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A Study on the Effectiveness of Teaching Life Skills (Self-Awareness and Problem-Solving) on Resilience of First Grade High School Students in Bukan County

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ABSTRACT

This research was carried out to study the effectiveness of teaching life skills (self-awareness and problem solving) on resilience of first grade high school students in Bukan County. The research method is pretest-posttest quasi-experimental study designs and control group. The statistical population in this research included all male high school students in Bukan County and among them 40 students were chosen through random cluster sampling; the students were divided into two experiment (20 members) and control (20 members) groups. The data collection instrument in this research was Connor-Davidson Resilience scale (CD-RISC). The experiment group was trained during 10 one-hour sessions and the control group did not receive any training. The derived data was assessed using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The results suggested that teaching life skills (self-awareness and problem solving) leads to an increase in resilience in the experiment group, comparing to the control group. ($p < 0.05$) Hence, teaching life skills (self-awareness and problem solving) is an effective method in increasing resilience.

Keywords: *life skills, self-awareness, problem solving, resilience, students.*

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INTRODUCTION

During the recent years, psychologists have considered positive psychology approach, which emphasizes on human capabilities and talents, instead of focusing on abnormalities and disorders. The ultimate goal of this approach is to identify the subjects and methods that lead to welfare and happiness of humans. Hence, the factors that lead to better adaptation of human with the life needs and threats are the main issue in this research. (Campbell-Sills, Cohan and Stein, 2006) The interest in the studies on the capabilities of individuals to preserve their optimistic thinking despite the negative happenings affecting mental health include research on reliance. (Zautra, Hall and Murray, 2010; Yates and Masten, 2004; Conner and Davidson, 2003)

In medicine and psychology, resilience indicates physical resistance, spontaneous improvement and ability to reestablish emotional balance in stressful situations. (Morales, 2007) Luthar and Cichiti believe that resilience is a dynamic process in which individuals show a positive adjustment, despite the presence of damaging and disastrous experiences. Kumpfer (1999) believed that resilience is regaining the initial balance or reaching a higher-level balance (in threatening situations) and this leads to successful adjustment in life. Some researchers consider resilience as a response to a certain circumstance and some other researchers believe that resilience is a sustainable coping style. (Lamond et al., 2009)

Generally, the concept of resilience refers to positive outcomes despite of hardships and adversities, positive and effective performance in desperate situations and recovery after a major failure. (Schoon, 2006) Resilient individuals have the capability to return and recover, be optimist and have flexible intellectual skills, seeing problems as opportunities to learn and grow, having perseverance and endurance, retaining healthy self-esteem, the ability to determine accessible, clear and real goals, having healthy support networks, the capability to grow emotional and supernatural capabilities, the ability for independence, the sense

of humor, the ability to get involved and have meaningful relations with individuals, the ability to behave with self and others with respect, the ability to solve problems and having conflict resolution skills. (Hoseyni, Qomi and Salimi, 2011)

Today, despite the deep cultural changes in lifestyle, many individuals do not have the required and fundamental capabilities to confront life problems and this has made them to be vulnerable in facing daily life issues and their requirements. (Klyneh, 2005)

Behavioral sciences experts believe that one of the most effective programs that helps the family members to have better and healthier life is teaching the life skills. (Mehrabizade Honarmand et al., 2010) Life skills refer to the fact that individuals need to defend themselves and their interests against different life situations. Individuals who have undergone life skills trainings are more aware of life and their capabilities and by accepting themselves and relying on self, believe that they can improve by putting effort and reach a higher level. (Bova, Burwick and Quinones, 2008)

According to World Health Organization, life skills include fundamental skills for living such as identifying characteristics and capabilities of self, paying attention to personal, family and social values, applying correct methods of establishing relationships, decisiveness, friend making, determining goals and proper methods to reach them, correct decision-making, avoiding violence and preserving health. (Keline, 2005)

It seems that teaching life skills could be effective in creating and increasing capabilities such as decision-making, creating motivation in self, responsibility taking, having positive relationships with others, creating positive self-esteem, problem solving, self-regulation and self-efficiency of individuals. (Heiman and Berger, 2008)

Considering the importance and value of teaching social skills with preventive purposes and improving the psychological health level, lack of these skills lead to a decrease in the sense of value in the individual. Life skills are a set of skills and abilities that help the individual to effectively cope with life conflicts and hardships. These abilities help the individual to perform positively and adaptively in relationship with other humans, society, culture and their environment, and preserve their mental health. (Keline, 2005) Teaching life skills could be suitable for all individuals, since all individuals have roles in expressing themselves in certain situations. (Hashemi, 2007)

