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The Effectiveness of Academic Life Skills Training on Happiness and Hope among Medical Students

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the present study is to examine the effectiveness of educational life skills on hope and happiness in academic students. The statistical population includes all students in Sabzevar University of Medical Sciences among of them 40 respondents were elected as samples. This quasi-experimental research was conducted with pretest and posttest on tested and control groups. Both groups completed hope questionnaire (Snyder et al. 1991) and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Argyle and Lu, 1990) as pretest and posttest. Data were analyzed using Multivariate Covariance Analysis (MANCOVA) and Univariate Covariance Analysis (UNCOVA) by the aid of SPSS-19. The results of this study showed that there was significance difference between groups of training of educational life skills and control in terms of variable of hope and happiness in students.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted that one of the main uses of psychology is to apply its principles in finding modern lifestyles, upgrading health and adaptation. Training program of life skills is one of the psychological applications in various individual and social fields that are performed in order to enhance physical and mental healthcare level and prevention from physical, mental and social impairments (Wellford 2500:1). Life skills are defined as an approach based on change in behavior or formation of behavior that creates balance among three fields of knowledge, approach and skill. Also, academic life skills are composed of capabilities that improve potential of adaptation and positive and effective behavior in educational environments. As a result, the individual is enabled to assume responsibility regarding his/her role without damaging oneself or others and to be efficiently exposed to educational challenges and tasks (Pitman, 2004:2). Given academic students

are assumed as capitals in any country and they enter universities usually at adolescence ages and they need to be more noticed under special conditions of cognitive- physical and emotional and social growth. One can refer to happiness and hope as some of the foremost characteristics of adolescents that are reduced with respect to situational and time conditions. According to Snyder (2002), happiness is some degree and criterion thereby an individual judge on his/ her general quality of his/her life as totally favorable life. Similarly, as a factor for life enrichment, hope enables individuals to look at their current status beyond from the present outlook (Veenhoven, 2008). Hope is a motivational positive and subjective mood based on planning to achieve goal as the product of individual interaction with the environment.

Happiness results from human judgment on how to spend life. This judgment is not imposed to an individual from outside, but it is an internal mode

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that is affected by positive emotions. Accordingly, happiness is based on personal attitude and perception and it denotes pleasant and favorable mood results from positive experiences (Hillis & Argyle, 2001). Special attention has been paid to positivistic psychological movement. As a factor for life enrichment, hope enables individuals to observe their own current status beyond the present outlook. Those ones, who have been subject to stressful events, expected for anything, even miracle, with different levels of hope and whereas individuals tend to self-satisfactory predication thus they wish to move along with their own anticipations (Ebright & Lyon, 2002). According to Snyder, Ritschel, Ravid and Berg (2006), hope is a motivational and subjective mood based on planning to achieve goal the results from individual interaction with environment. Hope has been considered as one of the sources for human to tackle in adaptation to problems and even incurable diseases and also hope can play important role in adaptation as a curing, multidimensional and dynamic and powerful effect (Harper, 2004).

Thus, with respect to importance of subject and limitation of study regarding happiness and hope in students, the current research seeks for analysis of effect of academic life skills on happiness and hope. So far there have been fewer studies conducted in this regard and less done among student's population. For example, in an investigation done by Ventura et al. (2017) they showed radiotherapy might reduce quality of life and damage to functional practices of brain, but academic life skills could moderate this reduction. In a meta-analysis done by Yarcheski and Mahon (2015), eleven predictors were found for hope among adolescents one of them was academic achievement and in another study performed by State et al. (2016) they indicated that happiness was related to identity.

The results from various studies show that training of skills, either life skills or parenting, might facilitate and improve adaptation and mental health, self-efficacy and self-esteem (Alawi Rafiei et al. 2018).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To select samples among students in Sabzevar University of Medical Sciences, 2 classrooms (with 20 members per each) were chosen randomly by multistage clustered sampling method in two groups including academic life skills training group and control group. Initially, two faculties were selected randomly in multistage clustered sampling method and finally 20 students were elected from any classroom. Based on attitude of Delavar (2008), at least 15 respondents are needed for the required sample size to conduct surveying study. Thus, 20 respondents were considered for any group to ensure from sample size in this study.

Following tools were utilized for data collection:

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire
Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was designed by Argyle and Lu (1990). This tool includes 29 items and it is scored by means of Likert five-scale spectrum (1= strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= slightly disagree or agreed; 4= Agreed; 5= strongly agreed). Total score of this tool is obtained by summing up scores of items and averaging of them and the higher score a testee obtains, the more characteristic the given testee possesses. Argyle and Lu (1990) reported reliability of tool 0.90 using Cronbach alpha coefficient. Reliability of tool was calculated 0.79 in this study using Cronbach alpha coefficient.

Hope Questionnaire
Hope Questionnaire was designed by Snyder et al. (1991). This tool comprises of 12 items and it is scored by means of Likert four-scale spectrum (1 = totally wrong; 2 = slightly wrong; 3 = slightly correct; and 4 = totally correct). Total score of this tool is obtained by summing up scores of items and averaging of them and the higher score a testee obtains, the more characteristic the given testee possesses. Snyder et al. (1991) reported reliability of this tool 0.80 using retest method. The reliability of this tool was calculated 0.71 using Cronbach alpha coefficient.

Training of academic life skills
Training was done in 8 sessions. The academic life skills include learning strategies (cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies), time management, and management of sources, critical thinking, and problem-solving skill, decision making skill where one session was designated for training of any skill and the first session included briefing session.

