Research paper

The Effectiveness of Social Skills Training on Self-esteem of Female Students with Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties

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Introduction

Emotional and behavioral problems are among the most common childhood issues (Ghandour et al., 2019). Thus, their prevalence in children and adolescents is reported as 17.6% (Cui et al., 2020). Emotional and behavioral problems can be classified into internalized behavioral disorders, such as depression and anxiety, and externalized behavioral disorders, such as aggression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder (Alenko et al., 2020). These problems in children arise due to several factors, one of the most important of which is the lack of social skills training. Social skills refer to a wide range of skills that effectively enhance a person's performance in interpersonal situations (Breil et al., 2022) and includes helping, asking for help as well as information, thanking, apologizing, starting a conversation, answering questions, following orders, waiting for your turn, cooperating, accepting criticism, and introducing yourself. One of the components directly related to the development of social skills is "self-esteem". Individuals with low self-esteem in relation to others consider themselves to be less daring and more awkward. Such individuals in social situations are more anxious and always expect failure. They also tend to expect more negative evaluations from others than people with high self-esteem. Low self-esteem leads to various problems, such as behavioral problems and aggression (Henrikson et al., 2017; Murad, 2020). The findings of some studies have shown that social skills training significantly increases social growth and self-esteem, as well as social adjustment (Gökel & Dağlı, 2017; Probst et al., 2017; Van der Stouwe et al., 2018).

Most psychologists believe that childhood years are an important time for teaching social skills, therefore, it is important to identify children who have deficits in social skills, provide intervention programs aimed at promoting social skills, and implement appropriate preventive programs (Zhu et al., 2021). Therefore, the current research was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of social skills training in improving the self-esteem and social skills of students with emotional and behavioral problems.

Method

The research design was a semi-experimental pre-test-post-test type with a control group. The statistical population included all female students in the third and fourth grades of primary schools in Tehran, Iran and a sample of 20 students was selected by convenience sampling method from the mentioned population. The criteria for entering the research were being enrolled in the third and fourth grades, and the criteria for exclusion were the presence of intellectual disability, drug use while participating in the program, and missing more than two sessions. In this research, the Rutter Children's Behavior Questionnaire, Parent

Form, and Teacher Form (RBSPT, Rutter et al., 1976) (RBSPT, Rutter et al., 1976), The Matson Evaluation of Social Skills with Youngsters (MESSY, Matson & Ollendick, 1988), and Self-esteem Questionnaire (SEI, Coopersmith, 1967) were administered..

Results

The results of the analysis of the covariance test to compare the mean of self-esteem in the two experimental and control groups showed that there was a significant difference between the subjects' self-esteem scores in the pre-test and post-test (regardless of the group factor) (p<0.01). The self-esteem scores of the participants in the two groups also differed significantly from each other (p<0.01) and the mean scores of the experimental group were higher than the mean average scores of the control group. The statistical power of the group effect test was at its maximum (1), and the effect size was 0.78% of the changes in students' self-esteem scores can be attributed to experimental grouping. There was a significant difference between the self-esteem scores of the subjects in the pre-test and post-test for both the experimental and control groups (p<0.01) and the results revealed that the self-esteem scores of the experimental group (which In the pre-test was 23/60) in the post-test, it increased significantly (36/60). It is worth mentioning that the effect size of this test is equal to 0.61, which shows that 61% of the changes in the self-esteem scores of the students of the experimental group compared to the control group in the two phases of the pre-test and the post-test can be attributed to the interaction of the experimental application with time. These results show the positive effect of education on students' self-esteem and the durability of its effects. The results of the analysis of the covariance test to compare the mean of social skills in the two experimental and control groups showed that there is a significant difference between the subjects' social skills scores in the pre-test and post-test (P< 0.01). In addition, the power of the test is above 0.99 and the effect size is equal to 0.55, which shows that 55% of the changes in the student's social skills scores in the two stages of the pre-test and the post-test can be attributed to the time factor. The social skills scores of the subjects of the two groups were also significantly different from each other (P< 0.01)), and the average scores of the experimental group were higher than the average scores of the control group. The effect size is equal to 0.39 and it shows that 39% of the changes in students' social skills scores can be attributed to experimental grouping. There is a significant difference between the social skills scores of the subjects in the pre-test and post-test of the two experimental groups and the control group (P<0.01) and the obtained results show that the skill scores the social scores of the experimental group (which was 164/20 in the pre-test) increased significantly (224/30) after the implementation of the intervention program. While the scores of the control group were the same in the two tests and it seems that there was no noticeable change. It should be mentioned that the effect size of this test is equal to 0.56, which shows that 56% of the changes in the social skills scores of the students of the experimental group compared to the control group in the two stages of pre-test and post-test can be attributed to the interaction of the experimental application with time was attributed. These results show the positive effect of education on students' social skills and the durability of its effects.

