

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Effectiveness of Training life skills on Mental health and self-esteem of Students

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ABSTRACT

The current research was conducted with the aim of the effectiveness of training life skills on the students' mental health and self-esteem. The research population includes all the PNU students, Saghez branch who were studying in the educational year of 2013-2014. In this research 40 students were selected through the random sampling method available as the research sample volume. Here, 20 students were selected through random sampling method available as the research sample volume that participated in the educational workshop of life skill and 20 more students were selected as the control group. The method applied in this research is semi empirical with two groups of experimental and control. The experimental group was placed under 8, 120 minute sessions of training life skills. To collect data the Goldberg 28 question general health questionnaire and the Copper Smith 58 question self-esteem questionnaire were used. To analyze data, the descriptive statistics (average, standard deviation,...) as well as inferential statistics (covariance analysis) were applied. Results indicated that the average mental health scores in the experimental group's posttest are lower than that of the posttest in the control group. Also, the average self-esteem scores in the experimental group's posttest are higher than that of the posttest in the control group. It is, thus, concluded that training life skills is influential in promoting the mental health and self-esteem of the students.

Keywords: Training life skills, mental health, Self-esteem.

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INTRODUCTION

With the start of the academic years, one of the most important life stages begins, because one can during the educational period prepare himself for the life after education. If people look at the educational period at the University Simply for obtaining a degree for finding a suitable job, the possibility of the fact that this period will leave amazing effects on the peoples' lives will be weak. However, in case, this mentality is formed among them that a favorable life has various requirements and on top of them, mastering a set of skills is of high importance, the academic courses will become the most effective stage in the personal life. Scientific evidence are indicative of the fact that mental health is among the most important human needs in today's life that in order it is fulfilled, man has to recognize himself exactly, comprehends others and hence establishes an effective relationship with the others. More importantly, he should identify his own negative emotions and daily stresses and bring them under his control and furthermore he should solve his problems, and adopt appropriate decisions. He should not have cliché thoughts and refuse information without processing. The necessity of meeting the above mentioned main needs is to master life skills. It should be noted, life skills are considered to be among the mental health promotional-

preventive plans that have been introduced by the World Health Organization [1]. Today, according to some socio-cultural changes, by Bandura most people lack certain abilities to deal with life problems. Today, based on the social-learning theory by Bandura, this affair has been considered by the world health organization and on the same basis, Botwin (1997) has formulated plans to educate and train life skills. In Botwin's opinion (1997), the life skills approach is based on the assumption that it is imperative situations be provided for the youth so that they can learn fundamental life skills[2]. To him, today the young people are now exposed to different pressures where these pressures could hurt their health (including personal and social pressures, and pressures by different groups). It is imperative that in order, of people, they be trained before facing problems and pressures so that they are made immune with respect to these pressures. These pressures can be called life skills training [3].

Training life skills as a program was formulated by the WHO in (1994) in order to prevent and increase the people's mental health levels [4]. This organization introduced 10 main skills as life skills, categorizing them in 5 groups: 1.Self -consciousness-empathy (with emphasizing on skills of enhancing self-esteem and confidence level), 2.Communication-interpersonal relationship (with emphasizing on interpersonal skills and expressing oneself), 3.Decision making-problem solving, 4.Creative thinking – critical thinking, and 5.Containing emotions –coping with stress. The importance and necessity of training life skills is once determined when we recognize that training life skills could lead to the promotion of the social-mental abilities. These abilities will aid the person to effectively deal with life situations and strives, assisting them to effectively and competitively act with other men, his own culture and environment and the society as a whole , thus materializing his own mental health ,. Thus, practicing life skills will render in boosting or changing attitudes, values and human conduct [5]. As a result, as healthy and positive behaviors appear, most of health problems will be preventable [6].

Based on the done research such factors as self- esteem, interpersonal skills, establishing a favorable relationship, determining the goal, decision making, problem solving and determining and identifying personal values have a positive role in preventing or reducing all sorts of mental disorders and behavioral malpractices [7]. In accordance with the importance of life skills with the various goals of preventing and promoting the mental health level, the necessity of training such skills to the youth will become clearer. One of the preventive programs taken into account at the global level is training life skills to the students. The WTO has prepared a plan titled training life skills to increase the mental health level and prevent social-mental problems. Since then, this program has been considered in most counties [4].

