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THE EFFECT OF LIFE SKILLS TRAINING ON ALEXITHYMIA AND INTERPERSONAL PROBLEMS OF THE ADDICTED WOMEN

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Received on 25-11-2015

Accepted on 22-12-2015

Abstract

The purpose of this study is analyzing the effect of life skills training on interpersonal problems and alexithymia of addicted women. Therefore, the study conducted on two experimental and control groups that each one of them was consist of the 20 addicted women (the sampling method was target oriented at first level and was random at second level) who were selected among all addicted women who went to Addiction Treatment Center of Welfare Organization of Bojnourd, Iran in 2015 (N=20). To measure interpersonal problems' variable, IIP-127 questionnaire (Herowitz, Rosenberg, Bayer, Orono and Vilasnor, 1988) was used and for measuring interpersonal difficulties FTAS-20 Toronto Alexithymia questionnaire (Bagby, Parker and Taylor, 1994) was used. For the control group a pretest-posttest was designed and experimental group received skills of life style training for 9 sessions (each session 120 minutes) three times in the week, while the control group did not received any training. The multiple parameter covariance was used for analyzing the data using, and the results showed that life skills training improve interpersonal problems of the addicted women significantly.

Keywords: Life skills, alexithymia, interpersonal problems, women addiction.

Introduction

Addiction is a family disaster which affects about one and a half million people and it subsequent threatens other members of society. Addiction is one of the most complex and most urgent phenomenon among social problems (Danesh et al, 2007). According to world statistics, women`s addiction is more dangerous in comparison of men`s. Among women the time gap between first drug use and first drug injection is approximately 2 years while it is 8 years among men. It

means women fell into this trap of running their life 6 years sooner than men and consequently their treatment is harder, and they have more physical, psychological and social side effects. (Ebrahimi,2011).

An addicted person loses not only his/her intellect and physical power, but also wastes economic opportunities that can be used in the construction of the society. Addiction by changing thoughts and behavior can easily destroy the individual, social and cultural bases in a society (Kaplan, 1994).Changes in the brain caused by drug use may be sustainable and have long-term effects and make harmful behavior among those peoples who used it (Taremian, 2000). The addiction not only makes problems for the person, but affects the whole system of the family and the society. Also makes different outcomes for both the individual consumer and others (Riber, 1996).On the other hand, the addicted women are much more vulnerable than men. Because drug using among women, often associated with other social problems, such as running away from home, poverty and abuse. Also addiction of the woman affects the children and families. (Danesh, 2013).Since the woman basic role in progressing and promoting the family as much as anything, her mental health should be considered very important. As the result, any issue that is relevant to women is important. Clinical findings shows that in drug depending: personal characteristics, life style, community relations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, interests and behavior that were formed during individual growth play major role in addiction (Dabaghi,2007).This impairment poses problems for individuals in social interactions. The findings in the emotional intelligence and alexithymia shows that probably one of the main reasons that caused people tend to use drugs is due to problems and shortcomings of their emotions(Parker,Taylor,Begby,2001).Research has shown that people with alexithymia have difficulty in identifying the right emotions from the other`s faces. Understanding emotions is inseparable component in interpersonal relationships. People`s capacity with alexithymia to empathize with the emotional states of others is limited. Limitations and inability of empathy and sympathy for others, inter personal relations, especially, affects the individual`s intimacy. Accordingly, it suggests that alexithymia through failure and inability to sympathize with others, increase the interpersonal problems (Setoode, 2006).Person with Alexithymia has difficulty in self- regulation of emotional or ability to cognitive processing of emotional and setting the excitement.

