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AN OVERVIEW ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM AND REDUCTION OF ANXIETY IN STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Social anxiety has been regarded as one of the common phenomena among adolescents. This action might appear with pathological aspect if it goes beyond the normal state, accounted as anxiety disorder. Since anxiety and fear despite the difference in their concepts emerge in emotional-cognitive, physiological and behavioral pattern and both can be used as synonyms in research literature, it can use the term "social anxiety" which has a wider concept being used more among adolescents. Indeed, coping with social anxiety can have a huge importance in improvement of individuals' performance and reduction of their situational anxiety, defined as sad experience of anxiety. Further, research have shown that about 1% of adolescents suffer from pathological aspect of anxiety. Since, at this stage, adolescents reach to puberty with increasing physiological and mental changes in them leading to deep developments and disturb in their physical and mental balance, a variety of treatment methods have been suggested to treat anxiety disorders among adolescents. Most of the treatments have been applied on adults resulting in successful outcomes. Social skills training program has been regarded as one of the proposed treatments, so that the present research has intended to examine effect of social skills training program on reduction of social anxiety among students. Quasi-experimental method has been considered as the research method, implemented on 30 students in two control and experimental groups. The obtained results were analyzed via software SPSS. Obtained results indicated that there is a significant

difference between experimental and control group in enjoying social anxiety after training social skills.

Key words-social anxiety, social skills, students

INTRODUCTION

At current age, two major cultural changes have emerged in different communities: 1- personal communications have been found with more values than past, appeared as a leading source for life satisfaction, 2-range of acceptable social behavior has significantly expanded. Under the framework for this cultural area, desire for assertiveness training is felt not just as a transient state but also as a permanent method. Assertiveness training meets some of strong cultural needs, pursuing two major aims as follows:

-reduction of social anxiety

-acquisition of social skills

In this regards, the problems that the young class have faced include anxiety, low assertiveness, depression, hostility, aggression. The children and adolescents who have little communication with their peers lose the situations which pave the way for social, cognitive and ethical skills. These individuals prefer isolation, tend to depression and loneliness and act poor at school (Green, Forrhand, Beck&vosk, 2001). Since man needs communicating with others to meet most of his needs, the necessity for learning social skills seems important; on the other hand the necessity

for setting social communication lies on being among community (Biabangard, 2005, p. 11). Assertiveness skill is an important communication skill which can reduce your levels of depression and anxiety and impro ve your self esteem. Training assertiveness skill is targeted in creating necessary ability by the person so as to face external situations which can be stressful and assist for improvement of self-esteem and life satisfaction. It is obvious that social anxiety causes lack or reduction of person's involvement in community, whereby this requires for educational approaches in line with reduction of social anxiety among individuals (Rheingold et al. 2003, p. 639). Social anxiety has been regarded as one of the common phenomena among adolescents. This action might appear with pathological aspect if it goes beyond the normal state, accounted as anxiety disorder, that American Psychiatric Association in The third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of 'Mental Disorders (DSM-III) have considered social phobia as a term for social anxiety. Since anxiety and fear despite the difference in their concepts

emerge in emotional-cognitive, physiological and behavioral pattern and both can be used as synonyms in research literature, it can use the term "social anxiety" which has a wider concept being used more among adolescents. Social anxiety refers to a common phenomenon at the early periods of adolescence. Studies have shown that about 1% of adolescents suffer from pathological aspect of anxiety (Kashani nia, Z. 2007).

In addition, epidemiological studies have put an emphasis on prevalence of social anxiety in social situations at the middle of adolescence period (Essau, 1999). Adolescents with high social anxiety have reported more depression symptoms such as nnegative mood and low self-esteem and poor performance in communication with peers (La Greca, 1998; Mallet, 1999). Isa et al. have put an emphasis on this point that about 10% of adolescents with social anxiety have received Diagnostic Criteria for Alcohol Abuse and Dependence. Without doubt, as mentioned by Park and his colleague, findings of such research are of great clinical importance. With regard to the studies, social anxiety among adolescents raises higher level of negative effects than social anxiety among children and adults, whereby these negative effects appear as social pessimism and alcohol abuse (Kashdan Todd, 2004). Adolescence

