

Effects of Cognitive Therapy and Training Program on Self-Assertiveness and Parenting Style

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ABSTRACT

The present research aims to investigate the effects of a self-assertiveness training program and deferent parenting styles in female first grade high school students in Tehran. Students were selected from 14 education authorities as designated by the Iranian Ministry of Education. All students had enrolled during the academic year 2008-2009. The aims of the present research were twofold: First, to compare self-assertiveness in students with deferent parenting styles and second, to examine the effects of a self assertiveness training program in students. The sample, using a cluster sampling method consisted of 400 students of whom 50 were selected to take part in the training program. All subjects completed the Assertiveness Innovatory (AI) and a 76 item inventory measuring parenting style. Subjects completed the questionnaires twice before and after the training program. Statistical analyses showed that there was a significant difference with "little control and too much love". It was further found that students who scored low on self assertiveness measures can benefit significantly from self-assertiveness programs.

KEY WORDS: cognitive therapy, parenting style, control, love, self- assertiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Most researchers currently agree that most social behaviors can be learned (Ormord), because the children who are not brought up among great people have socially different and unacceptable behaviors and cannot speak. The evidence also shows that the children who have not had a warm family environment have inappropriate social behaviors (Harjie & Owen, 1990) Bandura (1986) mentioned in cognitive-social theory that all behaviors can be learned except for early reflections. He believes that social learning is made through modeling and imitating other's behaviors, especially parents. Family environment, economic situation, thoughts and beliefs, customs, aspirations, parental education level, their age and also the form of families and personal and social behavioral patterns are effective (Harji and Owen, 1990). Bandura mentioned in his cognitive-social theory that all behaviors can be acquired other than the primary reflections. He believes that social learning is occurred through modeling and vicarious learning especially parents. Family environment, economic situation, thoughts and beliefs, customs, parental education level, their age and also family formation and social and personal behavioral patterns are interacting each other (Harji and Owen, 1990). Therefore, considering the influence of parent's parenting styles is an indisputable fact as a factor in the shape and formation of social skills. On the other hand, researchers have emphasized the relationship between parenting styles and development of life skills. Some experts believe that there is a significant relationship between the type of training performed by parents and quality of life skills in adulthood (Slicker, Picklesimer, Guzak & Fuller, 2005). The findings achieved by Husseinian and Baniasadi (2005) showed that those acquired with life skills training have a more realistic assessment of their life than others and have more logical beliefs and thoughts and are so decisive in making their capabilities practical and are more adamant in facing with life events. Life skills is divided into personal and social skills by World Health Organization (2000). Decision making and problem solving skills are, for instance, personal skills and communication and interpersonal skills are among the social skills. Lack of assertiveness is an interpersonal problem expressed in social situations and occupational, family and community interactions and it is underlying other problems, including mental disorders. In addition, decisiveness is one of the significant components in social skills and one the revisable aspects in interpersonal relations which is capable of both being trained and modified. The philosophy of group teachings in the framework of cognitive therapy meetings and is because of studies is reported regarding assertiveness variable and self-regard and anxiety (Hormozinejad, 2000) and self-confidence (Kumpat, Irish, Kasten, Freund & Bums, 1999). It is also reported that there is a significant relationship between self-regard variable, self-confidence and anxiety with parenting styles

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variable (Vignoli, Croity-Belz, Chapeland, Defillips & Garci). According to these findings, the first research hypothesis can be presented as below: there is a difference between the ability of student's assertiveness and in families with different parenting styles. Considering the studies conducted in the field of life skills trainings, especially training assertiveness programs in different people including nurses (McCabe & Timmins), patients (Dehbozorgi, 1993), students (Begley and Glcken, 2004, Dezhbakhsh, 1993), students (Lizarrage, Ugarte, Cardelle & Inate, 2003, Nesioshehni, Yeylagh, 2001), it can be found out that training skills especially assertiveness skills have been often associated with positive effects in people. The results achieved from this research are lead to the current research's second hypothesis being proposed:

Training assertiveness abilities increase the student's assertiveness with a low assertiveness score.

