



Effectiveness of Life Skills Education on Reducing Common Rumination and Anxiety among Male High School Students

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A B S T R A C T

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of life skills education (problem solving, communication skills and stress management) on reducing common rumination and anxiety among male high school students in Bandar Abbas city. This is a semi-experimental research. The research sample included 30 male secondary school students in Bandar Abbas who were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The research data were collected from the Common Rumination Scale (CRQ) and Beck Anxiety Scale. The research findings were analyzed using SPSS software and multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA). The results showed that group life skills education led to a reduction in common rumination and anxiety in the experimental group in the post-test, compared with the control group ($P < 0.01$). Accordingly, it can be said that life skills education can be effective in working with adolescents to improve their psychological capabilities and also reduce problems such as common mental rumination which is also a factor in depression. Therefore, education, counseling centers, and other institutions related to students and adolescents need to use group life skills in order to reduce psychological problems such as depression and anxiety in their planning.

Keywords: Life Skills, Common Rumination, Anxiety, Male Students.

INTRODUCTION

Due to the increasing importance of positive psychological components, several educational approaches and methods for promoting positive psychological capabilities have been studied by mental health researchers. One of these is the methods of enhancing life skills, which are based on the emphasis on positive psychological training. In contrast, studies have shown that paying attention to the positive psychological capabilities among students and adolescents and examining ways to improve these capabilities has been neglected. However, this group of society needs more than any other group the aforementioned education. Life skills education is one of the educational models that can help adolescents and students in dealing with different issues of life (Ramkumar, 2015; Srikala & Kishore, 2010).

Adolescence, a period of transition from childhood to adulthood is one of the life stages that has particular sensitivities. In this period, the teenager faces personal, social, occupational and family problems on the one hand, and extensive physical and cognitive changes on the other (Curry, 2001; Schächter & Romano, 2016; Schwartz, Hobbie, Constine, & Ruccione, 2005). Teenagers are constantly trying to gain identity (Morss, 2017; Stern, 2018).

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One of the structures that plays a role in the mental health of students is the common rumination. Common rumination is the thought that spins around an important subject, and even in the absence of the necessary environmental demands, these thoughts emerge, and the person usually discusses intimate friends of those thoughts. Depressive mental rumination is negative and repetitive thoughts about the causes, meanings and personal implications about the feeling of depression (Stern, 2018). According to Wells (2011), rumination is generally an excitement-centered method in contrast to the onset of depressed mood, which is an introduction to depression, and results in an increase in the duration and severity of depression. Many longitudinal studies have shown that people who are accustomed to ruminative responses show higher levels of depression when they are upset. Rumination causes reminding of negative memories, negative interpretation of current events and pessimism about the future. Also, in metacognitive perspective, self-injury and finally suicide are the answer to this long-term rumination, so efforts to reduce rumination are necessary (Wells, 2011). Common rumination, in contrast to rumination, is a seemingly desirable process that leads to a decrease in psychological anxiety among adolescents (Vine, Aldao, & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2014). On the other hand, adolescence is believed by most psychologists, such as Freud, Anna Freud, Erikson, to be a critical and stressful period. The two main features and disorder in this period are anxiety and depression. Freud conceived anxiety as Libido impulses, but Erikson considered it as the effect of identification. The entry of adolescents to the period of nominal thinking and encounter with all kinds of probabilities and realities of life are effective in increasing their anxiety and stress. At the same time, increasing the expectations of parents and choosing the way of future life are also effective in adolescent anxiety (Woodward & Fergusson, 2001). In recent years, the study of patterns of thinking in emotional disorders and the study of unwanted thoughts and its role in the continuity of emotional disorders are of concern to researchers. Rumination is known as a permanent engagement with a thinking or subject and thought about it. The rumination is a class of conscious thoughts that are characterized by a certain axis, and these thoughts are repeated without dependence on environmental demands. The metacognitive view of emotional disorders suggests that rumination is one of the main components of the onset and continuation of anxiety and mood disorders. Smith and Alloy (2009), suggest a rumination as an example of recurrent negative thoughts, and consider it as a metacognitive process that occurs in many psychological trauma. Moreover, it seems that rumination predicts levels of anxiety and depression and is related to hypomania, morbid gambling, social anxiety, persistence of post-traumatic stress symptoms, low sleep quality, sleep disturbances, drinking alcohol and alcohol abuse symptoms in adults, girls and adolescents, self-harm behavior, and suicidal thoughts. Generally, negative recurrent thoughts play a significant role in the development and continuation of posterior and anxiety disorders and insomnia.