When emotional information doesn`t place in cognitive processing and perceptions, the person cognitively and emotionally experience distress (Mikaieli et al, 2012).Therefore, drugs consumers getting mental immaturity and social dysfunction in their behaviors. People with alexithymia, express the physical excitement bigger than normal ones and

misinterpret the physical symptoms of emotional (Besharat et al, 2008). Studies has shown that people with alexithymia have difficulty in identifying the right emotions from the faces of others and their capacity to empathize with the emotional states of others is limited (Levant & Williams, 2009). They have limited capacity for sympathy with emotions and this inability in sympathizing with others influence the interpersonal relations, especially in the context of marital relationships. Accordingly, it is the possibility that alexithymia in the mutilation of sympathy and empathy decrease the marital satisfaction (Bagby & Talor, 1997). Low levels of emotional adjustment that results from the inability to cope with the emotions effectively, plays a main role in the first use of the drug (Gelman & pakler, 1999). When a person is placed under pressure for drug use by peers, effective management of emotional reduces the risk of abuse. An overview of the findings in the field of interpersonal problems show that one of the main reasons for the tendency of people to use drugs, probably, is due to problems and shortcomings of the social dysfunction (Yarmohammadi et al,2009). Many factors are involved in interpersonal problems and by training some skills these problems can be solved. In the process of a communication, if the messages transmit in encrypted form, that communication called verbal communication, but in the nonverbal communication the message transmit by signs or passwords. Interpersonal problems not only in appearance but also in the continuing anxiety are effective. The findings suggest that feelings of abuse are one of the most important signs of interpersonal problems. These people often feel postal, victim, trivial, violence, selfishness (Parker & Bagby, 2001). Interpersonal problems may be directly affected by the disruption in the cognitive processing of emotions, setting the excitement or mental health problems (Besharat et al, 2008). People who do not suffer from personal problems, when encounter with a traumatic thing or an anxiety, relying on their proper interaction capabilities and are able to solve the problem. However, people with personal problems show anxiety. Their interactions not only relieve symptoms but causes to be strengthened it. Accordingly, interpersonal problems through disability to communicate correlated with addiction (Talebi, 2005). According Vydygr and Francis (1985), each personality disorder has a special style that is often main feature of that (Besharet, 2008).

Today, the same as the role of women and men in social phenomena because of separating from the traditional life style, urbanization, technology, the growth of the women's movement, women's employment, socialization of women led the women as well as men under the influence of drugs (Danesh, 2013). Addicted women more than men have health problems and exposed to the risk of infectious like AIDS and sexual diseases. Addicted women are more loneliness.

Several factors especially; the lack of life skills plays a great role in the addiction of the individuals. Many people, especially drug customers have no necessary abilities and skills for daily life. So, the promotion of life skills has an important role in treatment (Yarmohamadi, 2009). Women have more tendencies to use drugs for emotional escape (Shirazi, 2013). Research of Botvin, & Kantor (2007) shows that training the life skills such as communication skill, decision-making, stress and anxiety management, have been effective in reducing alcohol and drug use.

Life skills are a set of mental abilities that provide positive adoption in people and enable people to accept their social responsibilities. With life skills the person can deal with the others demands and expectations without hurting themselves and others (Shirazi, 2012). Therefore, the best way of dealing with this problem is to provide an environment for help them to increase these skills. Studies have shown that three factors are associated with drug use: poor self-esteem, inability to express feelings and emotions, and lack of communication skills (Talebi, 2005). In fact, the promotion of life skills enables the persons to provide a positive and act adoptively when encounter with other human beings, society, culture, and environment (Klinke & kriss, 2005). Life skills training affect common underlying factor in mental health and primary prevention of addiction. By this way, the life skill training has biological properties that made it wide and is the foundation of any educational approach (Esmatpanah & Khakshur, 2009).

Studies show that addiction, interpersonal and alexithymia can affect each other but this paper investigates on the effect of life skills training on alexithymia and interpersonal problems of the addicted women. Also, the effect of the life skills training courses on the communication of addicted women and their ability to control of their emotions. A little research has been conducted on the effect of life skills on alexithymia and interpersonal problems in Iran and so far there has not been research that evaluates these three variables on addicted women. In this sense, the present study is completely new.

