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The Effectiveness of Assertiveness Training Program on the Resilience and Clinical Symptoms of Students with Symptoms of Generalized Anxiety Disorder

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Research Paper	Abstract
<p>Receive: 2022/03/31 Accept: 2022/08/13 Published: 2023/06/03</p> <p>Keywords: Training program, Assertiveness, Resilience, Clinical Symptoms, Generalized Anxiety Disorder.</p> <p>Article Cite: Ahmadi M, Ghasemi M, Shahriari Ahmadi M. (2023). The Effectiveness of Assertiveness Training Program on the Resilience and Clinical Symptoms of Students with Symptoms of Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Iranian Society of Sociology of Education. 9(1): 205-214.</p>	<p>Purpose: Generalized anxiety disorder has many negative consequences, including reduced resilience. Therefore, the aim of this research was the effectiveness of assertiveness training program on the resilience and clinical symptoms of students with symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder.</p> <p>Methodology: This study in terms of purpose was applied and in terms of implementation method was semi-experimental with a pretest and posttest design with a control group. The research population was male students aged 16 to 18 in the second-high school of Karaj city in the 2019-20 academic years, which from them number of 50 people of them were selected by multi-stage random sampling method and randomly replaced in two groups of 25 including experimental and control groups. The experimental group underwent 8 sessions of 60 minutes under the assertiveness training program and during this time the control group did not receive any training. The data were collected with the resilience scale (Connor and Davidson, 2003) and generalized anxiety disorder questionnaire (Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams and Lowe, 2006) and analyzed by multivariate covariance analysis in SPSS version 24 software.</p> <p>Findings: The findings showed that the experimental and control groups have significantly different in terms of the variables of resilience and clinical symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder. In the other words, the assertiveness training program led to increase resilience ($F=41.25$, $P<0.001$) and reduce clinical symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder ($F=28.34$, $P<0.001$) in students.</p> <p>Conclusion: The results indicated the effectiveness of the assertiveness training program on resilience and clinical symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder. Therefore, counselors and therapists can use the assertiveness training program along with other training methods and programs to increase resilience and reduce the clinical symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder.</p>



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Detailed abstract

Purpose: The presence of anxiety is considered to be moderate and if it exceeds that limit, it is called morbid anxiety as one of the psychiatric disorders. Anxiety disorders include a wide range of disorders, including panic, panic, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress, general anxiety and several other disorders, with an incidence rate of 18% and a lifetime prevalence of 28.8%. Generalized anxiety disorder is one of the most common chronic and destructive psychiatric disorders that, according to the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, involves severe worry and anxiety about several events or activities that last for at least 6 months on most days. It is determined to be difficult and accompanied by symptoms such as muscle tension, irritability, restlessness, and difficulty sleeping. The two main symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder include worry (such as preoccupation with negative thoughts about the future) and physiological arousal (such as muscle tension and sleep disturbance). In addition to the excessive, widespread and uncontrollable anxiety of those suffering from the aforementioned disorder, there are physical (dry mouth, sweating, palpitations, frequent urination and stomach upsets) and psychological (irritability, low concentration, high sensitivity to sound and sleep-related disturbances) symptoms associated with They experience anxiety. People with symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder are constantly worried about the possible occurrence of a wide range of negative events, they expect the occurrence of unfortunate events, have muscle contractions and have defects in psychological and social functions. Also, people with generalized anxiety disorder are socially anxious, hopeless and depressed, have low self-confidence, feel psychologically vulnerable, and have low health and quality of life. An increase in generalized anxiety is associated with a decrease in resilience. Resilience as a dynamic and active construct derived from the approach of positive psychology means positive, comprehensive and successful adaptation to stressful, exhausting and challenging conditions, the ability to return to the state before experiencing these conditions and the ability to grow and flourish in the said conditions. Generalized anxiety disorder has many negative consequences, including reduced resilience. Therefore, the aim of this research was the effectiveness of self-expression training program on the resilience and clinical symptoms of students with symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder.

Methodology: This study was applied in terms of purpose and semi-experimental in terms of execution method with a pre-test and post-test design with a control group. The research population was male students aged 16 to 18 in the second year of secondary school in Karaj city in the academic year 2019-20, 50 of them were selected by multi-stage random sampling method and randomly replaced in two groups of 25 including experimental and control groups. In this sampling method, four schools from four districts were randomly selected from among the existing schools, and then four classes were randomly selected from each school, and 25 students were randomly selected from each class, and they responded to the generalized anxiety disorder questionnaire, and then conducted clinical semi-structured interviews. And according to the study entry criteria, 50 people were selected as samples. The criteria for entering the study include obtaining a higher score in the generalized anxiety disorder questionnaire, not participating in similar psychological interventions, not taking psychiatric drugs, the desire to participate in research and living with parents, and the criteria for exiting the study include refusing to continue cooperation and absenteeism. It was more than two sessions. The process of conducting the research was such that after sampling according to the process explained above, expressing the importance and necessity of the research and obtaining their consent to participate in the research, the samples were randomly replaced in two groups of 25 people including the experimental and control groups. Both groups were evaluated in terms of resilience and generalized anxiety disorder in the pre-test phase, and then the experimental group underwent 8 60-minute sessions of self-expression training program, and during this time, the control group did not receive any training, and finally, both groups in the post-test phase were also evaluated in terms of resilience. and generalized anxiety disorder were evaluated. The self-expression training program was taken from the Neissi and Shehni yeylagh (2001) self-expression training protocol. Data were collected with resilience scale (Connor and Davidson, 2003)

and generalized anxiety disorder questionnaire (Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams and Lowe, 2006) and analyzed by multivariate covariance analysis method in SPSS version 24 software.

Findings: The findings showed that the experimental and control groups have significantly different in terms of the variables of resilience and clinical symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder. In the other words, the assertiveness training program led to increase resilience ($F=41.25$, $P<0.001$) and reduce clinical symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder ($F=28.34$, $P<0.001$) in students.

Conclusion: The results showed the effectiveness of the self-expression training program on resilience and clinical symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder. Therefore, the importance of implementing educational programs in a group and workshop manner on improving life skills, especially self-expression, is determined, and this intervention is suggested as a cheap, easy and applicable intervention for different educational levels in all schools. Because by teaching self-expression educational program, people (students) learn to express their opinions, feelings, needs and requests easily and without anxiety, and establish more effective communication with others and increase their mental health. As a result, counselors and therapists can use the self-expression training program along with other methods and training programs to increase resilience and reduce the clinical symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder. Like other studies, the present study has been faced with limitations, including the lack of long-term access to students, the lack of follow-up in order to evaluate the continuity of effectiveness. Also, using only self-report tools to collect data and not conducting interviews were other limitations of this research. In line with the limitations of this research, it is suggested to conduct follow-up studies in order to check the long-term effectiveness of self-expression training, and to increase the richness of information, other data collection methods such as interviews should be used. Another research proposal is to investigate the effectiveness of the self-expression training program on other psychological variables such as psychological well-being, quality of life, mental health, meaning of life, and psychological toughness.