

The Effectiveness of Group Training of Assertiveness Skill on the Social Adjustment and Self- esteem of Shy Male Junior-high School Students in Hamedan, Iran

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to evaluate the effect of group training of assertiveness skill on the social adjustment and self- esteem of shy male Junior-high school students in Hamedan, Iran. The research method is Experimental including pre-test and post-test phases along with a control group. The research population entails all the shy male junior-high school students of school year 2014-2015 in Hamedan city. Among one hundred participants who have filled Stanford Shyness Questionnaire, thirty participants who have got the least score in social adjustment and self-esteem were selected by random multi-stage sampling technique. They were assigned randomly into two groups as experimental and control group. The data collection instrument included the subtests of social adjustment questionnaire, a special version designed for high school students (AISS) developed by Sinha and Sink (1993). This test is one of Yes/No type Questionnaire. The Self-esteem Questionnaire was Copper Self-esteem Questionnaire. Assertiveness skills were taught in eight 90-minute sessions. The achieved data were analyzed by Multivariate Analysis of Covariance using SPSS 18. The results showed significant differences between the two groups in terms of their social adjustment and self-esteem. The findings of this study indicate that group training of assertiveness skills promotes the self-esteem and social adjustment of shy students.

KEYWORDS: Assertiveness, Social Adjustment, Self-esteem, Shyness, Skills.

1. INTRODUCTION

Genuinely human is a social creature and needs to communicate with others. Many of the higher needs of man as well as flourishing his creativity and talents are satisfied only through the interpersonal interactions and social relationships. In fact, self-knowledge, effective and interactive communication with others and the acceptance of social responsibility are among the fundamental goals of all education systems[1]. Human relations are crucial for the sense of well-being. Shy individuals have lower relational quality than non-shy[2]. Shy individuals behave awkwardly in their social interactions and interpersonal relationships. In other words, they lack social skills[3]. Over the past decades, research has shown that shyness is a reliable predictor of physical and mental disorder among children and teenagers.

Many factors contribute to the emersion of timidity. Some aspects of shyness are as a result of learning. Moreover, cultural backgrounds, environment and family circumstances and also behavioral and social patterns social create fertile ground for the development of shyness [4]. Since one of the main foundations of mental health and psychological well-being is having good social relationships, defects in these communications will likely to cause some problems [5]. Individuals who have more social relations and are more skillful in implementing life skills are less likely to be afflicted by mental and physical illnesses while mental and physical illnesses is more dominant among the lonely, isolated and stressful individuals who suffer from extreme shyness and weak self-esteem [6]. On the other hand life skills are a collection of skills and abilities that help an individual to confront and deal with conflicts and difficult living situations in an effective way. These abilities enable the individuals to act positively and flexibly in their interaction with other individuals, society, culture and environment in order to guarantee their own mental health [7].

Among these skills one can refer to the self esteem. According to a report by World Health Organization (WHO), it is predicted that few people will be able to have a satisfactory life without acquiring social and self assertive skills after 2010. The effect of teaching these skills on the success and achievement in life is possible through the manipulation of mental- social capacity of people. Therefore, teaching these skills will enhance individuals' mental-social capacities and thereby enable them to tend toward an adaptive and tolerating behavior[8].

Assertiveness is the core of interpersonal behavior and the key of human relationships [9]. Based on the theory of Alberti & Emmons [10] assertiveness is considered as a skill and competence for the interpersonal relationship. Assertiveness training program can improve the information, beliefs and behaviors such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, public health and teenagers' assertiveness so that they can change their view and establish interpersonal relations [11, 12]. A person who have the assertiveness ability in addition to insisting on his logical demands and proceeding opposing behavior in defending them, takes other's rights and tastes into account and avoids from extorting and violating others' rights [13]. In general, assertiveness refers to a person's ability to express and defend their opinions, interests, and feelings appropriately and without anxiety [14]. The person who has the assertiveness ability accepts the responsibility of his behaviors and choices. He has enough self-esteem. He has positive feelings, thoughts, and attitudes toward himself. His behavior with himself and others is clear and honest [15]. He gets use of communication methods that enable him to maintain his self-esteem and follow his happiness and satisfaction of desires [16]. Those who have assertiveness show a high degree of confidence and self-esteem [17].