In a study that investigate on the effectiveness of life skills training to improve quality of life and coping styles in treatment of methadone addicts by Baghi et al., (2013), Showed that life skills can improve people 's quality of life and provide effective techniques for coping with stress and negative emotions .In the other research by Shirazi (2013), that entitled as “the life skills training to enhance the efficacy of female-headed households” a sample of 220 individuals from female-headed households was participated. The findings showed that there is a significant relationship between life skills training and enhancing the efficacy of female-headed households. So, female-headed households' efficacy increases with life skills training. Various surveys indicate a high impact of life skills training in preventing behavioral abnormalities. In

the other study it was founded that the development of life skills is effective in preventing suicide (Terza, 1995&Ajilchi et al, 2008). Ginerand his colleagues (1993) investigate on the effect of life skills training on the prevention of violence and delinquency. In the other study, Defenbakher (1996) suggested that teaching life skills is effective in reducing the anger and aggressiveness of the persons. In a study entitled” the relationship between personality traits of women addicted and social order” showed that personality traits such as aggression, incompatibility, being antisocial, the absence or lack of social interest, lack of accountability, personality disorder and lack of attention to social rules may increase crime, violence and murder and causes lack of disciplines in the society (Baker et al., 1995).In a Life skills training program that was conducted for the prevention of suicide, violence and negative behaviors and reducing the academic failure showed that these problems reduced effectively (Gainer et al.,1993,LafsvmVbvaz, 1994; Aygrt et al., 1994; Thompson et al. 1998; Panther, 1998). Fox Axelrod, Balyval, Aslpyr and Sinha (2007) founded that Cocaine abusers have difficulties in understanding, managing the emotions and impulsivity control, particularly in the early stages of emotion. Bvtvyn & Griffin (2004) investigate on the impact of life skills training on reducing drug, improving the quality of life and improved ways of dealing with problems and stressful conditions.

It is clear that research inside and outside of Iran, study on the effect of life skills training on alexithymia and interpersonal problems in different groups. But there is no research that study on the effect on these problems on the addicted women. These deficiencies motivate the author to present study. Since that alexithymia is the psychological component and impact the individual and interpersonal problems, this article set out to investigate whether the life skills training have any effect on the improving the alexithymia and interpersonal problems of the addicted women?

The study population, sample sampling methods

This study was done in order to achieve practical results and designed as quasi- experimental under pre-test and post-test, consist of experimental and control groups. The experimental group was trained in life skills during the 9th sessions (each session 120 minutes) 3 times in a week. The control group did not receive any training. Participants are all addicted women in the camps of Social Welfare of Bojnord, Iran in 2015(Two camps with 50 members). Sample of 40 female addicts are selected and divided into two groups: control (N = 20) and treatment (N=20). Inclusion criteria is addicted women admitted in the camps and exclusion criteria is due to the participants who did not have such conditions. Thus, at the first stage, sampling is purposive and in the second stage is accidental.

Participants

For participating in this research three conditions were considered:

1. Women should be between 25 to 45 years old.
2. The participants are addicted and must be admitted in the camp.
3. At the same time the participants should not engaged in any health plan.

Instruments

In this study, Toronto alexithymia questionnaire (FTAS-20) (Baghi, Parker & Taylor, 1994) and interpersonal problems (IIP-127) (Hrvytz et al, 1988) was used to measure the interpersonal problems.

Life skills: For prompting the life skills of the addicted women techniques for stress coping, self-awareness, effective communication, expressing the empathy and ability to problem-solving was conduct.

Toronto alexithymia questionnaire (FTAS-20)

FTAS has 20 items (Bagby, Parker & Taylor, 1994) with three sub- scales: difficulty in identifying feelings (7 items), difficulty in describing feelings (5 items) and objective thinking (8 items). The respondents rated a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) = Strongly Disagree to (5) = Strongly Agree.

The total score for the FTAS is simply obtained by adding sub-scores together (Parker, Taylor and Bagby, 2003, 2001, Palmer, Gyngans, Manvka & Staph, 2004; Pandey, Mndal, Taylor & Vparkr, 1996; Taylor & Vbgby, 2000). In Persian version of the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (Besharat, 2007), Cronbach's alpha for the total alexithymia, and three subscales (difficulty in identifying feelings, describing feeling, and objective thinking), respectively, estimated .85, .82, .75, .72.

Inventory of interpersonal problems (IIP-127)

Inventory of Interpersonal Problems scales (Hrvytz, Rosenberg, Bayer, Orono & Vylasnvr, 1988) has 27 items and evaluate the interpersonal problems in six sub-scales: strictly (21 items), sociability (18 items), obedience (10 items), intimacy (12 items), responsibility (12 item) and controlling (10 items).