Research results have shown that teaching life skills has a positive impact on individuals' resilience and increases resilience considerably. (Asqarpur et al., 2016; Eslaminasab ad Mohammadi, 2011; Tiuraniemia, 2011; McCroskey, 2010, Bob and Roisin, 2010; Ahmadiyan, 2009) Results indicate that higher levels of resilience predicts positive and negative emotions and the experience of positive emotions helps the individuals with resilience to cope with the daily stresses better and have a higher life satisfaction by decreasing negative emotions. (Abolqasemi, 2011)

Considering the abovementioned, it could be discussed that life skills, like any other attitude and skill, are acquisitive and they are created from the beginning of life, gradually. Lack of these skills leads to emergence of ineffective and maladaptive behaviors in the individual against the pressures. The earlier these skills are thought and the higher the compatibility of these teachings with the level of mental transformation and needs of the audience, the higher their effectiveness. Hence, this research tries to study the impact of teaching life skills (such as self-awareness and problem-solving skills) in reliance of student. Although there have been a lot the studies carried out on the impact of teaching life skills on mental health, life satisfaction, and stress control, a few studies have been conducted on the impact of teaching life skills on the reliance of students. Hence, this objective in this research is to study the impact of teaching life skills (self-awareness and problem-solving) on resilience of first grade high school students in Bukan County.

Methodology

This research is a quasi-experimental study with pretest and posttest design and a control group. The statistical population in this research included all 3,000 male high school students in Bukan County. The sampling method in this research was random cluster sampling. The sampling was carried out through selecting two boys' high schools of Bukan County randomly and among four classes of first grade, 40 students were selected through random cluster sampling and divided into two groups of experiment (20 members) and control (20 members). The experiment group received life skills (including self-awareness and problem-solving skills) education in 10 one-hour sessions and the control group did not receive any intervention. Both groups responded to the pretest and posttest in the same time. The data collection instrument in this research included:

Connor-Davidson Resilience scale (CD-RISC): This questionnaire was prepared by Connor and Davidson through studying research references on resilience from 1979 to 1991 to measure the power to cope with pressure and threat. The questionnaire includes 25 five-point items that were scored from 0 to 4. Point 0 indicated never, point 1 indicated seldom, point 2 indicated sometimes, point 3 indicated often and point 4 indicated always. The sum of the points from the 25 items was the total score. Mohammadi (2005) adapted this scale to be used in Iran. Using Cronbach's alpha, Mohammadi calculated the scale validity to be 0.89 and through correlation method, the reliability of each item with the total score was measured to be 0.41 to 0.64. Using Cronbach's alpha, Shafi'izade (2012) measured the reliability of the questionnaire to be 0.91. Through using Cronbach's alpha, Ranjbar et al. (2011) measured the reliability of the questionnaire to be 0.84. Mazlum Begarui et al. (2012) measured the reliability of the questionnaire to be 0.83.

The carried-out interventions are the responsibility of the corresponding author who has been formally trained. The content the education program in this research are adopted from the manual of Life Skills Teaching. (Klyneh, 2005) The content of the

sessions are as the following: The first session, the importance of teaching life skills, defining resilience; the second and the third sessions, the start, inviting to free talk, categorizing the subjects, tracking the issues, close and open questions, small incentives, active listening, urgency, using silence, recognizing emotions, expressing feelings and reflecting the correct understanding; the fourth and fifth sessions, recognizing emotions, identity and identification, adjustments which means the ability to know self and weak and strong points of requests, fears, wills and desires of self, the sixth session, direct questions, addressing the disparities, determining the goals, support and encouragement, interpretation, providing information, providing advices, providing instructions, using personal examples, proposing delay and obtaining commitment; the seventh and eighth sessions, predicting situations, role modeling and role play; the ninth session, event writing, awareness and thoughts relaxation and mental visualization, desensitization, combining strategies, homework and the tenth session, evaluating results, conclusion, generalization, referrals and conclusion.

Findings

To study the research hypothesis, which was “Teaching life skills (self-awareness and problem-solving) impacts the reliance of first grade high school students in Bukan County”, ANCOVA was used. In order to observe the assumptions of ANCOVA, the assumptions of this test were studied and approved through using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Levene’s test and homogeneity of Regression slopes and this test could be used to analyze the data. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of resilience categorized by group and stage of test:

Table 1. Descriptive Indices of Variable of Resilience in Two Groups of Experiment and Control

Variable	Groups	Average	standard deviation
Pre-Test Resilience	Experiment	86.85	14.43
	Control	94.30	12.40
Posttest Resilience	Experiment	100.80	12.97
	Control	94.50	12.95