refers to a period of development between childhood and adulthood during which the relationship with peers deepens. Independence grows through decision making, under which the person obsesses with intellectual and social affairs. Adolescence generally refers to period of gradual process for movement towards Coherent Self-Concept. Further, the best definition for this period lies on achievement process that is found with increasing the ability for dominance of complicated challenges of Academic Assignments, social identities and new interests (Sadock & sadock, 2008, p. 57). The anxiety which occurs during students' education has been mentioned as the most important type of anxiety at this age group which threatens the mental health of students and puts an adverse effect on efficiency of talents, formation of personality and their social identity (Hamideh Azimi, 2004). This is in a way that an efficient manpower plays a determinant role in process of social and cultural development. Without doubt, attention to different aspects of young generation's life is a contributing factor in development. Experiencing anxiety by adolescents will put negative effects on their academic performance during their education and mental health and job performance in future. In this regards, the

necessity to pay attention to training necessary skills to adolescents to help them to pass the barriers and access special turning points is felt. Notably, in recent years, clinical researchers and physicians have made increasing efforts to understudy etiology, prevalence and broad effects of social anxiety disorder. In real or imaginary interactions, social anxiety includes the feelings based on the person's perception in negative assessment, emotional distress and avoidance behavior. Hence, in literature review, the Social anxiety is seen as a syndrome with three components (Tillfors, 2009).

Puklek (2008) mentioned that as the issue of social anxiety among adolescents has been rarely examined by researchers, studying this phenomenon is of great importance. For instance, some studies have shown that the most prevailing type of anxiety at the periods of childhood and adolescence has a social nature. In this regard, concern about being accepted or rejected by classmates, concern about support and advocacy by friends and concern about ridicule of friends are more prevailed(Puklek, 2004). High anxiety and low social skill among students cause disorder in academic performance, interruption in learning, undermining ability, undermining learning abilities, reducing abilities and raising economic

problems and adverse effects for the person, family and community. Further, anxiety jepordizes their mental health and suppress them from a healthy life, whereby the personality induces to disease instead of tending to growth and dynamism (Worly, 1997). Indeed, coping with social anxiety can have a huge importance in improvement of individuals' performance and reduction of their situational anxiety (Shahabi & Kashani, 2007, Jaffari, 2004). To teat adolescents' anxiety disorders, different treatment methods have been proposed. Most social skills training programs are considered. Systematic desensitization has been grounded on this assumption that most of maladaptive behaviors are acquistional, whereby we can forget everything that we have learnt them and learn more adaptive reactions instead of them. In Systematic desensitization, the patient is asked during treatment to contact the anxiety-producing objects and situations and keep up with this contact so far as his anxiety reduces and facilitates new learning (Salkoveskis & Jakes, 1999). Struss(2005)has introduced training anxiety control as a main part of behavorial treatment in anxiety disorders. Various studies have confirmed effectiveness of Systematic desensitization, e.g. the studies by Haymbrg and Barlow , 2006, Bernstein et al. , 1998; Hughes , 2005 , Black 's and

Davidson , 1997 , Eysenck , 1991 , Turner and Biddle , 1998. Currently, desensitization can be beneficial for resolving some of the disorders especially for anxiety disorders (Khodayari fard & Shokohi Panah, 2006, Tozandeh Jani et al. 2007; Lin et al, 2004). Through training assertiveness skills, the low-assertive person is trained how to express assertive behaviors in interaction with others (quoted from Soltani, 2006). Most of researchers believe that the individuals with social anxiety do not respect feelings and thoughts of themselves and others. These individuals due to having an unsuitable evaluation of statues deal with sensitivity and confusion with others' view. In this regards, researchers have known shyness variables as the factors affecting social anxiety behavior and have put an emphasis on their role in social anxiety. According to Crum's study (2005), negative social styles such as low self esteem result in social anxiety among students. Moris (2009) in his study indicated that special dimensions of self-efficacy are followed by special types of anxiety disorders. Gaudiano & Herbert (2006) have defined self-efficacy in social anxiety as a belief through which the individuals will enable to express themselves in a favorable style to prevent from negative evaluation by others. According to the studies which have examined the relationship between self-efficacy and anxiety, suitable correlation has been reported between these two variables (Amozade, 2012).One of the major hypotheses of cognitive strategies in the context of anxiety lies on this fact that anxiety is called with prediction of occurrence of a negative or harmful event and/or threat perception (Beck et al. 1985). Individuals' perception from threat is elaborated by means of subjective judgements on prediction of a negative event of aversiveness from that event (Carr, 1974). Individuals with anxiety disorders estimate outcomes of negative events higher than normal individuals (Butler & Matheo; 1983; Perry & Herbert, 1996; Locock & Salkovskis; 1988). However these exaggerative judgements might be followed by emotional disorders, theorists believe that judgments are subjective. Hence, exaggerative estimation of negative outcome of social events is the special disorder of social anxiety(Beck et al, 1985; Edna B. Foa and Michael J. Kozak. 1986). Edna B. Foa and Michael J. Kozak(1996) indicated that anxious individuals estimate negative outcome of social events higher than normal individuals(Stwar, 2009). A research by Monteil et al on a group of individuals with social anxiety indicated that cognitive factors in these individuals cause abnormality in their social skills.