The respondents rated a five-point Likert scale ranging from zero to four. For each participant in addition to these six sub-scales, a total score was calculated, too.

The Persian version of the scale (n=230) Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each of the subscales, respectively, .89, .82, .91, .93, .85, and .87. For male participants .87, .85, .89, .84, .83 and for female ones are .83, .89, .90, .92, vary from .85, and

.79. These data confirm the internal consistency of the scale. The correlation between participants' scores on two occasions for female participants ($r=.92$) and for male was $r=.94$ (Besharat, 2007).

Procedure: 40 participants were assessed by questionnaire and then randomly divided into control and experimental groups. The experimental group was trained by life skills during the 9 sessions (each session 120 minutes) 3 times in a week, while the control group did not receive such training. After drug intervention this questionnaire was completed by two groups. Participants were trained through workshops of Life skills. This means that the participants studied the educational pamphlets related to life skills that consist of stress coping techniques, the ability to self-awareness and effective communication, the ability to express empathy, and the ability for solving the problem. These techniques were taught to the participants by the researcher. At the beginning of each session the researcher expresses a problem and the participants were consulted in their groups, and then express their solutions. The researcher desired skill with some examples. At the end, the participants were trained to focus on a hypothetical question and provide a perfect solution.

Analysis: By using SPSS (18.0) the data were analyzed and one parameter covariance (ANCOVA) was presented.

Hypothesis

The main hypothesis: 1. Life skills training are effective in improving alexithymia of addicted women. To test the hypothesis, one parameter covariance (ANCOVA) was used. Table 1 shows the results of covariance analyze of mean scores during the post- test in experimental group and control.

Table-1: Results of covariance analyze of mean scores during the post- test in experimental group and control.

Eta coefficient	P	F	mean square	the degree of freedom	Sum square	measures
0/78	0/00	138/40	3258/29	1	3258/29	Group
			23/54	37	871/02	Error
				40	97651/00	Total

As shown in table 1, there is a significant difference in alexithymia of experimental and control group ($F=138.40$, $P\leq 0.00$). So, the first hypothesis was accepted. This means that life skills training are effective on alexithymia of addicted women.

2. Life skills training are effective in improving interpersonal problems of addicted women.

To test the hypothesis, one parameter covariance (ANCOVA) was used and table 2 shows the results.

Table-2: Results of covariance analyze of mean scores in experimental and control group with the post- test.

Eta coefficient	P	F	mean square	the degree of freedom	Sum square	measures
0/62	0/00	128/33	4550/7	1	4550/7	Group
				35/46	1134/72	Error
				40	28427/1	Total

As shown in table2, there is a significant difference in the interpersonal problem between the experimental and control groups. ($P \leq 0.00$, $F=128.33$).SO, this hypothesis is confirmed and the life skills training affect the addicted women `interpersonal problems.

The other Hypothesis

1. The Life skills training are effective in understanding the addicted women`s emotions.
2. The Life skills training are effective in describing the addicted women`s emotions.
3. The Life skills training are effective in objective thinking of addicted women.

In order to test these three hypothesizes, Analyze multivariate covariance (MANCOVA) was used. Table 3 shows the results of multivariate covariance analyze on mean post-test score in the experimental group and control group.

Table-3: Summary of MANCOVA analysis on the sub-scales of alexithymia in the experimental and control group with pretest control.

P	F	mean square	the degree of freedom	Sum square	measures
0/00	58/05	424/68	1	424/68	Understanding emotions
		7/31	35	256/03	Error
			40	2722/84	Total
0/00	85/77	430/91	1	430/91	Description of feelings
		5/02	35	175/83	Error
			40	2426/96	Total
0/001	50/35	270/71	1	270/71	Objective thinking
		5/37	35	188/15	Error
			40	1835/44	Total

As shown in table3, there is a significant difference between Understanding emotions

($P \leq 0.00$, $F=58.05$), Description of feelings ($P \leq 0.00$, $F=58.77$), Objective thinking ($P \leq 0.00$, $F=50.35$). This means that life skills training increased the feelings, emotions and objective thinking.