Self-esteem is the degree of value that has internal self- concept information for the person, thus, emanating from the personal beliefs about all the traits and characteristics existing in him. For mental health experts, self- concept is of great importance, because the personal conception of his own personality will greatly determine his impression with self-concept to his environment. These two factors pave the way for the type of his conducts [8]. Self-esteem is the satisfaction of the person from himself and the feeling of being valuable [9]. In other words, by self- esteem it is meant, how people think about themselves, how much they care for themselves and are pleased with their performance, how they feel with respect to familial, educational and social problems and in the end, how much the level of coordination and closeness of their ideal self and real self is [10].

Based on the humanistic theory by Maslow, when the person feels the others like him, and feels obligation, he is placed in a situation where two types of needs to respect will motivate him. Anyone needs to have value and respect for himself in the form of self- respect and needs others to respect him in the form of stature, approval and social achievement. Satisfying the needs with self-esteem allows the person to be confident of his own abilities, values, and sufficiency. This will aid him to be fruitful and meritorious in all of his life aspects. When he lacks esteem, he feels humility, desperation and hopelessness and is not that confident to get along with the problems [11]. Feelings, opinions about competencies, merits and one's traits determine self-esteem. To Laporte and Sevigny having good self-esteem means: to be aware of one's abilities and weaknesses and to accept oneself with what is more personal and valuable .This means that to shoulder ones. Responsibilities, to approve of oneself, to respond one's needs, to have aim, and to choose ways to attain them, good self-esteem brings personal integrity and attention for others [12].

Self- esteem in addition to being part of the mental health correlates with the academic achievement. May researchers have delved into the relationship between the positive self -esteem and high scores at school [13].

One of the main health aspects is mental health. Given the WHO's definition , mental health is defined as the competency to communicate coordinately and harmoniously with others, to reform social and personal environment, to solve conflicts and personal inclinations rationally, equally and appropriately [14]. The term mental health has an extended concept that includes mental well- being, the feeling of self-

ability, sufficiency, understanding inter generation solidarity and the ability to recognize potential intelligence and emotional talents in the personal, in such a way that the person can understand his own abilities, adapt with his common life stresses and become helpful and effective professionally [15]. Cheerfulness, enthusiasm and feeling of being fortunate is one of the divine blessings bestowed on mankind in the light of mental health and perfection; in addition, mental health is one of the most effective factors in promotion and perfection of man [16].

Today, in most countries across the world, strenuous efforts to become industrialized and higher population growth on the other hand, it is urbanization and immigration that are at the focus point. Following these fundamental changes social- mental problems as well as stresses are on the rise and the world witnesses major changes in the epidemic of the diseases and peoples' health needs so that psychological diseases are top of the list of the factors creating disability and premature deaths. High outbreaks of these diseases and chronic long term disabilities have engendered in then fact these diseases to be taken the priority of officials [17]. By the way, health is the necessary condition for playing social roles and man can have activities when he enjoys health [18].

Results by Haghghi *et al* (2006), in a research titled the efficacy of life skills on the mental health and self-esteem among the female first grade at junior high schools indicated that training life skills will increase mental health and self-esteem [19]. Results by Katezade (2011), titled as the effect of training life skills on the mental health of the female girls showed that training life skills will increase mental health and self-esteem [20]. Albertyn *et al* (2004) in their research concluded that training life skills will increase active role in life, responsibility in the professional environment future planning, and the ability to have critical thinking [21]. Schechtman (2005), examined the impact of training life skills on the promotion of self-esteem and teachers' understanding of the working environment and concluded that these trainings would lead to an improvement of the working environment understanding as well as the promotion of teachers' self-esteem [22]. Wichroski (2000), has maintained that training life skills will lead to increased self-esteem and flexibility against changes and promote positive attitudes in the direction of the feeling of self-sufficiency [23]. Results by Sajedi *et al* (2009), with the subject of the impact of training life skills on the interpersonal relations, self-esteem and expression of oneself among the blind girls showed that these trainings have been effective on the blind girls' self-esteem, leading to their enhanced self-esteem [24].