Evidences which indicate role of cognitive factors in social anxiety specify that why the individuals with suitable social skills face problem in use of them in some situations. These individuals evaluate Interpersonal feedbacks about themselves more negative than others. Further, it seems that they more likely recall their interpersonal reactions and estimate their interpersonal skills in social situations lower than the standard limit. Other evidences indicate that individuals with social anxiety are susceptible to generalize their negative recognition to other social situations (Cacioppo, Glass, Mrlvzy, 1979; Halfvrd & Fvdy, 1982). Other studies have shown that an emphasis on cognitive factors in treatment of social anxiety can be effective. Recognition of important role of cognitive factors caused adding cognitive strategies and their linkage with behavioral treatments become beneficial (Kvlyngtvn, Moon Bay, Onsive, Gelder, 1994). Buttler and Mathio (1984) put an emphasis on adding cognitive treatment methods to behavioral treatments. Logical reconstruction is one of the cognitive reconstruction methods which is considered in treatment of social anxiety. This technique has been proposed by Gldfryd et al.(1998) grounded on Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) with this

difference that it is more comprehensive than Gldfryd.

Treatment logic

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) is described referring to this issue that these individuals have negative predictions about outcomes of different events.

-representation of negatisve assumptions which are known as the infrastructure for Obsessive–compulsive disorder (OCD)

-analysis of patient's problems from cognitive perspective to determine irrationality of one of the assumptions

-training the patient to modify his speech

In this method, the patient learns when he feels stress affected by an emotional reaction assume it as a sign and strive to perceive irrational thoughts and ask himself "might what I am saying be irrational?". Thus, he recognizes it with more awareness and replaces rational terms. Gldfryd believes that it can integrate behavioral methods with this method. If the methods such as practice and conductance are combined with this method, there will be more effectiveness. McNealy & York (1990)combined logical reconstruction with multi-content behavioral methods and acquired positive outcomes in treatment of social anxiety. Stravinsky et al obtained positive results via this combined method in treatment of social anxiety. Hant

compared logical reconstruction with integration of this method, practice and behavioral review, that the results indicated superiority of combined method in treatment of social anxiety. Bernstein and his colleague believe that efficiency of behavioral therapy and cognitive - behavioral therapy about anxiety disorders of children and adolescents require for further organized research. Since results of such studies enjoy little capability for generalization, it must retest them. Role of social factors in social anxiety has been mentioned as the areas with the highest research, that it has not obtained absolute results despite attractiveness. Social anxiety has been considered as a destruction in process of processing information, thoughts, attitudes and beliefs which cause stimulation and retention of emotions and behaviors affiliated to social anxiety (Clark & Wells, 1995; Fenigstein, Scheier, Buss, 1975; Rapee & Heimberg, 1997; Schlenker & Leary, 1982; Trower & Gilbert, 1989; quoted from Rapee, 2004). Since the 1970s to later, corresponding to extensive range of cognitive theories in psychology, role of cognitive and perceptual factors was considered in the ability of assertiveness. Yeo and Green put an emphasis on effect of cognitive factors and evaluation of person from himself and mentioned it as the cause for assertive behavior (Green, 1982). They

