

Effect of anger control and assertiveness skills training on reducing aggression of high school first grade girl students toward their mothers

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Abstract: Life skills are considered as the means individuals use to develop their abilities in different aspects. Thus, they influence individuals either from inter-personal or intra-personal relations. The present study, then, aims at investigation of the effect of anger control and assertiveness skills training on reducing aggression of high schools first grade girl students toward their mothers. To do this, a total population of female students studying in high schools first grade from region 3 of Tehran in academic years 2006-2007 was determined. Through cluster sampling one high school out of all of high schools in region 3 was selected. The research plan was a type of semi-experimental with pre-test and post-test with control group. A questionnaire of conflict tactics scale stress was applied as the measurement instrument. Range of Cronbach's alpha for sub-scales independency, verbal and physical aggression were 0.42-0.72, 0.62-0.88, 0.42-0.96 respectively that according to it 30 participants suffered from the highest rate of aggression were selected from among 196 students and divided into two 15 people control and experimental groups. In the next stage, the experimental group took participated in 7 training sessions and a week after training sessions, both groups passed a post-test. Covariance analysis used for the data analysis. The obtained findings indicated that training of anger control and assertiveness skills can increase rate of reasoning power and decrease rate of verbal and physical aggression among students of the experimental group.

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Introduction

Adolescence is one of the most critical, sensitive and ever changing periods of life accompanied with physical, mental and cognitive developments. An individual's future life, therefore, depends on right and logical decisions are made in this age (Nejati, 2005). According to puberty and formation of identity, a teen may reflect an incompatible behavior (Ahmadi, 2003).

The need to independency and self-prove as well as this sense that he/she is not well understood is one of major characteristics of adolescence that most of the time is problematic (Ahadi & Mohseni, 2001).

Due to unclear status a young adult has, most often he/she finds an emotional conflict between himself/herself with children and parents (Navabi Nejad, 2004). As a child matures, especially in adolescence, parents' expectations contradict with children's for achieving a proper independency of their age.

Parents impose rules and regulations and as children grow up they violate them (Minouchin, 2004). To self-prove as an independent and unique identity, the teen tries to deny what he/she used to confirm. That is, they stand against family and imitating patterns. Sometimes, this happens in form of aggression and violence against beliefs, morals

and traditions he/she opposes them (Ahadi & Mohseni, 2001).

Thus, one of principal reasons individuals get involved in aggression could be unfamiliarity with fundamental skills of life. According to the World Health Organization (2003), life skills consist of all capabilities for a compatible and positive behavior, make peoples to deal more effectively with daily needs and challenges.

These skills, therefore, contribute to development of youths' mental health when encounter with realities of life as well as empowering them to perform beneficial activities in line with protecting the self and enhancement of health and social relations (UNODC, 2007).

According to WHO the chief life skills include decision -making, problem-solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communications, interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, coping with emotions, and coping with stress.

Of the positive consequences training of such skills may have among students, increase of self-confidence, independency, development of general knowledge especially in field of personal and family health as well as social behaviors is outstanding (UNICEF, 2002).

Life skills either as a solution to development of mental health or as a means to

protection of socio-mental problems in a community like addiction, domestic and social violence, children abuse, suicide, AIDS, and so on are practical (Feti et al, 2006).

Skills of anger control and assertiveness also equip the individual to manage anger, no aggression, expression of disappointment appropriately and moving forward personal goals without damage to others' right. In training of such skills based on cognitive-behavioral theories, recognition and then alteration of wrong and dangerous ideas which cause behavioral and emotion disorders highly matter.

This type of treatment helps the individual to recognize his/her own incorrect patterns of thought and inefficient behavior and then change them. To this, therefore, certain direct and leading methods such as precisely organized training, indoctrination and assigning tasks are applied (Shafi Abadi & Hosseini, 2006, Hawton et al, translated by Ghasem Zadeh, 2006).

Different investigations have confirmed the positive effects these skills possess. For instance, Segrin and Tyler (2007) found that social skills correlate with all indicators of mental health. Mout, Smith and Wodarski (1999) in their studies recorded the positive effects training of social skills may have in 23 researches out of 25. Mass et al (2006) performed two studies on anger control.