Data analysis method
Data were analyzed in this study at two descriptive and inferential levels. Parameters of central tendency and dispersion were used at descriptive level while Multivariate Covariance Analysis (MANCOVA) was utilized for tests of statistical hypotheses. Similarly, SPSS-19 software was used for data calculation.

RESULTS
Descriptive findings
Participants in this study included 40 students at average age (20.5) out of them 12 were females and 8 were males. Frequency distribution and frequency percentage of academic status of their parents have been presented separately based on tested and control groups in Tables (1-4).

As it seen in Table (1), results of MANCOVA test showed that there was a significant difference between life skills training and control groups in terms of both variables of happiness and hope.

As it observed in Table (2), the results of MANCOVA with pretest effect control indicated that training has significantly affected posttest scores and with respect to square Eta it can be implied 24/7% of variance in happiness caused by impact of training

As it seen in Table (4), MANCOVA results along with pretest effect control showed that training has significant effect on posttest scores and given square eta, it can be said 24/6% of variance of hope caused by training life skills. Therefore, in response to the second hypothesis that implies training of academic life skills affects hope in students, it can be mentioned this training technique has improved hope (F=12.084; P≤0.001) in students.

DISCUSSION

Given the academic students should be addressed more at the early years of entering university when they are in adolescent ages, some of foremost psychological characteristics of adolescents in this period are happiness and hope which are subject to change with respect to special conditions. Thus, the present research was designated to examine if training of academic life skills including critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, time management, planning and learning strategies could increase hope and happiness in students.

The findings showed that training of academic skills could increase happiness and hope. The research findings were consistent with findings of study done by Golshani (2015). In a study titled effect of training of lifestyle and cognitive- behavioral training on happiness and hope among female adolescents, Golshani (2015) concluded that both training lifestyle and cognitive-behavioral training have affected improving happiness and hope in female adolescents and there was no significant difference among two training lifestyle and cognitive-behavioral trainings.

With respect to results of Table (2) and given square eta it can be implied 24.7% of variance of happiness caused by impact of training life skills and this training has increased significantly happiness in students. Alternately, results of this study were typically consistent with findings from studies done by Ventura et al. (2017), Mardanshahi (2015), Shayan and Ahmadi Getab (2012). For example, in a study done by Mardanshahi about role of training life skills in happiness and interpersonal characteristics, he concluded that training of life skills significantly increased happiness and interpersonal characteristics and at the same time Ventura et al. showed that radiotherapy could reduce quality of life and traumas to functional practices of brain, but academic life skills could

To respond to this hypothesis that if training of academic life skills can affect happiness and hope MANCOVA was used as statistical test with pretest control and their results are given in Table (2).

academic life skills. Thus, in response to the first research hypothesis that mentions method of training life skill can affect happiness in students it can be said this training method has improved happiness (F= 177.349; P<0.0005) in students

moderate this reduction. And this study recommends that training of educational skills can improve quality of academic life. In fact, educational skills play intermediate role between functional practices and quality of life. Happiness is the degree thereby an individual judge on general quality of his/ her life and it is generally considered as a final goal in life. Happiness is one of human inherent tendencies and talents and wish and need to bliss, happiness and joy in life so this inherent talent should be discovered within proper teachings similar to other human's talents and used for human health and fitness (Ahn, Garcia & Gimeno, 2004:13). Likewise, all humans feel sense of progress and become happy when they succeed by time and energy consuming. Life may be very boring without success and sense of progress. All people need to work, but fulfillment of this need should not be only intended to acquire earnings; instead, it should cause development, progress and usefulness. Thus, academic competencies could be accompanied with happiness for students.

With respect to results given in Table (4) and square eta, it can be implied 24.6 % of variances of hope is due to effect of training of academic life skills. Therefore, it can be said training of academic life skills has affected in significant improvement of hope in students (F=12.084; P≤0.001). These finding is consistent with the findings from studies done by Yarcheski and Mahon (2015), Karami Baghtifuni et al. (2015), Yousefi Jouybari et al. (2014) and Ghorban Shiroodi et al. (2012). In a meta-analysis study which was conducted by Yarcheski and Mahon, eleven predictor factors were found for hope among adolescents one of them was academic achievement. Students with higher academic achievement were more optimistic to the future. Karami Baghtifuni et al. also concluded in their study that training of life skills might reduce depression and increase significantly life expectancy in tested group and their depression was reduced significantly.

Overall, training of life skills may essentially contribute to facilitating adaptation and health and prevention from side-effects of stress. In this technique of presentation of necessary and basic trainings, the individual is trained by necessary skills for success in life and s/he is helped to train his/her capabilities, information, tendencies and skills needed for healthy and successful life.

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Table 1: Summary of results of MANCOVA test

Dependent variable	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Sum of squares	F-statistic	p-value	Square eta (PES)
Happiness	26.604	2	13.302	75.357	0.0005	0.726
Hope	0.750	2	0.375	5.422	0.007	0.160

Table 2: Summary of MANCOVA results for training groups of life skills and control on happiness

Effect source	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F-statistic	p-value	Square eta (PES)
Pretest	1.304	1	1.304	14.642	0.0005	0.284
Group	15.791	1	15.791	177.349	0.0005	0.827
Error variance	3.294	37	0.089			
Total variance	359.834	40				
Total adjusted variance	21.110	39				

Table 4: Summary of MANCOVA results for groups of training academic life skills and control

Effect source	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F-statistic	p-value	Square eta (PES)
Pretest	0.213	1	0.213	3.376	0.074	0.084
Group	0.762	1	0.762	12.084	0.001	0.246
Error variance	2.332	37	0.063			
Total variance	395.483	40				
Total adjusted variance	3.232	39				