As it could be observed in Table 1, the mean of the students’ scores in the control group in the resilience pretest is 94.30 and 94.50 in the posttest and there is not a big difference between them. However, the mean of the students’ scores in the resilience pretest is 86.85 that has increased to 100.80 in the posttest. Table 2 presents the ANCOVA results to study the difference between the groups in resilience:

Table 2. ANCOVA of the Impact of Life Skills on Resilience

Sov	Sum of squares	df	Average of squares	F	Significance level	impact coefficient	
Modified model	5966.03	2	2983.01	135.08	0.001	0.79	
Width from origin	214.25	1	214.25	9.70	0.001	0.36	
Resilience Group	Pretest	5569.13	1	4550.07	252.19	0.001	0.20
	Group	1564.63	1	980.31	70.85	0.001	0.87
Resilience - Group	456.12	1	340.10	100.19	0.001	0.19	
Error	817.06	37	22.08	-	-	-	

As it could be observed in Table 2, by controlling the impacts of pretest, the hypothesis of “Teaching life skills affects resilience” is approved at $p \leq 0.05$; that is, the H_0 is rejected and the research hypothesis is approved; that is teaching life skills (self-awareness and problem-solving) has had positive effect on male first grade high school students and it has increase the students’ resilience. In addition, the derived impact coefficient shows that 0.87 of the difference between the groups in resilience score in posttest is related to teaching life skills.

Discussion and Conclusion

The objective in this research was to study the effectiveness of teaching life skills (self-awareness and problem-solving) in male first grade high school students. Accordingly, after conducting the method and studying the pretest and posttest results, it could be concluded that teaching life skills (self-awareness and problem-solving) has a positive impact on male first grade high school students and the mean of the students’ scores in the experiment group who received life skills training had a drastic increase comparing to the pretest. The results derived from this study are in accordance with the results from Asqarpur et al. (2016), Abolqasemi (2011), Mika’ili Moni’ et al. (2011), Tiuraniemia (2011), Eslaminasab and Mohammadi (2011), McCroskey (2010), Bob and Roisin (2010) and Ahmadiyan (2009).

To explain the aforementioned findings, it could be stated that teaching life skills such as problem-solving and self-awareness increases the adaptability and positive and efficient behavior. These abilities enable the individual to accept the responsibilities of their social roles and cope with the daily requests, expectations and problems especially in interpersonal relationships more effectively without damaging self or others and this leads to an increase in resilience. Using such skills helps the individuals to go through a better thought process in confronting problems and facing hardships based on processing data by

decentralization of the problem and its consequences towards self and this leads to a more desirable behavior and prevent the later damages. In other words, teaching life skills helps with changing the thought process of the individual to that they become aware of the available valuable resources and this awareness might call the optimism in the individual and help with them to jump into the balanced condition (resilience).

Teaching life skills (self-awareness and problem-solving) helps the resilient person to manage the stressful situations and not only survive the disasters and life hardships but also reach a newer level of positive balance and growth and since resilience is a dynamic process that depends on the life context. When it is reached in a successful way, improves the personal potential and generally, it refers to positive outcomes, regardless of bad experiences, positive and effective performance in bad situations and improvement after a difficult situation. (Bonanno, 2004)

When individuals have a complete self-awareness, they try to gather and assess information on their capabilities on the issue, before they choose an activity and begin trying. This stage provides the individual with a chance to consciously regain their review whether they have the ability to powerfully adapt in confrontation with the problems. They will reach sufficient self-effectiveness (a property of resilience) through having an awareness of their capabilities and they are capable of coping with bad or complicated experiences and ultimately, optimism and positive thinking become active in the process of resilience. By reaching this stage, the individual is become more consistent in their efforts, have more faith in their own capabilities, will not be drowned in the waves of their hesitations, have perseverance in carrying out their assignments and they often have a great outcome.

When resilient individuals retain problem-solving skills, they can control the situation in adverse environments and try to change the situation, since when individuals discover the problem-solving processes, the positive transition increases and they discover principles that help them make the right decisions in uncertain and unfamiliar situations through focusing on intellectual activities and problem-solving strategies by creative thinking.

Any given research is inevitably facing limitations and this necessitates the interpretation of the findings in those limitations. Among the limitations of this research could be referred to the fact that the results from this study could be generalized to the male high school students in Bukan County and if generalization to other students is needed, it has to be done with caution. Considering the current theoretical scope, findings and current limitations, it is proposed that this study is carried out in other geographic regions and different cultures and on both genders. Additionally, considering the effectiveness of these teachings on students' resilience, it is recommended that school counselors provide students with a set of life skills in the form of cultural and training programs for all students in non-school hours.

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