Many researchers have indicated that most of the mental and emotional problems and disorders have roots in social issues [25]. Given the modern problems, life skills enable people to address daily life challenges more appropriately. Training these skills will pave the way for the promotion of social personal development, personal rights protection, observance of others' rights, and prevention of the mental health problems. Self-consciousness and empathy, communication and interpersonal relationship, decision making a problem solving, critical thinking, dealing with emotions, dealing with stress are main and fundamental skills [25]. Thus, it can be concluded that training life skills could exert positive impacts on peoples' lives. The academic years for the students are the critical stage of mental health development. Their self-evaluation is challenged and their judgments are criticized by external factors and this period is a stage of declined self-value [19]. Thus, training skills to the students that are helpful and constructive in promoting their mental health and self-esteem are of paramount importance.

People always, face with different events in daily life or become aware of them that create emotions and feelings affecting how behavior is shaped. Getting along with life pressures and obtaining skills to cope with them have always been part of life's reality. Hence, the necessities of training life skills at universities become clear. Also, the necessity of training these sorts of skills to prevent peoples' problems become clear during their lives. In line with the expanded social adaptability, life skills teach man how to remove frailty from themselves and to look at life issues as solvable puzzles. In fact, life skills, teach man how to adapt with his social environment. The art of establishing communication with others and speaking are primary skills that in case one possesses these skills, he can eliminate most of destructive emotions and enjoy mental health. Students constitute a large part of the society population. Thus, due to the existing literature, training life skills are not only supportive of the students educationally, but they also papers them to face with the problems of adapting to the community, increased mental health and self-esteem and to go through this critical period. Because, a huge part of our society is consisted of students, hence the aim of this paper is to determine the efficacy of training life skills on the students' mental health and self-esteem. The paper attempts to answer the question: Is training life skills effective on the mental health and self-esteem of the students? Based on what went by the paper aims to study in a practical process the mental health and self-esteem of the Saghez students on two groups of control and experimental using training life skills.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research population includes all the PNU B.A. students, Saghez branch who were studying in the educational year of 2013-2014. The statistical sample of the experimental group includes 20 students who voluntarily participated in the life skills workshop and the statistical sample of the control group too includes 20 students who didn't participate in the life skills workshop (they were selected randomly in hand). The experimental group was placed under 8, 120 minute sessions of training life skills (Klinge, 2009) while the control group didn't receive any training[26]. To analyze data, the descriptive statistics (average, standard deviation,) as well as inferential statistics (covariance analysis) were applied.

Measurement tools

General health questionnaire (GHQ): GHQ questionnaire was designed by Goldberg in 1972 to measure the mental health. This test has 28 questions, including four subscales of physical complaints, anxiety, social functions and depression [27]. To score, the simple Lickert method (0-1-2-3) was applied. In this test, the cutting off point for sieving has been estimated as 23. In other words, the trainees scoring less than 23 were not qualified for the patience [28]. In examining the fourfold subscales of the physical signs, anxiety and sleeplessness, social function disorder and grave depression, if the trainee score above 14, he /she has problem with that scale, the reliability of the GHQ 28 was reported as %81 in various research [29].

Cooper Smith self-esteem questionnaire

Includes 58 items, which has yes or no answers. The items of each of the subscales are: 26 item general scale, 8 item social scale, 8 item family scale, 8 item professional;-educational scales, 8 item lie scale. The subscale scores as well as the overall score will provide the possibility of determining a situation in which qualified people possess a positive understanding of themselves [30]. Cooper Smith et al, (1990), have reported the retest coefficients of this questionnaire in two stages after 5 weeks at 0/88 and at 0/70 after 3 years [31].