4. The Life skills training are effective in truthfulness of addicted women.
5. The Life skills training are effective in openness of addicted women.
6. The Life skills training are effective in consideration of others among the addicted women.
7. The Life skills training are effective in aggression of addicted women.
8. The Life skills training are effective in protection role of addicted women.
9. The Life skills training are effective in dependency of addicted women.

Table-4: Summary of MANCOVA analysis on the sub-scales of alexithymia in the experimental and control group with pretest control.

P	F	mean square	the degree of freedom	Sum square	measures
000/	34/96	134/3 3/84	1 32 40	134/3 122/94 1286/20	Expressly women Error Total
0/00	94/32	164/40 99/4	1 32 40	40/164 71/159 55/1620	Women kindness Error Total
0/00	78/21	73/73 38/3	1 32 40	73/73 29/108 922/10	Consider others Error Total
0/00	31/67	140/24 08/2	1 32 40	24/140 67/66 1097/55	Aggression Error Total
0/00	24/34	108/51 16/3	1 32 40	51/108 40/101 1049/55	Supportive of Error Total
0/00	48/19	45/81 35/2	1 32 40	45/81 22/75 784/52	Dependence Error Total

As the result show, there is a significant difference between the truthfulness ($P \leq 0.00$, $F=34.96$), openness ($P \leq 0.00$, $F=34.96$), consideration of others ($P \leq 0.00$, $F=21.78$), aggression ($P \leq 0.00$, $F=67.31$), protection role ($P \leq 0.00$, $F=34.24$), dependency ($P \leq 0.00$, $F=19.48$). Therefore, life skills increased these problems among the participants.

Discussion and conclusion

According to the dependent variables of the study, alexithymia and interpersonal problems, the present study investigate to find whether life skills training enable the person to communicate with other people , society , culture and environment ?And adopt them to control their emotions? Also, investigate to find out if the life skills improve he interpersonal problems of the addicted women?

Results indicate that there is a significant relationship between the variables. This section summarizes the overall findings and responds to the research questions posed by the researcher. The result shows that the life skill training has significant effect on the alexithymia and interpersonal problems of the addicted women. Alexithymia through defect inability to recognize emotions and feelings associated with personal problems. Also mentioned that for coping with stress, stressful situations, and the struggle of life the person requires some abilities to equip with them. These functions are very fundamental. Functions like emotional behaviors in terms of things like self-esteem, self-efficacy, and the ability to problem-solving, self-perception and social skills (Talebi, 2008).The Researches suggests that in alexithymia, emotional processing, emotional concepts become impaired also, the emotional communication is disrupted. It has been found that people with higher levels of alexithymia have low accuracy in some specific tasks such as pairing verbal and nonverbal emotional (Besharat, 2010).Also, the results of other findings in this study show that teaching life skills to improve interpersonal problems also effective addicted women.

Life skills training can reduce stress, anxiety and teach people how to deal effectively with the pressures of life, personal life and social functions. Mental health education can be one of the most effective methods to control the injuries of the society (Shamloo, 2002).The result of the present study is accordant with other studies. Najafi (2012) suggested that the life skills reduce the anxiety of divorced women. Kaplan et al., (1992) confirmed that life skill training has effective impact on the interpersonal problems and anxiety among the students. Interpersonal problem-solving skills have positive relationship with social community among the peers, hope and empathy (Passion, 1991).Also, it mentioned that people need some skills to cope with stress and stressful situations. These are fundamental function and formed in the process of transformation and affect the self-esteem, self-efficacy, the ability to problem-solving (Talebi, 2005).In other words, interpersonal relations help in acquiring and maintaining the position among the others. People realize the right and wrong about the actions of peers. These skills increase the abilities to deal with conflicts, problems of life and spiritual,

psychological security. Therefore, creates opportunity for people to learn new things and increase the responsibility empathy, cooperation, coordination and collaboration with others (Salehin, 2013). In general, it can be concluded from the results of this research that life skills training is effective in alexithymia and interpersonal problems of addicted women. It seems that poor life skills put the individuals at risk of return. Life skills training are widely useful in prevention of addiction (Bagi et al. 2013).

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