showed that individuals with more sensitivity fail in their assertive behavior. Training is targeted in helping the individuals to change their view on themselves, increase their assertiveness, elaborate their thoughts and feelings and increase their self-confidence. Further, individuals learn how to cope with their problems in their interactions (Moenodin, 2007). Training assertiveness improves assertive behaviors and thoughts through cognitive reconstruction, so that individuals can improve their self-confidence and make more effective interpersonal relationships with others. This method through the challenge between therapist and clients assist the individuals to change their negative and insufficient beliefs (Fisher, 2009). This lies on this fact that the individuals with low assertiveness concentrate in unfavorable thoughts for realistic exposure with situations in outside (Ghasem Zade, 2012). This method is one of the effective intervention methods to treat individuals with social anxiety. From view of cognitive theories, negative beliefs about the ability and competence of a person have a potential role in formation of social anxiety. Cognitive treatment is one of the major methods used for management of anxiety and depression. Cognitive reconstruction is a useful tool to understand and transform negative thought. Training

social skills is a means in cognitive treatment method. The main idea of training social skill lies on this fact that we can change our thoughts more positively through training social skills. In this regards, the present research examines to which extent training social skills reduces social anxiety among them?

Research method

The present research is an experimental research with pre-test and post-test on control group. The present research aims to examine and compare the extent to which training social skills affect students with social anxiety. Hence, the applied aim of this research is to evaluate the proposed treatment methods and acquire the most suitable and effective method in treatment and reduction of social anxiety among adolescents. Library and fields studies at high schools in district one of Tehran education system were used to collect information and the selected individuals were matched based on diagnostic criteria for social anxiety in terms of age, gender and social situation. These individuals were matched based on diagnostic criteria for social anxiety in DSM 111-R in terms of age, gender and social situation and were classified to two groups including treatment and quasi-treatment groups. The statistical population consists of all the students at age group(13-17 years old) at high school

in district one of Tehran. With regard to wide population, firstly two high schools were selected via cluster sampling method and then extent of anxiety of 30 students with high scores in anxiety was specified and then these students were classified to two experimental and control groups via random method. In this regards, sample size equals to statistical population (30) and then 15 individuals were considered as experimental group and 15 individuals were considered as control group.

Measurement tools

In the present research, the tools below have been used to collect the required information. These tools were used to measure and evaluate different aspects of social anxiety among adolescents, that the evidences indicate that these tools enjoy validity and reliability.

Cattell's Anxiety Questionnaire (CAQ)

Anxiety Scale of Arnold B. Cattell has been provided based on numerous studies, mentioned as the most effective tool which has been provided as a short questionnaire with forty items. Cattell's Anxiety Questionnaire (CAQ) has been regarded as a questionnaire which can be used without care regardless of this fact that the participant reminds an important part of the previous responses. This scale can be used in both genders after age group of 14 years old and most of cultures (quoted from

Zahra Rahimi, 1998). In this research, Cattell's Anxiety Questionnaire (CAQ) was performed in pre-test in classroom groups and in post-test in experimental and control groups. The reliability coefficient obtained for Cattell's Anxiety Questionnaire (CAQ) via Cronbach's alpha by Zeinab Asadi (2004) has been reported equal to 83.0. The reliability coefficient obtained for Cattell's Anxiety Questionnaire (CAQ) via Cronbach's alpha by the researcher has been reported equal to 94.0. Cattell's Anxiety Questionnaire (CAQ) has been normalized by Mrs Dadsetan in 1989 and validity of Cattell's Anxiety Questionnaire (CAQ) has been confirmed. In addition, Cattell's Anxiety Questionnaire (CAQ) has been used as an authentic measurement tool in different theses that the professors have confirmed validity of this scale.

The checklist for an investigation into Matson Evaluation of Social Skills

Matson et al., (1983) formulated the the checklist for measurement of social skills of individuals at the age group 14-18 years old. The checklist for Matson Evaluation of Social Skills has two self-reporting and reporting forms by instructor that each one has sub-scales. In this research, self-reporting form by the instructor has been used.

