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Examining the impact of teaching social problem solving on the self-esteem of students with learning disorders

Sedigheh Davoodi[*1], Mahin Askari[2]

1. Department of Educatinal Manegmenet, Bandar Abbas Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas, Iran
2. Hormozgan Medicine University, Bandar Abbas, Iran

A B S T R A C T

This research was done to examine the impact of teaching social problem solving on students' self-esteem, who are suffering from learning disorders. The survey was an experimental research consisting of pretest and posttest phases with experimental and control groups. Its statistical population included all students aged 12-16 from Bandar Abass 1st school district who were diagnosed with learning disorders (35 students). A sample of 32 students was randomly selected from this population using Kukran formula in two groups of 16 (one as experimental group and the other as control group). A standard questionnaire was used to collect data about solving social issues and self-esteem. The statistical methods of co-variance analysis were used to analyze data, with the obtained results showing: teaching how to solve a social issue affects self-esteem and its components (general self-esteem, family self-esteem, social self-esteem, job/educational self-esteem) for students with learning disorders.

Keywords: Teaching Social Problem Solving, Life Skills, Self-Esteem, Learning Disorders.

INTRODUCTION

Learning experts have focused on particular students with so-called social disorders since 1950. These students are a group of children who look normal and their physical growth, height and weight all seem normal. Their intelligence is more or less the same as other children. These children view themselves as highly positive, but when they start going to school and want to learn how to read, write, and calculate, they face serious problems. It is commonly said that they are suffering from learning disorders. While these students are confident enough that they can advance in their education, they slowly finds out that their peers outperform them in education. After several months in elementary school, they see themselves different from others; feel low self-esteem; internalize their problems; and their self-esteem decreases considerably which causes their frustration[1].

* . Corresponding Author

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A major goal in education is to develop capability of problem solving, creativity, and innovation in students. Students can adapt to different and new situations in life using these abilities[2]. On the other hand, the transient conditions of society has made children and teens face particular problems and complexities. In these circumstances, one of the most important skills which can strengthens their mental health and development to encounter future problems is problem solving skills in general terms and social problem solving in specific terms, such that those who are unable to solve inventible problems may exacerbate their problems by applying ineffective solutions[3].

The results from a research conducted by Hosseini Nasab, Mesrabadi, and Aghajanzadeh[4] show that teaching social skills teaching has a significant and positive impact on general self-esteem, educational self-esteem and social self-esteem. Cup (1976) showed that teaching social problem solving skills has a positive effect on self-expression, self-esteem and accountability[5]. Thus, based on aforementioned information it has become clear that teaching social problem solving to students, namely students with learning disorders can increase their self-esteem. It can be concluded from reports and statistics published in Iran that social problem solving, self-esteem, relations between them and other associated aspects have not been studied an analyzed sufficiently in a professional manner. This indicates the fact that no comprehensive study or research has been carried out about these variables in the context of education, especially among students with learning disorders. Therefore, it is necessary for researchers, teachers, and students to research this topic. Thus, this paper is intended to examine the impact of teaching social problem solving on student self-esteem with learning disorders in the 1st school district of Bandar Abbas County.

The hypothesis we are about to test is as follows:

Teaching social problem solving affects self-esteem components of students with learning disorders.

METHODOLOGY

The present paper is an experimental research of pretest posttest design with an experimental group and a control group. Using simple random sampling, the experimental and control groups were selected. The statistical population included all students aged 12-16 (sixth graders and junior high-school students) in the 1st school district of Bandar Abbas County who were diagnosed as students with learning disorders in the academic year 2013-14. They were referred to the Learning Disorders Center so that their problem can be solved. According to the figures published by the learning disorders center of Bandar Abbas County 1st school district, a total of 35 people visited this center. In the present research, 35 people were pretested first. A simple random sample of 32 were then selected out of those with lower self-esteem and educational performance scores using Kukran formula. They were divided into two groups of 16 (one as the experimental group, the other as control group).

The following tools were used to measure the research variables:

1. Social problem solving questionnaire: the social problem solving has been designed by Heppner and Peterson (1982) to measure respondents' perception of their problem solving behavior. It has 35 parts which are developed to measure how individuals react to their daily issues.
2. Self-esteem questionnaire: the Copper-Smith (1967) questionnaire was used to measure self-esteem levels in students.