Their findings showed that ability of controlling emotions leads to experiencing less anger and consequently decrease of negative emotions. In other study, two different methods for training of anger control were compared. The first was training of problem solving; using techniques of cognitive restructuring and the second was training of social skills based on techniques of modeling, behavioral exercises and corrective feedback. Both methods ended to the same results of anger reduction, problem solving, and frequency of expressing anger (Sukhodolski et al, 2005). Kelner et al (2002), during 10 training sessions of anger control observed that young adults with behavioral problems dropped off their peer conflict.

Shure and Spivack's (1980) researches indicated that aggressive children are unfamiliar with cognitive skills of problem solving. Smith et al (1996) performed a study on assertiveness. Their findings confirmed that a major portion of group performance assertion is a skill. Another research showed that young adults with difficulties in social skills can easily acquire these skills through group training and solve their problems (Bulkeley & Cramer, 1990).

Elliott and Gramling's (1990) findings on teaching of assertiveness to a group of university students indicated that training of assertiveness,

significantly increases social relations. A few other investigations examined the effect of training of assertiveness besides another method on international university students' compatibility that reported its training useful (Hejazi et al, 2011).

The positive results obtained from another study about the cognitive-behavioral interference effect on adults suffering from Asperger syndrome, revealed that identification and management of anger is necessary either for the subjects or their parents (Carter, 2010). Yin Rou et al (2008) also observed outstanding improvements in mental patients participated in assertiveness training sessions.

In a study, Mohammadi (2006) found that training of anger control correlates with decrease of violence in couples. Rafezi (2004), after administration of anger control program for aggressive girl young adults and comparison of results achieved from both experimental and control groups realized a significant difference among them.

Bahrami (2004) examined a group of high school second grade girl students under the condition of training of problem solving skill and understood major effect on reduction of aggression.

Jafari Manesh (2003) in a study aimed at evaluation of the effect of training life skills, found that after participating the training period, students' self-confidence, compatibility and educational progress considerably increased and their level of anxiety, state-characteristic decreased principally. Training of life skills according to Abasian Broujeni (2008) positively affected boy students' social growth.

Akbari (2007) also after studies on a population of boy students understood that training of problem solving, assertiveness and self-esteem skills leads to maximization of rate of emotional intelligence.

Manjezi (2012) discovered training of communication skills influential on marital satisfaction. Training of stress management through cognitive-behavioral method according to Mirzaee et al (2011) caused a decrease in anxiety and physical symptoms of premenstrual syndrome.

The primary purpose of this research accordingly is to develop mental health, prevention from social problems and increase of individuals' abilities for a proper encounter to the problems. In a smaller scale, as the second purpose, evaluation of the effect of training anger control and assertiveness skills on reduction of high school first grade girl students' aggression toward their mothers is considered.

Hence, the main research question is proposed here is that, whether training of anger control skills and assertiveness could lead to

reduction of the girls' aggression toward their mothers or not. Also, the minor research questions are stated as follows:

1. Does training of anger control and assertiveness skills increase application of reasoning methods by girls toward their mothers?
2. Does training of anger control and assertiveness skills decrease the girls' verbal aggression toward their mothers?
3. Does training of anger control and assertiveness skills reduce the girls' physical aggression toward their mothers?

Research hypotheses

1. Training of anger control and assertiveness skills enhances employment of reasoning methods by the girls toward their mothers.
2. Training of anger control and assertiveness skills reduces the girls' verbal aggression toward their mothers.
3. Training of anger control and assertiveness skills decreases the girls' physical aggression toward their mothers.

The population consists of all of high school female students of region 3 of Tehran studying in academic years 2006-2007. The cluster sampling was used and from entire high schools of region 3, Tehran, one high school was randomly selected.

Then, the conflict questionnaire parent-child was distributed among all of high school first grade students and 30 participants out of 196 who received the highest aggression score were picked and classified into two fifteen - subject experimental and control groups.

After that, the independent variable, training program of anger control and assertiveness skills, was executed for the experimental group. The group undertook 7 sessions of training and at the end a post-test was administered in order to rate of aggression for both groups become clear.

The research plan was a type of semi-experimental with pre-test, post-test and control group.