Several studies have shown that assertiveness and self-esteem are related. Tempel & Rapson [18] examined the impact of assertiveness on the self-esteem and concluded that self-esteem is significantly increased in most of the testees. This improvement is also observed in the subsequent inquiries [18]. In various studies, Ardini *et al.* [19] showed that there is a correlation between the non-assertive behaviors and low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence. They reached the conclusion that non-assertive behavior has an inverse relationship with high self-esteem behavior, self-confidence and social self-sufficiency, and independent behaviors [19]. In his studies, Ravykz also concluded that teaching and learning social skills and assertiveness training, in both sexes leads in lowering mental stress and heightening mental health and self-esteem [20]. Examining the simple and multiple relationship between self-esteem, feeling of loneliness, and social anxiety and self-expression also showed that overall self-esteem, individual self-esteem, educational self-esteem, social anxiety, avoidance, avoidance distress, and fear of negative evaluation has a significant relationship with self expression [21]. Azais, Granger, Debray & Ducroix (1999), in their study concluded that assertiveness improves the adaption in social interactions while dysfunction in assertiveness contributes to anxious, depressive and personality disorders, representing a frequent impairment for patients [22].

Barton-Arwood *et al.* (2005) and Amand *et al.* [23], noted in their studies that social adjustment skills training has a positive effect on the social adjustments and enhancing social skills [23]. The results of the studies by Verduyn *et al.* [24], revealed that social skills training leads to a significant improvement in activities and social behaviors of students as well as their self-confidence [24]. Jacobi [25], in his study on high school students in Tafresh City, Iran showed that assertiveness training through group role playing is effective in improving social skills [25]. A lot of other studies (Khalatbari, 2008; Khalatbari *et al.*, 2009; Jalali & Jalalvand, 2008, and Neisi & Shahni Yeylagh, 2003) [26-29] has verified the role of life skills training sessions, which res among the skills of assertiveness, on the level of adaptation and aggressiveness.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is semi-experimental for the implementation of which the pre-test and post-test with intact control group design was chosen. The statically population included all the high school students enrolled in Hamedan City, Iran in the school year 2014-2015. After they filled the Stanford Shyness Questionnaire (including 40 questions based on Likert scale from 0 to 4) sampling was done thorough multi-stage random sampling method and a total number of 100 people who had the highest levels of shyness were selected. The sub-test of social adaptation, special version for high school students (AISS) [30] was given to the 100 participant. Thirty participants who have got the lowest score were determined. They were randomly assigned into two experimental and control groups. The experimental group received an eight 90 minute of training in assertive skill for an eight session period. The control group did not receive any training.

To determine the amount of adaptation in adolescents Sinha and Sink questionnaire [30] for students' adaptation (AISS) was used; this questionnaire was developed by Sinha and Sink [30] and includes 60 questions that examines 14 to 18 years old students in three areas of emotional, social and educational (20 questions in each area). Reliability coefficient of the test is estimated thorough Split-half method as 95%, test-retest method as 93%, and Kudrer Richardson formula as 94%. The content validity of the test has been confirmed by 20 experts of psychology. In general, the validity and reliability of the test is satisfactory high [31]. Cooper Smith Self Esteem Questionnaire has also been implemented in this study. It is a 58-point scale self-report paper and pencil test which consists of 8 lie detector items and the remaining 50 items are divided into 4 subscales of general, family (parents), academic (school), and social self-esteem. Cooper Smith *et al.* [32] calculated the retest coefficient of 88% after five weeks and retest coefficient of 70 % after three years for this scale. Shekarkan and Neisi [33] in a study conducted on the first to third year high school students in Najaf Abad, Iran reported the test-retest reliability of the scale as 90% and 92% for male and female students, respectively. Implementing this scale on a sample of students, Allameh (2005) also estimated its reliability. He reported the split-half reliability of the scale as 83 % and its Cronbach's Alpha as 84%.

Several studies have verified the reliability of Cooper Smith including Shekarkan and Neisi[33] who estimated the reliability coefficient of this scale through calculating the correlation between the questionnaire scores and average scores of students final exam results. The achieved values were reported as 69% and 71% for boys and girls, respectively[34].

The treatment phase of the study included eight sessions. The course syllabus based on Assertive Skill, a course book by Mohammad khani [35] was taught to the experimental group during 8 sessions as follows:

First session: Introduction, Familiarity with group members, Statement of the goals and rules of the group

Second session: Defining assertiveness, practicing types of communication styles

Third session: Teaching and practicing non-verbal skills

Fourth Session: Teaching and practicing how to say No.