Scoring method: checklist for an investigation into Matson Evaluation of Social Skills consists of 64 questions and two secondary scales which include suitable social skills and unsuitable behaviors. Range of scores of these scales ranges from 64 to 320(Matson and his colleague, 1988). Implementation method: to give a response to this form, the instructor should read each term and then consider this response based on five-point Likret scale ranging from score 1 to 5 for each student.

Intervention program and implementation method

The present research intended to train necessary social skills to the students and measure their effect on social anxiety. For this purpose, firstly the social skills of students were measured via the checklist for an investigation into Matson evaluation of social skills and the skills in which the students had problems were selected as the necessary skills for training. In addition, social skills training program was designed, formulated and implemented via literature review and psychology experts' and professors' view during 12 sessions. Aims of social skills training program include: training how to deal with others, obeying instructions, considering order and silence, helping others, increasing the ability for attention, having

patience, accepting outcome of task. The intervention program was performed during 12 sessions in experimental group, which the students attended in experimental group were asked not to share the issues which are proposed in social skills training classes. Yet, control group was not received these trainings.

Data analysis

In this section, the obtained data were examined and analyzed to test hypotheses.

Descriptive characteristics of sample group

Firstly, descriptive characteristics of respondents in two experimental and control group have been represented.

Age distribution of respondents

Table 1: Frequency distribution of respondents based on age

Groups	13 years old	14years old	15 years old	16years old	17years old	Sum
Experimental	1	2	2	3	2	10
Control	1	2	2	2	3	10

Descriptive characteristics of variables

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of two experimental and control groups in research variables

Tests	Range of score		experimental group		control group	
			X	SD	X	SD
Cattell's Anxiety Questionnaire (CAQ)	0-80	**Pre-test**	**64/45**	**32/84**	**59/54**	**28/57**
		Post-test	43.65	22.23	60.45	12.65
Matson evaluation of social skills	64-320	**Pre-test**	**48/12**	**12/21**	**44/54**	**11/62**
		Post-test	23.77	5.98	43.89	12.98

table 2 indicates that there is a little difference on scores of participants in experimental and control groups at pre-test stage, yet the individuals under study in experimental group at post-test stage have acquired lower scores in three mentioned variables.

Results of table 2 indicate that there is a significant difference on having social skills among two control and experimental groups.

Hence, it can deduce that training social skills cause acquisition of social skills.

Results of table 2 indicate that there is a significant difference on having social anxiety between two experimental and control groups. Hence, it can deduce that training social skills has reduced social anxiety among experimental group.

Variance analysis for social skills

participants	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean of squares	f	Sig
	4867	1	4867	6.55	0.02
	34346.36	29	467.5	-	-

Variance analysis for social anxiety

participants	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean of squares	f	Sig
	4548	1	4548	5.78	0.01
	87687.8	29	7679.8	-	-

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Acquisition of social skills is one of the effective factors in reducing social anxiety.

Hence, the present research was conducted to give a response to this question "whether training social skills to students has

affected reduction of social anxiety". Findings of research indicated that the changes after training social skills in experimental group are significant, so that training social skills affects reduction of social anxiety among students. In other words, level of students' social anxiety compared to the level of students' social anxiety has reduced to a large extent. For this purpose, total scores of social anxiety have been obtained from Cattell's Anxiety Questionnaire (CAQ) and compared in two experimental and control groups. Variance analysis indicated effect of training social skills on students' social anxiety. Findings of the present research indicated effectiveness of training social skills on findings of research by Chen et al.(2001). Further, the present research analyzed scores of social skills which have been acquired through Matson Evaluation of Social Skills. Results of comparison in pre-test and post-test in experimental and control groups indicated a significant difference among two groups in post-test, that it can know this difference due to training and state that training social skills has been effective in experimental group, caused this group acquires better scores in post-test.

Suggestions

-there has not been the possibility to monitor outcomes of implementation of intervention program during long-term in the present research, thus it is suggested using different post-tests at different periods of time in next research so as to reveal sustainability of effect of training.

-it is suggested examining effect of training social skills on reducing behavorial and emotional abnormalities and enhancing assertive behaviors and studying effect of these trainings on improving students' mental health.

-it is suggested examining social skills training programs on social anxiety of students and children with special needs and deaf and smart students.

-it is suggested considering training social skills in in-service training program for instructors and consultants in order that they play potential role for increasing their academic performance.

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