The research instrumentation and its characteristics

The measurement instrument in the current research is a survey named "Conflict Tactics Scales". The Conflict Tactics Scale is a 15 item instrument is used for measurement of three tactics of coping with conflict, reasoning, verbal aggression, and physical aggression among members of a family. The Conflict Tactics Scales have been used more than any other scale of measuring family conflict.

These scales consist of three formats

1. Conflict with brother or sister
2. Conflict with parents
3. Mother-father conflict

Items of Conflict Tactics Scales assess behaviors that the individual in conflict conditions with family members perform whose scores show frequency of that specific behavior during past year (Sanai, 2000).

Scoring

There are different methods for scoring Conflict Tactics Scales such as Guttman scale, Summative scores, rates of conflict tactics, and aggression typology. The chronicity scores of Conflict Tactics which have clinical function are produced through sum of scores. The sub-scale scores of "reasoning" in each of Conflict Tactics Scales result from items A- E.

The scores of "verbal aggression" are achieved with sum of items F-J and "physical aggression" with sum of items K-O. Scores related to the self conflict tactics and tactics of other peoples are involved in conflict are independently calculated. Higher scores imply using more than one specific tactic.

Validity

With regard to the original data, six researches confirm the internal consistency of sub-scales like reasoning, verbal aggression and physical aggression. The range of 12 alpha coefficients for sub-scale reasoning is from 0.42 to 0.76, for sub-scale verbal aggression 16 alpha coefficient exist that range from 0.62 to 0.88. Also, for sub-scale physical aggression 17 alpha coefficient are available that range from 0.42 to 0.96. Consequently, it seems that internal validity of reasoning is lower since the used format had few items. However, the more complete survey is presented here possesses greater validity (Sanai, 2000).

Zaboli (2004) in a study on a 46- subject sample achieved alpha coefficients 0.58, 0.65, and 0.82 for sub-scales reasoning, verbal aggression and physical aggression respectively.

Reliability

The reliability of Conflict Tactics Scales has been approved repeatedly. Different researches have confirmed the structure of such factors as reasoning, verbal aggression and physical aggression. Agreement of different family members about Conflict Tactics Scales attests the reliability.

Additionally, large quantities of information about construct validity are at hand, including correlation among scores of conflict tactics and factors of risk of family aggression, anti-social behavior of child victims, rates of affection among family members and confidence (Sanai, 2000). In Iran, too, the questionnaire was assessed by a few counseling professionals naming Jafari and Emami and its content validity was approved (Zaboli, 2004).

The Data analysis

After collecting the related data, they were analyzed via descriptive and inferential statistics methods. The mean, and standard deviation were calculated through descriptive statistics and the data examination occurred via multivariate and univariate covariance analysis within inferential statistics section.

Findings

Tables 1 and 2 indicate the mean and standard deviation of conflict scales in pre-test and post-test of experimental and control groups. Table 3 presents covariance analyses for the data relevant to three conflict scales.

Table 1: mean and standard deviation of conflict scales in pre-test of both groups

Control group (n=15)		Experimental group (n=15)		Conflict scales
SD	M	SD	M	
4.92	15.80	5.60	14.67	reasoning
3.09	15.87	3.03	16.27	Verbal aggression
4.37	3.60	4.27	3.53	Physical aggression

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of conflict scales in post-test of both groups

Control group (n=15)		Experimental group (n=15)		Conflict scales
SD	M	SD	M	
3.59	14.20	3.32	17.00	reasoning
2.96	14.93	3.27	7.40	Verbal aggression
3.63	2.93	1.62	0.93	Physical aggression

Table 3: results of covariance analyses

Assumptions of analysis of covariance			Conflict scales
Same slope of the regression line	Linear relationship of pre-test and post-test	Covariance	
$F_{(1,27)}$	$F_{(1,27)}$	$F_{(1,28)}$	reasoning
2.185 *	8.630***	1.143 *	Verbal aggression
1.607 *	6.132 **	1.085 *	Physical aggression
3.381 *	11.708***	1.547*	

* *N.S.*, ** $P < 0.05$, *** $P < 0.01$

Due to presence of three covariance analyses such as sameness of both groups variances, a linear relation between pre-test and post-test data as well as sameness of slope of regressions in either group, for

each of three conflict scales, the results of multivariate and univariate covariance analysis are represented in Table 4.