Table 1: The results of the analysis of covariance to compare the mean of self-esteem and social skills

Variable	Sources	df	F	P	η^2	OP
	Time	(2,34)	17.83	<0.001	0.51	1
Self-Esteem	Group	(1,17)	61.12	<0.001	0.78	1
	Time*Group	(2,34)	26.92	<0.001	0.61	1
	Time	(2,20)	20.40	<0.001	0.55	1
Social Skills	Group	(1,18)	11.31	<0.001	0.39	0.96
	Time*Group	(2,20)	22.52	<0.001	0.56	1

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study was conducted to investigate the effect of social skills training on the self-esteem and social skills of female students with emotional and behavioral problems. The results showed that social skills training was effective on the self-esteem of students with behavioral and emotional problems. The findings of the present research are consistent with the results of Gökel & Dağlı (2017) and Van der Stowe

(2018). Accordingly, children who have learned the social rules of the peer group well and have established strong relationships with family members will most likely show a high level of self-esteem. Also, children who have acquired the necessary social skills have a more positive self-concept, and this makes them evaluate their limitations and abilities more correctly and finally find their true identity (Siadat, 2014). Therefore, teaching social skills helps students to know their emotions and feelings well, to evaluate them carefully, and to understand the logical and illogical thoughts related to them. The findings also showed that social skills training was effective in improving the social skills of students with behavioral and emotional problems. This result is in line with the results of research (Nurjanah et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022; Da Silva et al., 2018; Kazemi, 2014; and Magg, 2006). In explaining this finding, it can be said that since social skills training is a useful way to increase children's awareness and knowledge, using this program can also increase children's skills and help them to know themselves better. It also reinforces their positive thoughts and gives them tools to challenge negative thoughts and achieve harmony (Beygi et al., 2022). While learning social skills, people realize that there are differences between them and others, and they must accept these differences to be able to succeed better in their communication and friendships. In addition, social skills training promotes social adequacy and increases social adaptation, reduces negative behaviors and increases positive communication, and increases responsibility, acceptance by others, and improves social skills (Zabihi Hesari et al., 2018). One of the limitations of this research is that the results cannot be generalized to male students with emotional and behavioral problems, students in other cities, or other exceptional students. In addition to self-esteem, future researchers are advised to investigate the effect of social skills training on other variables, such as academic achievement, depression, anxiety, assertive behaviors, and aggressive behaviors, and to study the effect of such training on improving children's mental health and adaptability.

Ethical Considerations
Ethical Code
This study was preregistered at the Vice-Chancellor for academic affairs and Graduate Education, Psychology and Education of Exceptional Children, Faculty of Psychology and Education, University of Tehran, Iran.

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Authors' Contributions
Ahmad Beh-Pajooh supervised the research process and, revise it critically for intellectual content, and approved the final version for publication. Malihe Akmali conducted the research, implementation of training and analyzed the data, and wrote the manuscript as part of her MA thesis at the University of Tehran. Seyyedeh Zahra Seyyed Noori revise it critically for intellectual content, and approved the final version for publication.

Conflicts of Interest
This study is based on a master's thesis, supported by the University of Tehran and no potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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