaviors such as aggression, anxiety, feeling of absurdity, and suicide increased considerably in adolescents. It seems that Lack of some psychological equipments is account for the behaviors. Self-esteem is among of the factors that its disturbances cause negative consequences (Kreitner, and

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Kinicki, 2007). Students as agents of community in educational settings may suffer different problems in absence of life skills and self-esteem, since self-esteem as a necessary item in psychological structure play several roles in social-educational functioning of the individual. This is why governments in their programs should pay the most attention to psychological status of students. Societies with well-equipped human assets could win the competitions and survive in changing situation of the world. Because of this potentiality educational policies should take an active program to elaborate self-esteem via training life-skills (Muafi, and Gusaptono, 2010).

Generally life skills training focus on students to acquire capability to live effectively society. In this vein, schools and counselors have an important role to elaborate skills which guide students' life. Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promote mental well being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. As a definition at the heart of life skills education is the learning of life skills. Life skills are 'abilities for adaptive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life' (WHO, 2001). UNICEF and WHO agree that life skills are generally applied in various aspects of life. Such as in the context of health and social events like human relationships, learning about social influences on behavior and learning about rights and responsibilities, as well as being taught in the context of health problems. Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities – i.e. what to do and how to do it (cited in Millia, 2009).

One of these capabilities is self-esteem. In the mid 1960s Morris Rosenberg as a social-learning theorist defined self-esteem in terms of a stable sense of personal worth or worthiness (Rosenberg, 1965; Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, 1989, 1995). Nathaniel Branden in 1969 defined self-esteem as:

"...the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and being worthy of happiness"; according to Branden (1987), self-esteem is the sum of self-confidence (a feeling of personal capacity) and self-respect (a feeling of personal worth). It exists as a consequence of the implicit judgement that every person does about, on one side, his/her ability to face life's challenges, that is, to understand and solve problems, and, on the other side, his right to achieve happiness, or, in other words, to respect and defend his own interests and needs (Baumeister, Smart and Boden 1996).

Branden's description of self-esteem includes the following primary properties:

self-esteem as a basic human need, i.e., "...it makes an essential contribution to the life process", "...is indispensable to normal and healthy self-development, and has a value for survival."

Because this enduring construct influence positively behaviors of the individual, experts should try to make fundamental courses in order to elaborate it. In doing this, psychologists and mental health providers may increase self-esteem by various ways include training skills that are essential to cope to situations of life.

While many studies have been assessed training programs on self-esteem in different populations (Creed et al, 2001), a few studies investigated the programs on self-esteem of adolescents' students. In school, besides academics children also learn social skills and encounter authority other than their parents (Matheson and Grosvenor, 1999). Students often look to adults in the school community for guidance, support and direction (Brooks, 2004). Furthermore, schools have a high credibility with parents and community members (WHO, 2001) and thus have a great influence on children and their families. In the present study authors intended to investigate and determine the role of training of life skills on high school students' self-esteem.

Method

This is a pseudo-experimental research with two groups in which one of them is study group and the other assigned as control group.

Participants

This research accomplished in Karaj city in Iran. Subjects of the study chose from list of male students in all schools of Karaj. According to random arrangement, 160 subjects selected randomly and divided in two groups.

Instruments

Coopersmith self-esteem questionnaire (58-items version): This is a reliable and valid tool which is use excessively by researchers/clinicians and could be used as a screening tool. Iranian version of the questionnaire has

sufficient internal consistency (Chronbach's Alpha=0.86). The questionnaire completed by two groups after educating sessions.

Demographic Checklist: the authors made a checklist to recruited SES data.

Procedure

Authors selected 4 experienced (licensed) counselors in order to teach life skills to the students. Before beginning the program the authors constituted a preliminary session for counselors, staffs and students to inform them about the program and after administering consensus form the main program began. The purpose of preliminary session was to accord the program. The counselors presented a manual guide to each subjects.

Life skills program continued 10 sessions twice a week with 50 minutes for each session. After the last session subjects were asked to complete the questionnaire.

Contents of the sessions:

The core set of skills (WHO 1997: p.1) that follow the above description are:

- 1) Self-awareness: This item aims to make ability to aware of self-characteristics, weaknesses, and strengths, recognizing demands of circumstances, and fears. Self-awareness help the individual to understand that whether one is under stress, and usually this is a prerequisite of empathetic social relationship.
- 2) Empathy: This item intended to make better understanding of others even once we are not in place of them. This skill makes the individual pay attention to others and create feeling of belongingness.
- 3) Interpersonal communication: This item teach the subjects to reinforce cooperation, trust, and working closely with each others.
- 4) Effective relationship: The skill educate the subjects to understand others, conditions, active listening, and how to express demands.
- 5) Coping stress: This item teach the subjects how to aware of stress and how to control.
- 6) Emotional management: This means how to identify affectionate states, discriminate emotions and finally how to respond them.
- 7) Problem solving: In this skill subjects learn how to make and find better solutions for their problems.
- 8) Decision making: The skill teaches the subjects to make appropriate decisions in conflictual situations.
- 9) Creative thought: This item teach the subjects how to build and discover new ideas; in this skill problems assume as an opportunity instead of a problem in which one should find fresh ways to solve problems.
- 10) Critical thinking: This skill teaches the students to think about accepting or rejecting others' idea specially in stressful conditions. This item focuses mostly on reasoning.

The skills presented the subjects in determined time, and after the last session they administered questionnaire of self-esteem. Recruited data analyzed in two section of descriptive and inferential statistics by spss-16 software.

Results

160 subjects were studied in this research, and according to their school documents none of them had psychological problems. The two groups compared in respect to their self-esteem scores.

According to results of the study, the mean score of self-esteem in the study group is more than control group; in order to analyze significance of this difference independent samples T test used to compare the groups.

In the table 1, descriptive statistics shown.

Table 1. descriptive statistics of the study

Groups	N	Mean	SD
Study Group	80	34	41/05
Control Group	80	29	41/38

In the table 2 result of the T test displayed the difference of the two groups

Table 2. inferential statistics of two groups

T	DF	Sig.
4/95	158	0.001

The results indicate that there is significant difference between two groups ($T= 4.95$; $df= 158$; $P<0.001$), and this means that implementation of the program influenced positively scores of self-esteem in study group subjects.

Discussion

Global life conditions involve constant coping skills and people of all ages should be equip to these skills; the necessary issue that educational organizations must concentrate on it. As the literature points, Creed (1996; 2001) showed the importance of the skills in which influence self-esteem and also self-efficacy of the adolescents.

Based on the results of the present study, this kind of programs could elaborate levels of self-esteem in subjects. The results implicitly indicate that educational organizations have an important role to increase such constructs which consequently affect adolescents' problems.

While the study revealed short term consequences of the program, it is possible to evaluate long term results of the studies in follow up trials. The students, who had participated in life skills training program, could be successful in social communications using assertive behaviors. These successes cause positive evaluation of a person and have a positive effect on self-esteem. These people find

a good feeling about themselves by stating their emotions, beliefs and thoughts and they end internalizing their emotions and excitements (worry). It leads to social compatibility and self-reception by themselves (Aboutorabi Kashani and Bayat, 2010).

One of the limitations of the study may be relate to research design of the study; in such trials it is most useful to apply pretest and posttest design since cause to more exact result, and authors should consider it in further researches.

Findings of the study reflect the efficiency of the program in this sample and should be generalize cautiously to other samples. It is necessary for researchers to accomplish several studies in different ages to make more appropriate conclusion.

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