Michl, McLaughlin, Shepherd, and Nolen-Hoeksema (2013), found that there is a significant positive relationship between rumination depending on past events and anxiety that persists after controlling depression in individuals. As a result, suppressing thoughts is used as an attempt to prevent rumination. More specifically, those whose toleration ambiguity regarding ambiguity as a stressor, anxiety impressiver and anxiety suppressor is low believe that they should avoid uncertainty. They also tend to overestimate the unpredictability of events or occurrence of negative events. This causes them to consider ambiguous and duplex information as threatening. In general, both common rumination and anxiety appear to have

roots in common (Behzadpoor, Motahhari, & Sohrabi, 2015).

One of the educational models that has been employed in recent years, especially in relation to various psychological structures, is life skills education. In recent years, attention to the teaching of life skills in different countries is increasing. One of the ways to prevent psychological and behavioral problems is to enhance the psychological capacity of individuals through the training of life skills. Life skills are a set of abilities that provide context for positive and beneficial behavior. Various and extensive researches have shown the positive effect of life skills education on reducing substance abuse, preventing violent behaviors, strengthening self-confidence, increasing skills of coping with stress, establishing positive and effective social relationships, and so on. Ten-fold life skills include: 1) self-awareness, 2) interpersonal relationships, 3) communication, 4) critical thinking, 5) creative thinking, 6) decision making, 7) problem solving, 8) coping with stress and tension, 9) coping with unpleasant emotions, 10) empathy (Picklesimer, Hooper, & Ginter, 1998). Research has shown that communication patterns and the rate of life skills predict a better quality of life. The characteristics of life skills are trainable and learnable. As a result, this skill can be changed in a positive direction, and in case of having an efficient and positive relationship, higher psychological quality and well-being can be gained. Correct and appropriate communication increases the emotional intimacy of individuals (Askari, B Mohd Noah, Aishah Bt Hassan, & Bt Baba, 2012; Scheeren, Vieira, Goulart, & Wagner, 2014). If a person can communicate in the right way, he will not only have effective communication with others, but the intimacy between him and others will be also increased (Malary, Shahhosseini, Pourasghar, & Hamzehgardeshi, 2015). One of the ways to increase this skill is to teach life skills. One of the issues that should be addressed in reducing the anxiety, is the problem solving and stress management skills (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2012). The emergence of conflict and the issue is normal in life, and due to the age nature of adolescents, sometimes many challenges and disappointments take place, and as a result, students feel anger, disappointment and dissatisfaction towards the issues, and the training of these skills can be a great help for these people.

Life skills education improves the psychological capacity of individuals and enhances their ability to adapt to the pressures and problems of individual, social and daily life difficulties, so that when faced with difficult and challenging situations, they do not conceive themselves as incapable and do not trap in isolation, depression and antisocial behaviors (Khaksari et al., 2019; Wenzel, Weichold, & Silbereisen, 2009). Therefore, the aforesaid skills can affect the rumination and common rumination.

Common rumination and anxiety are among the issues that male students in high school are faced with, both of which can cause more severe psychological problems, especially depression and suicide. Therefore, various approaches have been proposed to prevent these problems, and recently life skills education has been important. The need for this education for adolescents is especially evident when students and adolescents face a lot of problems that have been addressed in the field of life skills education, and it seems that the use of this educational approach would be effective in promoting the psychological capabilities of students, thus this study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of life skills education (problem solving, communication skills and stress management) on reducing common rumination and anxiety

among high school male students in Iran. Therefore, considering the mentioned materials and the importance of common rumination and adolescent anxiety in male students, this study attempts to answer the question whether life skills education (problem solving, communication skills and stress management) is effective on reducing common rumination and anxiety of male high school students in Iran.

Research hypotheses

1. Life skills education (problem solving, communication skill and stress management) is effective in reducing the common rumination of male high school students in Iran.

2. Life skills education (problem solving, communication skills and stress management) is effective in reducing the anxiety of male high school students in Iran.