Table 4: multivariate and univariate covariance analysis for conflict scales

Univariate covariance analysis			Multivariate covariance analysis	Source of changes
Physical aggression	Verbal aggression	reasoning		
$F_{(1,27)}$	$F_{(1,27)}$	$F_{(1,27)}$	$F_{(3,26)}$	Experimental and control groups
15.363 ***	28.652***	25.746**	13.748 ***	Partial Eta square η^2
0.475	0.628	0.602	0.721	

*** $P < 0.01$

Note: ratio of multivariate F is yielded from Wilks- Lambda approximation

Significance of the multivariate measure shows that training of anger control and assertiveness skills were influential on high school first grade girl students toward their mothers.

Since the univariate calculated measures are meaningful for each of three conflict scales, the moderated means of both groups after controlling the effect of pre-test on post-test are listed in Table 5.

Table 5: moderated means of post-test scores

Physical aggression	Verbal aggression	reasoning	
0.59	3.70	21.4	Experimental group
3.92	18.62	12.60	Control group

As the above table shows, the mean score of reasoning in post-test (after controlling pre-test) is greater in the experimental group (training of anger control and assertiveness skills) than the control group. The mean score of verbal and physical aggression scales is lesser in post-test of the experimental group than the control group. In other words, training of anger control and assertiveness skills causes reasoning increase and verbal and physical aggression decrease.

Discussion and conclusion

The obtained results of the current study indicates that training of anger control and assertiveness skills led young adult girls to use more reasoning in their conflict state with their mothers. Many other studies also have proved the positive impacts of training of life skills including anger control and assertiveness skills. Among the more related investigations to the present topic, certain studies like Zaboli's (2004) research can be mentioned. She found psychodrama method in increase of reasoning useful. The achieved results by Shahidi(2006) were in accordance with the current findings.

In his study, Shahidi understood that group counseling maximizes reasoning among in conflict brothers and sisters.

Accordingly, Amini (2007) examined the impact of training of life skills on enhancement of young adult girls' adjustment and found them influential. Since thanks to more adjustment, anger is more controlled and aggression is reduced. this in turn can makes the ground prepare for using more compatible methods such as negotiation and discussion about conflict subjects and/or generally applying more the reasoning strategies instead of aggressive behaviors.

The research findings also indicated that training of anger control and assertiveness skills are effective on reduction of verbal aggression which is similar to Zaboli(2004), Baktash (2005), Shahidi (2006), Tayebi (2007), Riesch, Jackson and Chanchong (2003), and Branje (2008). Training of the mentioned skills causes physical aggression decrease that more studies have been performed so far. To name a few, Oostrom and Mierlo (2008), Montgomery (2006), Openshaw, Mills, Adams and Durso (1992), Tuttle, Campbell and David (2006), Marek, Brock, and Sullivan (2006), Spence(2003), Harris and Rice (1997), Tuffrit, Degiyousp, and

Gashtasp pour-Parsi (1997) cited by Prochaskaw, translated by Mohamadi (2006) are significant.

For conducting a research certain limitations always are present which prohibit the researcher to achieve the desired results. The present research is not an exception as well. For instance, since the present study was a type of semi-experimental study, it was impossible to control all of variables, and certain variables like age, sex and educational level were measured.

Also, due to time limitation and interference with high school final exams, the training sessions were held during 7 sessions that otherwise better and longer term results would be achieved. Limited cooperation of the Education office, school manager, teachers and advisors imposed other restrictions, too.

Since being unfamiliar with such social skills as anger control and assertiveness can create serious problems like depression, addiction, antisocial and aggressive behaviors, home escape and committing suicide, a number of practical recommendations were provided. For example, holding life skills workshops in all of elementary, secondary and high schools is one of them. These workshops theme are mostly about self, anger control, assertiveness, interpersonal relations skills, problem solving, time management and etc. which are among skills seem crucial for achievement in all life situations.

In the best periods of life, children and young adults are equipped with the highest rate of learning and flexibility, teaching of such skills will play a significant role in educating a healthy and successful generation. Holding of certain workshops which are mostly associated to the interpersonal relations and solving problems relevant to parents-children conflict can also be efficient. Because in a conflict situation more than one person is involved, formation of treatment groups due to solving conflicts beside participation of all of conflict engaged individuals, parents and children, wives, sisters and brothers will be more efficient.

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