In cognitive therapy sessions of assertiveness teachings, it is expected that parenting styles have an influence on the amount of assertiveness training effectiveness considering the effects of parenting methods on social development, problem solving skills, independence, decision making (Elliot, 1990) and increased self-regarding (Khademian, 1997, Hormozi Nejad, 1997), and also creating an atmosphere for intellectual development and children's emotional security (Winser, Modigan & Aquilino, 2005); and conversely, the effect of assertiveness impact on social skills (Lizaraga and colleagues, 2003) and increased self-confidence (Ien Rolin, 2004). Therefore, the third hypothesis is offered entitled "the effect of assertiveness training program is different on students with different parenting style". Thus, the current study is conducted generally aims for the effect of parenting styles on amount of assertiveness and also comparing the effectiveness of assertiveness training programs.

METHODOLOGY

Statistical Community, Sample and Research Methodology:

The first part of this study is concerned with comparing children's assertiveness in four different parenting styles by cause-comparative method. The research statistical community includes all high school students of Regions 1, 2 and 3 in Tehran in the academic year 2010-2011. The concerned sample were selected using multi-stage random cluster among the students for the first part. Firstly, 450 people were randomly chosen among Tehran education center of regions 1,2 & 3. Concerning the second part of the study, the assertiveness training variable intervention was used from pretest-posttest design with control group. Because the concerned sample for the second part of study was a semi-experimental study; and on the other hand, it needs to homogenize the experiment and control group, a high school with 6 classrooms was selected. 50 students (25 students for experiment group and 25 ones for control group) were chosen in this sampling. It is worth mentioning that the sample has been homogenized concerning the characteristic such as low level of assertiveness than the average students, residence, parental education, average, IQ, the location of high school and demographic data of age and sex. The students have the following characteristics:

1. Their assertiveness score was lower than that of average level of other students.
2. Their first half-semester was between 15-17.
3. Their IQ was reported between 100-115 according to the current report on their consultation document.
4. Their parents were graduated in diploma and advanced diploma.
5. Subjects aged 15 years and the maximum difference of changes was 4 months.
6. Students were enrolled in a high school.
7. Each 10 students has single way of parenting style.

Then 20 students of experiment group participated in five sessions of assertiveness training. The content of the training session are presented in table 1.

Assessment Tool

Self-assertiveness Questionnaire:

This questionnaire includes 4 questions and it was designed by Gambril and Richi in 1975. Each question presents a situation which the respondent should rate the possibility of conducting such behaviors with options of very high=5, high=4, medium=3, low=2 and very low=1. In a study conducted by Piry (2004), construct validity of a questionnaire with factor analysis was obtained with two-factor hierarchical method, which together account for 48% of the assertiveness variance. Proportional meaning was selected for both factors. The first factor is compatible with Basic Assertiveness based on the Long and Jakobski's (1978) view which includes simple action of tool and insisting on rights, beliefs and feelings; the second factor is named contrastive assertiveness based on the Kelly and colleague's views (1978). This assertiveness factor has contrastive dimension and are discussed in coping with others and in interpersonal interactions. The reliability of the questionnaire with retest method in the studies conducted by Gambril and Richi (1975) 82%, in Piry's (2004) research, the reliability of the questionnaire was 85% by Cronbach's alpha method, and in Paizi's study (2002, quoted from Piry, 2004) was 92% on high school girls, second grade by Cronbach's alpha.