Fifth Session: Teaching and practicing how to make a request

Sixth Session: Teaching and practicing of the 4-step model of STOP

Seventh Session: Teaching and practicing of special techniques

Eighth session: Reporting on the previous session and providing feedback, Drawing a conclusion, and Filling the poll form.

3. RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of assertiveness skill training on social adjustment and self-esteem of male shy junior-high school students in Hamedan, Iran. The findings were presented in two parts: descriptive and inferential. Table 1 compares the mean and standard deviation of the social adjustment and self-esteem in pre-test and post-test of the experimental and control groups.

Table 1. The mean and standard deviation of the social adjustment and self-esteem in experimental and control groups

Variable	Group	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Average	Average SD	Average	Average SD
Social adjustment	Experimental	8.47	2.949	14.20	2.077
	Control	12.20	2.704	12.73	2.549
Self-esteem	Experimental	21.87	2.532	33	2.726
	Control	22.40	3.019	23.40	3.066

As shown in the table, the pre-test scores for the social adjustment and self-esteem in the experimental group are 8.47 and 21.87 and in the control group are 12/20 and 22.40, respectively. The post-test scores for the social adjustment and self-esteem in the experimental group are 14.20 and 33 and in the control group are 12.73 and 23.40, respectively. It can be concluded that social adjustment and self esteem have increased after the intervention in the experimental group. Table 2 demonstrates the results of multiple analysis of covariance in investigating the differences in the results of the social adjustment and self-esteem in both experimental and control groups.

Table 2. Test of Wilks' Lambda to assess the impact of group membership on the sum of the scores of dependent variables in post-test

Variation Source	Wilks' Lambda	F	Df	Df Error	Sig.	Effect Size	Statistical Power
Social adjustment Pre-test	.674	6.054	2	25	.007	.326	.843
Self-esteem Pre-test	.501	12.431	2	25	.0001	.499	.991
Group Membership	.058	2.32	2	25	.0001	.942	1

The results of Multivariate Analysis of Covariance in Table 2 indicates that by controlling the relations between pre-test scores and other variables of control group with the post-test scores, there are significant differences between the study groups ($p < 0.0001$); thus, the main hypothesis of the study was verified.

4. DISCUSSION

Among the many issues that in any society, especially its educational system, is taken into consideration is to improve the behavioral conditions of society and to prevent the mental and social harms. In the current stressful and disappointed lives, people always come across the situations that they don't defend themselves as they should. They are instead faced with some sorts of lack of clarity and decisiveness in dealing with the others[29].

Assertiveness training, a behavioral multi-content method, like other social skills rooted in psychotherapy, including behavioral therapy. It is believed that lack of decisiveness and assertiveness are something learnable so it can be removed by training and teaching the adventuresome, overt and decisive behavior, instead[29]. In this study that examined the effect of assertiveness skill training on the self-esteem and social adjustment of shy male junior-high school students in Hamedan, Iran, it was tried to answer this question

that whether teaching the assertiveness contributes to the enhancement of social adjustment and self-esteem on the part of the experimental group as compared with the control group. To answer this question, one hypotheses were formulated and examined.

5. CONCLUSIONS

According to the results of Table 1 which compares the average scores of social adjustment and self-esteem in pre-test and post-test for both the experimental and control groups and observing the Table 2 which shows the multivariate analysis of variance, it was concluded that assertiveness skill training has a significant effect on the social adjustment and self-esteem of participants in the experimental group compared to the control group. In this study, assertiveness skills training led to the increase in self-esteem and social adjustment of students in the experimental group while no significant difference was detected in the performance the control group.

These findings are consistent with research results of the studies conducted by Sanderman, Higman, and Pikerzgl [19], Temple and Robson [18], Ravicz, [20], Azais, Granger, Debray, and Ducroix [22], Amanda et al. [23], Verdyn and colleagues [24], Mansouri, [21], Jacobi [25], Khalatbari, [26], Khalatbary et al. [27], Jalali and Jalalvand[28], Neisi and Shahni Yeylagh [29].

To justifying these findings, it can be said that assertiveness training obviates the deficiencies in social adjustment and self-esteem of students who have a lot of problems in self-respecting and adjusting to their environment and makes an increase in creating an effective and constructive communication in interpersonal interactions and as well as emersion of appropriate and adaptable social behaviors. In addition, achievement in social and educational functions requires equipping with social adjustment, high self-esteem, assertiveness and social skills. This feature gives students the opportunity to work positively and constructively in various areas.

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