The present research uses Cronbach alpha method to determine the reliability of questionnaire and content validity to determine the validity of them. The covariance analysis test (ANCOVA) was used to analyze data.

RESULTS

First, the covariance analysis method is used to investigate the hypotheses performed in experimental and control groups with pretest-posttest design. It is presumed that both groups have the same variance. The F-test was used to determine if variances are equal, with its results shown in table 1. If F is not in a significant level ($p>0.05$), we conclude that there is no significant difference between variances of experimental group scores and those of control group scores in posttest, and this presumption is met. In this event, the "covariance analysis" method is used to analyze the hypothesis statistically. On the other hand, if F is at a significant level ($P<0.05$), we conclude that there is a significant difference between variances of experimental group scores and those of control group scores in posttest, and this presumption is not met. In this event, the "differential t-test" method is used to analyze the hypothesis statistically.

Table 1. Determining the equality of self-esteem scores variances and their dimensions in posttest

Variance	f value	1st freedom degree	2nd freedom degree	Significance level
Overall self-esteem	858.0	1	30	3.0
General delf-steem	1.1	1	30	2.0
Family self-esteem	9.0	1	30	3.0
Social self-steem	09.1	1	30	3.0
Academic/job self-esteem	48.0	1	30	4.0

As it can be seen, f value is not significant in any self-esteem variable ($P>0.05$).thus, we conclude that there is no significant difference between variances of experimental group scores and those of control group scores in posttest, and the presumption is met. Therefore, the "covariance analysis" method is used to analyze other hypothesis statistically.

- Teaching social problem solving has a positive effect on the learning components of students with learning disorders.

- The general self-esteem variable

As it can be seen in table 1 data, this presumption is met. The "covariance analysis" method is used to analyze this hypothesis statistically.

Table 2. Difference between posttest general self-esteem scores

Difference source	Sum of squares	Freedom degree	Squares mean	f	Significance level
Pretest effect	372.549	1	372.549	1.8	0.1
Independent Variable effect	320.892	1	320.892	33.6	0.0001
error	10817.00	29	11.06	------	------
Adjusted sum	699.469	30	-------	------	------

As it is seen in the 2nd row, f value stands at 33.6 which is significant at 0.0001 (since significance level is less than 0.05). So, we conclude there is a significant difference between general self-esteem in posttest after removing pretest effect. Thus, the hypothesis is confirmed – that is, teaching social problem solving affects the variable of student general self-esteem.

Table 3. Average and standard deviation of general self-esteem in posttest

Group	Number	Unadjusted average	Standard deviation	Adjusted average
Experimental	16	21.1	3.2	21.2
Control	16	14.4	3.5	14.3

As it is seen, without taking pretest effect into account, the averages of general self-esteem variable would be 21.2 and 14.3 for experimental and control groups, respectively. This indicates the impact of teaching social problem solving on student general self-esteem with learning disorders in the experimental group.

- The family self-esteem variable

As it can be seen in table 1 data, the presumption is met. Thus, the "covariance analysis" method is used to analyze this hypothesis statistically.

Table 4. Difference between family self-esteem scores in posttest

Difference source	Sum of squares	Freedom degree	Squares mean	f	Significance level
Pretest effect	5.4	1	5.4	1.7	0.01
Independent Variable effect	23.944	1	23.944	7.5	
error	92.209	29	3.1	------	------
Adjusted sum	1103.00	30	-------	------	------

As it can be seen in the 2nd row of table, f value stands at 7.5 which is significant in 0.01 (since it is less than significant level of 0.05). So, we conclude there is a significant difference between family self-esteem in posttest after removing pretest effect. Thus, the hypothesis is confirmed – that is, teaching social problem solving affects the variable of student family self-esteem.

Table 5. Average and standard deviation of family self-esteem in posttest

Group	Number	Unadjusted average	Standard deviation	Adjusted average
Experimental	16	6.44	1.5	6.40
Control	16	4.63	2.06	4.66

As it is seen, without taking pretest effect into account, the averages of family self-esteem variable would be 6.40 and 4.66 for experimental and control groups, respectively. This indicates the impact of teaching social problem solving on student family self-esteem with learning disorders in the experimental group.

- The social self-esteem variable

As it can be seen in table 1 data, the presumption is met. Thus, the "covariance analysis" method is used to analyze this hypothesis statistically.