Table 1: Cognitive Therapy Session

No	Session contents	homework	Time (minute)
1	Introduction, definition and expressing the significance of assertiveness, having debate about benefits and functions of assertiveness, being aware of one's own rights and those of others in society and personal life, the concepts such as having the right of assertiveness of non-assertiveness, rights of freedom, choice, expression, beliefs and feelings	Having concentrated on daily activities, students try to remember the behaviors which their rights and of others has been considered or it has been violated.	100
2	Presenting a report of previous session's homework and giving a talk about assertiveness –based behavior, the reason of the lack of assertiveness, getting familiar with forms of behavior such as passive behavior, being dominant and aggressive behavior, considering the causes, benefits and harms of types of behaviors, giving examples to more clarify discussions using training method and playing role.	Detection and differentiation of courageous, aggressive and passive behavior in one's own behavior and that of others	95
4	Presenting the assignment reports and focusing on aggressive behaviors, discussing the following issues: why are we angry, whether anger is helpful or not?, whether anger should be expressed or not?, what are the consequences of not expressing it?, how should it be expressed?, what are the ways to control anger, recognizing emotions and controlling them, identifying the place and time of expressing anger using cognitive restructuring and training situations in classroom?	Thinking about the desire achieved from acting contrary to one's feelings and tolerating what it is not wanted using one's own experiences and that of family.	95
Summing up, introducing the book and filling the feedback form			

Parenting Style Questionnaire

This questionnaire includes 74 options in which teens respond to it based on the way they are dealt with by their parents based on a 5-option scale ranged from completely agree to completely disagree. The questionnaire was provided by Naghashian (2006) based on the work of Schafer (1960). The scale reliability was calculated by Cronbach's alpha and retest which the amount reported for control-freedom was 63%, respectively and for cold-warm relationships and for reliability coefficient and Cronbach's alpha was 92% and 82%, respectively for the whole questionnaire (quoted from Tahmotan, 1998). Tahmotan calculated the scale reliability and by Cronbach's alpha coefficient in his study and obtained it for control-freedom dimension 74% and for the whole scale 85%. Naghashian (2006) obtained the questionnaire validity through content validity.

Yaghoubikhani (quoted from Naghashian, 2006) used the main factors analysis to determine the effect of question's factor validity which the achieved results indicate two factors. The questions 1-42 have more load on emotion factor and the questions 7-43 showed a high correlation with control factor. Generally, the result indicated that the factors analysis approved the validity of questions factor and approved the opinion of the questionnaire designer indicating that the mentioned tool assessed two dimensions.

Table 2: Frequency and frequency percentage of the students based on the type of parenting style:

Parenting styles	frequency	Percentage
High control-high affection	118	29.3
Low control-high affection	109	23
High control-low affection	87	21.6
Low control-low affection	89	22.1

Findings

According to the results achieved in table 2, parenting styles of high control-low affection is reported 21.6%, low control-low affection 22.1%, low control-high affection 23% and high control- low affection 3.29%.

Table 3: one-way variance analysis to examine differences in mean scores of students based on parenting styles

Indicators	Total average of assertiveness score	Standard deviation	Resource of changes	Total squares	df	Mean squares	F	Significance level
Parenting styles								
High control-low affection	118	27.141	14.56	Inter-group	87.5959	3	19	86.62
Low control-high affection	109	1.147	20.99	Intra-group	5.152858	399		
High control-low affection	87	136.2	17.66					
Low control-low affection	89	140.2	20.83					

Average: 4.158818

To consider the first hypothesis, that is “ there is a difference between the assertiveness ability of students in the families with various parenting styles”, the one-way variance analysis was conducted.

As it can be seen, there is a significant difference among the four groups ($F=5.16$, $P<0.002$). Scheffé post hoc test is used to check the binary difference of the groups. The obtained results showed that there is a difference between low control-high affection parenting styles and high control-low affection style in terms of the amount of assertiveness ($F=0.002$). according to the average of the two groups, it can be said that students who were under the low control-high affection parenting styles are more acquired with assertiveness.

The second hypothesis indicating “ assertiveness training programs increase the ability of assertiveness among students with low assertiveness score” is conducted with comparing the pretest-posttest. To analyze data, the difference of the scores was calculated using minimizing posttest score from pretest of each subject and then the mean of score differences through t test was considered (table 4). To study about variance equality in total score and its subscales, the Lon’s F test validated that there is no significant difference between variances of the two control and experiment groups, and therefore, the requirement of t test was achieved for dependent groups. The result of t test showed that conducting assertiveness training programs significantly increased the assertiveness score of the students.