METHODOLOGY

This research is semi-experimental with pretest - posttest design with control group. In semi-experimental design of pretest-posttest type with control group, dependent variable is measured before and after the presentation of the independent variable, and it includes the following steps:

1. Pre-test implementation
2. Putting subjects expose to an independent variable
3. Post-test implementation and comparison of the results using appropriate statistical test

Also, this research is of applied type in terms of purpose. The statistical population of this research included all male high school students in Bandar Abbas. In order to select the subjects, at first two high schools were selected randomly among male high schools. In the next stage, a class was selected between the first and third classes, and the common rumination questionnaire and Beck anxiety inventory were performed for all of them. Finally, among those who received the highest score in both questionnaires, 15 students were selected in each school. And one of the schools was randomly selected as an experimental group and another as a control group. Scores of individuals at this stage were considered as pre-test. Considering that in experimental and semi-experimental studies that are conducted as group training, the sample size for each group was proposed to be at least 15 individuals, which was considered the same in the present study. The data gathering tool includes a Common Rumination Questionnaire (CRQ) with 27 items and is related to measure the relationship of individuals with their same-sex friends who have common rumination with them. Triple-items, measure 9 areas: - Frequency of problem discussion - Discussion of problems rather than being entertained by other activities - Encouraging children to discuss problems through friends - Discussing a problem in a repetitive form - Thinking about the cause of a problem - Thinking about the consequences of problems - Thinking about parts of a problem that are not understandable - Focusing on negative emotions. The subjects respond to each of the items based on the 9-point Likert scale, which is ranked from I strongly disagree, 1 to I totally agree, 9 and describes the

rank of each item. About the inner conformity of this questionnaire, it should be noted that in the present study, the Cronbach's alpha was equal to 0.82. The Beck Anxiety Inventory is the next tool. This questionnaire is one of the most important and valid instruments for anxiety self-assessment which its validity and reliability has been approved in various internal and external researches. It contains 21 questions, that each question is graded in a four-part spectrum from 0 to 3. Each of the test materials describes one of the common symptoms of anxiety (mental, physical, and panic symptoms). The total number is put in a range from 0 to 63. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was equal to 0.84.

In this research, the data collected from the implementation of the questionnaires in the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as tables and charts to demonstrate the demographic characteristics and in order to deduce the data, a multivariate covariance analysis test (MNCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses and control the effect of pre-test and assess the effectiveness of life skills education. All data analysis steps were performed using SPSS twenty-two software.

A summary of group training sessions was also held in 12 sessions. These trainings of 12 sessions (for each problem solving skills, communication skills, and stress management) were held in 4 sessions that are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Summary of Group Life Skills Education Sessions (Chris 1998); Translation by Mohammad Khani

Session	Goals
First	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Familiarity with the group, regulations and duties of the members - Gaining Pre-test - Defining communication, principles governing communication, providing explanations of privacy.
Second	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the contents - Communication styles - Characteristics of people who follow the dominant style, the characteristics of people who follow the aggressive style, the characteristics of people who follow the dignified style - The way of using I sentences with role play.
Third	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the contents - Active listening skills - The skills necessary to communicate effectively including the skills of engagement in dialogue and the skill of assertiveness and division of these skills.
Forth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review contents - Non-verbal skills training including body language skills and metalanguage skills - Speaking skills and the use of proper words and phrases.
Fifth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify stress and its effects on life.
Sixth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review contents - Review appropriate strategies for dealing with different stresses in life and education.
Seventh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review contents - Obstacles and destructive interventional factors in the stress control process
Eights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concluding and answering to stress management questions.
Ninth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Definition and Importance of Conflict in Life - The conflict pyramid including exchanging daily events - Sharing ideas, expressing feelings, need for making decisions, decision making, problem solving, crisis
Tenth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the contents - Controversial issues in spouses' relationships, apparent and hidden issues, recognition of the symptoms of hidden issues including spinning wheels

	- Minor triggers, avoidance, competition and decision making.
Eleventh	- Review the content - Dealing with hidden issues and using speaker-listener techniques, - Conflict resolution approaches, constructive and destructive approaches - Presuppositions of Conflict Avoidance Contingency.
Twelfth	- Review the content - Steps to resolve the conflict, including negotiating about the problem, problem solving, specifying the details of the problem, mental precipitation, agreement and compromise - Tracking, summarizing and answering questions and performing post-tests.

RESULTS

In this section, the data from the research are presented in two sections: descriptive and inferential, or data analysis:

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2. The mean and standard deviation of the research variables by the group in the pre-test

Variable	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number
Common rumination	Control	80.53	14.46	15
	Experimental	81.07	14.52	15
Anxiety	Control	17.13	4.52	15
	Experimental	16.73	5.40	15

As seen from the table above, the control group in the common rumination variable has a mean of 80.53 with a standard deviation of 14.46 and in the experimental group, 81.77 with a standard deviation of 14.52. In the anxiety variable, the mean of control and experimental group is 17.13 and 16.73, respectively.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation of the research variables by the group in post test

Variable	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number
Common rumination	Control	80.93	14.39	15
	Experimental	66.40	8.09	15
Anxiety	Control	16.67	4.22	15
	Experimental	10.66	2.89	15

As seen from the table above, the control group in the common rumination variable has a mean of 80.93 with a standard deviation of 14.39 and in the experimental group, 66.47 with a standard deviation of 8.09. In the anxiety variable, the mean of control and experimental group was 16.67 and 10.66, respectively.