Table 6. Difference between social self-esteem scores in posttest

Difference source	Sum of squares	Freedom degree	Squares mean	f	Significance level
Pretest effect	0.531	1	0.531	0.2	0.6
Independent Variable effect	9.8	1	9.8	5.03	0.03
error	56.406	29	1.9	------	------
Adjusted sum	1281.00	30	-------	------	------

As it can be seen in the 2nd row of table, f value stands at 5.03 which has become significant at 0.03 (since it is less than significant level of 0.05). So, we conclude there is a significant difference between social self-esteem in posttest after removing pretest effect. Thus, the hypothesis is confirmed – that is, teaching social problem solving affects the variable of student family self-esteem.

Table 7. Average and standard deviation of family self-esteem in posttest

Group	Number	Unadjusted average	Standard deviation	Adjusted average
Experimental	16	□□□□	1.1	□□□
Control	16	□□□□	□□□	□□□

As it is seen, without taking pretest effect into account, the averages of family self-esteem variable would be 6.7 and 5.5 for experimental and control groups, respectively. This indicates the impact of teaching social problem solving on student family self-esteem with learning disorders in the experimental group.

- The job/academic self-esteem variable

As it can be seen in table 1 data, the presumption is met. Thus, the "covariance analysis" method is used to analyze this hypothesis statistically.

Table 8. Difference between job/academic self-esteem scores in posttest

Difference source	Sum of squares	Freedom degree	Squares mean	f	Significance level
Pretest effect	0.109	1	0.109	0.06	0.7
Independent Variable effect	28.9	1	28.9	18.2	0.0001
error	46.07	29	1.5	------	------
Adjusted sum	827.00	30	-------	------	------

As it can be seen in the 2nd row of table, f value stands at 18.2 which has become significant at 0.0001 (since it is less than significant level of 0.05). So, we conclude there is a significant difference between job-academic self-esteem in

posttest after removing pretest effect. Thus, the hypothesis is confirmed – that is, teaching social problem solving affects the variable of student family self-esteem.

Table 9. Average and standard deviation of job/academic self-esteem in posttest

Group	Number	Unadjusted average	Standard deviation	Adjusted average
Experimental	16	□□□□	□□□	□□□□
Control	16	□□□□	□□□	□□□□

As it is seen, without taking pretest effect into account, the averages of job/academic self-esteem variable would be 5.82 and 3.86 for experimental and control groups, respectively. This indicates the impact of teaching social problem solving on student job/academic self-esteem with learning disorders in the experimental group.

CONCLUSION

The present research was designed to examine the impact of teaching social problem solving on the self-esteem of students with learning disorders in the 1st school district of Bandar Abas County. The following conclusion was drawn: teaching social problem solving affects the self-esteem of students with learning disorders.

An academic problem which causes parents to visit clinical centers frequently is learning disorders. In DSM-IV classification, learning disorder is diagnosed, when progress in standardized tests for reading, mathematic and written expression is considerably lower than expected level, based on age, education level and IQ[6].

When explaining the impact of teaching social problem solving on promoting the self-esteem of students with learning disorders, it can be said encountering different stresses and issues of life is an indispensable part of each individual and it is even more obvious in students with learning disorders. Based on the Hans Selye's theory (general adaptation syndrome), individuals who are facing problems enter the resistance phase after experiencing the alarm phase. At this point, the body mechanisms are mobilized to encounter the stressor by using energy as long as the stressor persists. The faster the individual overcomes the problem, the lower the consumed energy will be, and it will be less likely for the body to reach the third stage (exhaustion stage) and psychologic health will be in turn more assured. In this circumstances, it is obvious that those with better capability in social problem solving can overcome their problems quickly and easily. As a result, its negative and detrimental effects on bio-mental and social aspects will be lower. On the other hand, encountering different issues and problems in life, when combined with successful solving and adaptation can increase one's self-esteem, self-confidence, self-efficacy and tolerance through reinforcement process and the revised Thorndike law of effect. Thus, it can be concluded that teaching social problem solving can increase the self-esteem and the academic performance of

students with learning disorders. In the problem solving model, students practice different ways of problem solving, and they have the chance to think. Therefore, this model prompts students to take action to increase their self-esteem.

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