To study about the assertiveness training effectiveness on coping and fundamental assertiveness of students, t clearly showed that the difference observed in the average differential scores is not accidental and conducting assertiveness training programs was able to increase the coping and fundamental assertiveness among students (see tables 5 & 6).

Table 4: t test of independent groups to study about the difference among differential means in the two control and experiment group in assertiveness scores

Groups	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean difference	T	Df	p
Experiment group	20	28.9	24.1	28.6	37.5	38	0.001
Control group	20	-0.3	2.15				

One-way variance analysis to consider the assertiveness training programs in students based on different parenting styles showed that there is no significant difference between assertiveness scores in students with different parenting styles before and after training programs ($F=1.56$, $df=3.61$, $P=0.238$).

Table 5: t test of independent groups to study about the difference of differential means in experiment and control groups in coping assertiveness scores.

Groups	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean difference	T	Df	p
Experiment group	20	14.1	13.77	13.95	4.47	38	0.001
Control group	20	0.15	2.1				

Table 5: t test of independent groups to consider the difference of differential means in experiment and control groups in fundamental assertiveness scores

Groups	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean difference	T	Df	p
Experiment group	20	14.45	14.15	13.25	4.14	38	0.001
Control group	20	0.15	2.1				

DISCUSSION

The results showed that there is a significant difference between student’s assertiveness ability in different parenting styles, and as revealed in Scheffé post hoc examination, this difference was concerned with low control-high affection method against high control-low affection method. This means that the students in low-control-high affection parenting styles (permissive) have more amount of assertiveness than the students in high control-low affection parenting style (authoritarian). Also, the study conducted by Bamarind in 1991 showed that adequate and social-developed parents of children are more affectionate and loving compared with other parents and are more communicated with their children. The studies conducted by McKord (1991) also emphasizes this point that high control is lead to social conflict. This result reveals the effect and significance of two factors named control and affection (Stanfred and Beh Yer, translated by Dehghan Pour & Kharazchi, 1998).

According to the results of the research mentioned above, it can be said that there is a general consensus among the experiments that parent’s skills and behaviors are highly influencing in children’s development and family relations affects on all aspects of life such as having communication with adults and elderly people, education, bad habits and delinquency. Also, children

whose parents are balanced in making an intimate and free relationship have higher self-confidence and have more mental health. It is worth mentioning that being equipped of people with these skills prevents from many social problems such as delinquency and drug abuse and having tendency towards risky behaviors which can be seen in adolescence. Therefore, the need to pay attention to parent's educational practices and being aware of its different effects become very apparent in children's behavior. The research findings also show that training assertiveness programs increase student's assertiveness with low assertiveness program. Many studies confirmed the positive effects of assertiveness training programs on people's assertiveness ability in different ages, including the research results of Dorbakhsh (1994), Joyce and Will (1986), McKab and colleagues (2002) and Kropat and colleagues (1999) is compatible with this hypothesis.

Those who are benefitted from assertiveness as of tools for effective communication can discover many solutions under their relationships through expressing their problems, better understand the issues and are received with social supports. The more an individual have the ability to express the problems accurately and clearly, the more it is surely likely to plan and use more useful ways. Social skills training, especially assertiveness skills, have more significant position in society as well as therapeutic value namely prevention role. As the studies showed, these trainings was effective in various programs, such as the positive effect prevention program have in risky sexual behaviors amongst adolescents (Boumarind, 1991), preventing from suicide and drug abuse and alcohol use (Gourman, 2002) (quoted from Poursharifi, Bahrami, Ehsan, and Tayefe Tabrizi, 2006). In addition, the significant role of education in creating healthy social and emotional relationships should also be considered. Joyce and Will (1986) declared in a report of student's assertiveness training programs that students showed intimacy, sincerity and honesty in interpersonal interactions using these ways and take effective measures in dealing with conflicts and reducing anxiety and tensions related to social situations. The mental image of person from himself including feelings about oneself and performances is also improved. Assertiveness is closely related with self-concept and one's respect and helps feeling of self-confidence is created in interpersonal relationships.