Before analyzing the hypothesis data, to make sure that the data of this study estimates the underlying assumptions of multivariate covariance analysis, they were investigated. For this purpose, four assumptions of this analysis, including the multivariate normality, missing values, homogeneity of variance and linearity, were investigated, respectively.

One of the conditions for using multivariate covariance analysis is the multivariate normality of dependent variables. In the absence of this assumption, different methods of converting various data are used. In the present study, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used

to examine the normality of the data. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 4. Z values obtained from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for dependent variables in the whole sample

Variable	Z value	Significance level
Common rumination	0.92	0.36
Anxiety	0.87	0.42

As can be seen in Table 3, the significance level of z values for dependent variables in the whole sample is higher than 0.05, which is not significant and as a result, the normality of the dependent variables is confirmed.

The method of multivariate covariance analysis is very sensitive to the missing values or the boundaries of dependent variables. Non-extracting the missing value from analysis or not converting this data can increase the amount of error in the first and second types. In analyzing the data no missing values were available. In this study, for the purpose of examining single variate missing data using the SPSS software program, z values for variables were calculated. The results showed that the scores of no variable were not the two high or low standard deviations.

Multivariate covariance analysis assumes that the variance in each box of the data table is the same. The unequal size of the box is not a serious problem, but the amount of each box should not be four times the smallest box. If so (due to the drop in the subjects or for any other reason), the variance of the boxes should be investigated in order to ensure that no box has a variance as big as 10 times of the size of the smallest variance. If so, the data should either be converted to logarithms or converted to standard grades (z). In this research, the Levin test was used to analyze the variance of variables before data analysis. Table 4 shows the results of the homogeneity test of the variance of the research dependent variables.

Table 5. Levine test for homogeneity of variances

Variable	F	Df1	Df2	Significance level
Common rumination	0.90	1	28	0.77
Anxiety	1.74	1	28	0.20

As shown in Table 4, Levin's test for any of the variables is not significant, thus the assumption of the homogeneity of the variances is confirmed. In the multivariate analysis of variance, this assumption is evaluated with the M-box test, the results are presented in the following table:

Table 6. M Box Test

M Box	5.038
F	1.549
Df1	3
Df2	141120
Sig	0.199

Given that $p > 05.01$, then the assumption of the covariance equality of the dependent variables is confirmed.

The Results of the Hypotheses Analysis

First hypothesis: life skills education (problem solving, communication skills and stress management) is effective in reducing the common rumination of male high school students in Bandar Abbas.

Second hypothesis: Life skills education (problem solving, communication skills and stress management) is effective in reducing the anxiety of male high school students in Bandar Abbas.

In order to investigate the effect of experimental intervention, multivariate covariance analysis (MANCOVA) was conducted on the scores of dependent variables of the research. Table 6 shows the results of multivariate covariance analysis on the scores of the dependent variables of the research.

Table 7. Summary of multivariate covariance analysis on the scores of dependent variables of research

Trace	Test	Value	F	df of the hypothesis	df of Error	Significance level	Effect size
Processing	Pillai's Trace	0.949	233.92	2	25	0.0001	0.95
	Wilks' Lambda	0.051	233.92	2	25	0.0001	0.95
	Hotelling's Trace	18.713	233.92	2	25	0.0001	0.95
	Roy's Largest Root	18.713	233.92	2	25	0.0001	0.95

The contents in table 6 show that there is a significant difference between the two groups in terms of at least one of the dependent variables. To further investigate this difference, analysis of one-way variances in MANCOVA text was done on dependent variables. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 7. Table 7 shows the results of one-way analysis of variance in MANCOVA text to compare the scores of variables in two different groups.

Table 8. One-Way Variance Analysis Results in MANCOVA Text on the Scores of Dependent Variables

Trace	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean squares	F	p	Trace size
Group	Common rumination	177.68	1	177.680	240.41	0.001	0.90
	Anxiety	79.70	1	79.704	299.62	0.001	0.89

The results in table 7 show that one-way variance analysis was significant in the common rumination variable (F = 240.41, p = 0.001), anxiety variable (F = 292.62, P = 0.001).