Summary of sessions

- First session: Preparation and goal setting, familiarity with the members of the group
- Second session: Expressing problems, discussing the life skills, and talking on addiction effects on mental disorders
- Third session: Training self- consciousness- empathy (with emphasizing on skills of enhancing self-esteem and confidence level)
- Fourth session: Training communication-interpersonal relationship (with emphasizing on interpersonal skills and expressing oneself)
- Fifth session: Training decision making-problem solving
- Sixth session: Training creative thinking –critical thinking
- Seventh session: Training containing emotions –coping with stress
- Eighth session: Summary and summing up of the sessions and ending, speaking of what has been learned, reviewing the life skills training.

RESULTS

The aim of the present research was to ascertain the efficacy of life skills on the metal health and self-esteem of the people addicted with drugs where information about descriptive scores on mental health and self-esteem are provided in the pretest and posttest in the control and experimental groups and results of a report on the slopes homogeneity assumption as well as the test results of the covariance analysis on the average scores of the pretest and posttest in the two groups with respect to „mental health and self-esteem are also listed .

Table 1. Descriptive information of mental health scores and self-esteem in the pretests and posttest of the control and experimental groups

Group	Stage	Mental health		Self esteem	
		Average	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation
Experimental	Pretest	25/95	2/24	29/45	2/33
	Posttest	18/15	2/65	33/95	2/63
Control	Pretest	26/21	3/95	30	2/54
	Posttest	25/9	2/64	29/9	2/12

The content of the table (1) shows the descriptive information in the pretest and posttest with regards to mental health among the control and experiment groups. The average mental health of the people in the experimental group in the pretest is 25/95 and 18/15 in the posttest while the same number for the students' mental health in the other group are 26/21 and 28/9 respectively. Also the content of the table shows the descriptive information in the pretest and posttest with regards to self-esteem among the control and experiment groups. The average mental health of the people in the experimental group in the pretest is 29/45 and 23/95 in the posttest while the same number for the students' mental health in the other group are 30 and 29/9 respectively.

Table 2. The results of the homogeneity of slopes assumption test

Variables	Sum of Squares	d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig	Eta square
Group	0/824	1	0/824	0/255	0/617	0/007
Pretest	127/117	1	127/117	39/28	0/001	0/522
Pretest* group	5/16	1	5/16	1/6	0/215	0/0042
Error	116/49	36	3/236			

Findings of table (2) indicate that the homogeneity of slopes with the value of $F(1,36)=1/6$ for mental health has not been significant, hence, the homogeneity assumption of the regression slopes has been fulfilled for the variable of mental health. Given the above data, to examine the hypothesis in question the covariance was used whose results have been provided in the following table (3).

Table 3. Results of the covariance analysis on the average pretest and posttest averages in the control and experimental groups with regards to mental health

Variables	changes sources	Sum of Squares	d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig	Eta square
Mental health	Pretest	142/703	1	142/703	43/405	0/001	0/54
	Group	579/25	1	579/25	176/184	0/001	0/826
	Error	121/65	37	3/29			

The content of table(3) indicates that the F value ($F=176/184$) and significance level of (0/001) in the variable of group shows that there is difference between the two groups in the posttest. Based on the results, training life skills are effective on the mental health of the students.

Table 4. The results of the homogeneity of slopes assumption test

Variables	Sum of Squares	d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta square
Group	0/068	1	0/068	0/052	0/821	0/001
Pretest	169/956	1	169/956	131	0/001	0/784
Pretest* group	1/96	1	1/96	1/51	0/227	0/04
Error	46/706	36	1/3			

Findings of table (4) indicate that the homogeneity of slopes with the value of $F(1,36)=1/51$ for self-esteem has not been significant, hence, the homogeneity assumption of the regression slopes has been fulfilled for the variable of self-esteem. Given the above data, to examine the hypothesis in question the covariance was used whose results have been provided in the following table (5).

Table 5. Results of the covariance analysis on the average pretest and posttest averages in the control and experimental groups with regards to self-esteem

Variables	changes sources	Sum of Squares	d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig	Eta square
self-esteem	Pretest	168/08	1	168/08	127/8	0/001	0/775
	group	202/08	1	202/08	153/64	0/001	0/806
	Error	48/66	37	1/315			

The content of table (5) indicates that the F value ($F=153/64$) and significance level of (0/001) in the variable of group shows that there is difference between the two groups in the posttest. Based on the results, training life skills are effective on the self-esteem of the students.