The characteristics of confident individuals is somewhat overlapped with assertiveness features.

Defending from one's own personal rights, the ability to say "no", starting, continuing, ending, how to fix specific problems, tolerating pressures and feeling freedom and identifying in selecting, gaining other's acceptance and trust and avoiding from social exclusion are among the common characteristics of people with self-confidence and having the ability of assertiveness (Ford, 1992; quoted from Rezaie, 1996).

Therefore, the need to train this skills is highly clear, because its positive effects will considerably help to promote mental health and interpersonal relationships. Assertiveness skills training in adolescence develop the ways to deal with problems, resolving conflicts, the ways of decision- making and the behaviors along with assertiveness in students as well as reducing feelings of inability and confusion.

Therefore, considering the results of assertiveness skills training in adolescence, it is required that training teachers help these skills grow and develop based on these training basics and creating supportive environments. The research findings showed that assertiveness training sessions has been able to increase fundamental and coping assertiveness in experiment group.

It seems that family's impact on forming the characteristics is an obvious matter and it is emphasized on the role of parents on children's behaviors in many studies. Bamarind (1991) reported that there is a direct relationship between social development, self-confidence and mental health with parenting styles. In an another study, Vignoli and colleagues (2005) showed that educational practices can have an effect on individual's interests and their job searches. Even in the study conducted by Euhan Burgh (2003, quoted from Wignoli and colleagues (2005)), parents are introduced as one of the environmental factors which has much effects on children's nutrition; however, by increasing age and entering adolescence and physical and intellectual development and being involved in a much bigger society in which the peers are significant members within, parent's effects are gradually decreased and adolescents try, with a desire for independence, to make decisions about important events in life. This issue become more clear especially in the short term and being influenced from environmental factors, because parents usually impose their beliefs and thoughts to their children using tolerating practices, controlling and creating intimate relationships over time. Therefore, short time delay after assertiveness training program to examine the effects of a variable as parenting style is of the factors that prevents its scrutiny. In addition, being involved in exam month parents usually behave differently as well as individual differences of students which is controlled to some extent and personality traits are among the uncontrolled factors. Researchers also prefer that more than four sessions to be consecrated for training, but this limitation was imposed by school authorities. Furthermore, the lack of parental cooperation to form assertiveness training sessions outside school hours did not provide sufficient facilities to researchers. Another notable factor is inappropriate time position; that is to say, the research was compulsory performed in exam time and this can cause anxiety and lack of focus in students. Due to mentioned limitations, various dimensions of the study

was left unconsidered and many questions were remained unanswered. It is recommended that following issues be considered using current research in the near future. Obviously, replicating the current research employing the methods in various parts of the country and comparing its results and also conducting this study in both males and females can be very fruitful. There is no doubt that using the applicable results of this research in education, juvenile institution and addiction centers are also required. It is recommended that student's understanding from practical meaning of assertiveness and adopting it with aggressive behaviors and also parent's and training teacher's understanding of practical meaning of assertiveness and adopting it with domineering and polite behaviors is concerned in the future studies. Using assertiveness training to prevent delinquent behaviors, drug abuse, risky sexual behaviors in schools continually seem beneficial. It was not able to consider the long term effect of training in the current research, as many other researches. It is recommended that researchers re-perform the post test after more time and consider the long-term effect of training. One of the important subjects in the current study is existing cultural differences. The findings of some researchers suggest that assertiveness capability is partly depends on individual's sex and culture. For instance, Florin and Zernitski (1987) come to conclusion by comparing the Israeli adolescence that Arab girls have less assertiveness skills than Israeli's boys and girls in some social situations. Moreover, Roland (1996) reported the same results in Asian population compared with their American counterparts. It is suggested that cultural and gender differences be considered in Iranian community in the future studies.

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