To understand the way of this difference, it is enough to compare the mean of the two groups of control and experiment with respect to the dependent variables. According to the results of table 8, the mean scores of common rumination and anxiety variables in the experimental group was significantly lower than the control group. Therefore, research hypotheses are confirmed.

Table 9. 95% confidence interval of variables

Dependent variables	Group	Mean	95% confidence interval	
Common rumination	Control	83.40	82.92	83.89
	Experimental	67.93	67.45	68.42
Anxiety	Control	16.99	16.66	17.33
	Experimental	13.33	13.03	13.67

CONCLUSION

As the results showed, there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the common rumination and anxiety after the elimination of the pre-test effect in experimental groups. In the way that the mean score of the post-test in the experimental group was significantly lower than that of the control group. In other words, group life skills education has led to a reduction in common rumination and anxiety in the experimental group in the post-test phase. Therefore, the hypothesis that "life skills education (problem solving, communication skills and stress management) is effective in reducing common rumination and anxiety in male high school students in Bandar Abbas" was confirmed. In explaining the results, it can be concluded that life skills education (problem solving, stress management and interpersonal relationships) reduces the stress and improves the mental capabilities of students, which can be effective in reducing their anxiety. Interpersonal relationships point to having the appropriate interpersonal skills, the ability to do the right thing about life, self-satisfaction and satisfaction of others, and the amount of social support. It seems that skill training of the ability to effective interpersonal communication makes it possible for individuals to connect to an experienced supporter to solve their problems that provides the necessary supports in dealing with problems, in particular anxiety. On the other hand, effective interpersonal relationships is of great importance in establishing a healthy and constructive relationship with those whose emotional, informational and instrumental support can help a person to deal effectively with problems.

As the results showed, there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the common rumination pre-test after eliminating the pre-test trace in the experimental group. The mean score of the post-test of experimental group was significantly lower than that of the control group. In other words, group life skills education has led to a reduction in common rumination in the experimental group in the post-test phase, compared with the control group. They showed that mental skills can play a role in reducing ruminations. Khera and Khosla (2012), conducted a research entitled *The Impact of Life Skills on the Success of Students*. The results of this study indicate that life skills education itself has a positive and significant effect on the successful transfer of students from the university to the workplace. Life skills education in students improves their communicational behaviors with each other and with their parents. Their research, which was conducted among several experimental groups, suggested that teaching problem-solving skills, stress management and other life skills can be effective in enhancing the mental capabilities of children and managing the problems surrounding them.

UNICEF defines life skills as a behavioral change-or shape-based approach that takes into account balancing the three domains: knowledge, attitude and skills. Many studies have been confirmed on the effect of life skills education programs on various aspects of mental health and the results have shown that training these skills improves social skills and interpersonal communication, increases positive social behaviors and social adaptability, increases satisfaction of family-system, and increased coping skills, which can be effective in reducing adolescent psychological problems, especially rumination and anxiety.

It should be explained that life skills are a technique for increasing the psychological flexibility that educating them can create new horizons for the treatment of anxiety and

depression. As mentioned earlier, mental ruminations such as the fundamentals of depression and it is obvious that they are quickly affected. Life skills education improves the psychological capacity of individuals and increases their ability to adapt to the pressures and problems of individual, social life and daily life difficulties. So that when faced with difficult and challenging situations, they do not conceive themselves as unable and not be trapped in isolation, depression and anti-social behaviors. Therefore, these skills can also affect common rumination. If one can communicate in the right way, he will not only have effective communication with others, but the intimacy between him and others will be also increased. One of the ways to increase this skill is to teach life skills. One of the issues that must be considered in improving the quality of life is the problem solving and stress management contract. The emergence of conflict and the problem in life is normal, and because of the age of adolescents, sometimes many challenges and disappointments take place, and as a result, students feel anger and disappointment with the issues, and the training of these skills can be effective in enhancing their psychological capabilities. In sum, it can be said that through the training of life skills, personal and social adaptation increases, interpersonal relationships improve and self-esteem increases, thus all of these prevent the person from referring to negative past events and review them.

In the end it is suggested that:

- The students exposed to high risk of anxiety be identified and the necessary personal or group interventions takes place.
- According to the results of this study, it is suggested that group life skills education for students in schools be implemented.
- It is suggested that topics related to common rumination be provided to students and their families in various ways, such as leaflets, brochures, etc.

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