DISCUSSION

The current research was conducted with the aim of the efficacy of training life skills on the students' mental health and self-esteem. According to the results of the research, we can understand that using life skills could be effective in improving mental health and self-esteem. The results are in line with those of researches by Wichroski, Albertyn et al, Schechtman, Haghighi et al, Sajedi et al, and Katezede [19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24]. To explain these findings, it can be said that, command over life skills will render the man to exactly recognize himself, comprehend others, create effective relations with them, identify negative emotions and his daily stresses, bring them under his control, solve his problems, adopt his decisions, not to have cliché thoughts, and reject information without processing [6]. To explain data we can say thus, one of the interventions in increasing the mental development among the addicts is the mental training. Mental training will result in the fact that and awareness in dealing with life problems. The term life skills refers to a larger group of social-mental and interpersonal skills that could aid people adopt their decisions consciously, communicate effectively, expand their coping skills as well as the personal management and have a healthy and fertile life. Given the importance of life skills with various objectives of preventing and promoting the mental health level, the necessity of training these skills to the adolescents becomes clear to us. To explain data we can say Given the WHO's definition, mental health is defined as the competency to communicate coordinately and harmoniously with others, to reform social and personal environment, to solve conflicts and personal inclinations rationally, equally and appropriately. Life skills can navigate personal affairs and those of others relating to the environment in such a way that they could lead to more health and more health means more physical, mental and social health [32]. To explain the findings, we can say that based on the WHO (1994) definition regarding life skills are defined as the competency to communicate coordinately and harmoniously with others, to reform social and personal environment, to solve conflicts and personal inclinations rationally, equally and appropriately [4]. Empathy skills will promote personal comprehension of others, bear differences and respect to different perspectives and boost the sense of friendship. Effective communication skill on the appropriate interpersonal interactions education and the way conflicts are solved will increase mental health and self-esteem. This will help man choose effective ways to look at the problem as issues and do not deal emotionally with them and choose the most suitable guideline and solution and do not consider the ups and down strategy as well as narcotics consumptions. The most important function of human thought was comprehending life and handling it. Life skills program, by introducing such concepts as self-awareness, anger, stress and problems strives to help man to comprehend life, while it plays the most peculiar role in commanding life skills. Because, each man is himself obliged to acquire life skills and convert them to knowledge successively. The end objective of life skills was to make people accept their responsibilities and increase their sense of satisfaction and mental health. Due to the fact that life skills are reliable for education and acquisition, it is hoped, based on achievements and results of this research, and guidelines are recommended so that effecting factors in life skills and mental health are identified and behaviors and needs are intelligently organized. Hence, in this way, students will have a healthier and fruitful life. It is clear that according to the importance of life skills role in strengthening talents and educating efficient students forces for building a clear and successful future, examining training life skills on students is of high importance. In this regard, such researches haven't been done in Saghez and according to the Kurdish culture and language, this research paves the way for future researches, thus it can make students be acquainted with their level of self-satisfaction and valuation and also, this research will lead them to mental health. Since the culture of this city is different with those of other cities (Students who might be admitted to universities from different cultural backgrounds), the cultural and academic status of Saghez is explained and thus, their mental health and achievement will be boosted. The results of the current research could have many applications for clinical psychologists, psychologists of counseling centers, students, deputyship for students' affairs, and students' deputyship of the ministry of sciences, research and technology of all the students. Lack of access to the IQ levels and exact economic and cultural situations and their impacts on the mental health and self-esteem of the students was one of the limitations. It is recommended that this subject be fulfilled at junior, high schools and in other places of the country and also, life skills be trained as a course credit at universities.

CONCLUSION

Training life skills affect positively the mental health and self-esteem of the students. Since, it is likely low mental health and self-esteem will affect the mental disorders as well as educational failure and act as obstacles on ten ways of success and achievement, thus, ways to increase self-esteem and mental health in addiction is of importance. In fact, life skills, by challenging negative thoughts, will boost planning for attaining goals, and strengthen self-esteem.

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