

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING ON STUDENT'S HAPPINESS

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Abstract. The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of communication skills training on female high school students' happiness. At this experimental study, first Sixty female students, were selected using multi-stage cluster sampling and then by simple random method, divided into three test and a control groups. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics. The results showed that, in comparison to control group, communication skills training significantly induces student's happiness in test group, and among communication skills, empathy was more effective than assertiveness and listening skill ($P < 0.05$). Finally, the results showed that the communication skill training had a positive effect on students' happiness.

Keywords: communication skills training, happiness, students

1 Introduction

The human always had been seeking for joy and happiness. In other words, human does all his/her activities to reach happiness and bliss. According to Aristotle, there are at least three types of happiness. At the lowest level, the ordinary people consider that, equivalent to Success, but at the upper level the desired happiness is accordant to Aristotle opinion, or the happiness caused by spirituality. There are Six fundamental human emotions: anger, fear, hate, Surprise, sadness and happiness (Dickey, 1999). Mental happiness is a person's cognitive and emotional evaluation of his/her own life. This evaluation causes emotional reactions to the accidents and also cognitive judgments about satisfaction and to accomplish tasks. So, mental happiness is a wide concept, including: experience of desired emotions, low levels of negative emotions and high life satisfaction. People's mental happiness is reflected in evaluation and perception of their life in terms of emotions, psychological and social functions. Emotional component of mental happiness contains two components: happiness and life satisfaction (Carr, 2004). Studies show that in about one hundred-year life of scientific psychology, the negative aspects of emotion were mostly considered. For every fourteen articles about negative emotions, there is only one article about positive emotions. Other researcher, with a review of the literature over the past decade, considers this proportion, seventeen to one. But in the last two decades a number of psychologists innovated a kind of positive psychology which includes subjects like: positivism in coping with the pressures of life and overcome depression and exanimate.

Overall, this researches are in line with the positivist psychology movement which started by Martin Seligman. Happiness at least has two major components: emotional and cognitive. Although happiness is not the opposite of depression but the absence of depression is a prerequisite to achieve happiness (Alipour & nourbala, 2009). Happiness is a character trait that is based on biological theory. The most comprehensive and also most operational definition of happiness was offered by winhoven. In his opinion, happiness is referred to the judgment of a person about the extent of desirability quality of life. In other words, happiness means that how much a person loves his/her life. In fact, happiness is the common goal of people and everybody tries to achieve that. And that is consist of evaluation of people of themselves and their lives (Buss, 2000). Researches conducted in relation to happiness show that treats of happy people are adaptive and helpful. These people look at things with clear vision, usually pray, attempt to solve their problems directly by themselves and ask help from others in time. On the other hand, unhappy people think and act pessimistic, are

immersed in fantasy, they blame themselves and others and avoid working for solving problems. Therefore, the mental health contains important principles that can be recognized using the effect of emotion on different aspect of human treats and its development including: Physical and mental health, training and skills development, social competencies and positive social relationships (Bridge, et al., 2002). Fortunately, by referring to the principles of positive psychology, the most valuable solution for increasing happiness can be found. Different ideas, reasons and ways of increasing happiness have suggested that these ideas should be properly investigated. Among these methods, life skills training and so that communication skills are the most important. In fact, the emphasis on human training, has a preventive role for healthy people and rescues the patients from disease. Communication skills play an important role in enhancing the health and vitality of human beings and can prevent the onset of many physical and mental diseases and eventually there will be much more happiness in our lives (Shahjafari et al., 2003). Argyle and Lu (1990) showed that part of the happiness expressing, in extroverts is for the sake of better social skills, especially assertiveness and cooperativeness. Communication skills training can help people a lot. This training includes verbal and nonverbal communication such as listening, empathy and assertiveness. Unfortunately, the people of the community are not always in the course of normal psychosocial development and for various reasons, a large number of adolescents and young people can't achieve external stimuli and find balance between stimuli's and their own internal motivations. Thus, the harmonious and comprehensive development of human as the main excellence objective, would not be realized. Meanwhile the society becomes more complex and broader social and interpersonal communication occurs, internal and environmental conflicts become more, and causes weak persons to get perplexity and confusion. Behavioral problems and mental disorders, make direct and immediate intervention necessary, so that, in this situation, the intervention is to increase the adaptability of people, raising their social and personal capacity in breeding programs that aims at promoting psychological capacity of adolescents and young people. This important and essential action takes place by life skill training (Farmahini, 2013).

Today, it has been proven that one of the characteristics of successful people in various fields, is the ability to communicate with others. On the other hand, a lot of stress that people suffer from in social and family relationships, is caused by establishing an inappropriate relationship by these people, that will affect their physical and mental health. In fact, learning effective communication methods, are important from different aspects. First, effective communication, is an essential component of prevention of mental disorders. Secondly, the main key to prevent social pathologies, is effective communication skills, especially assertiveness. Third point is that; it is of the necessary materials for the general concept of success. On the other hand, from a holistic view, today, on behalf of international community like the World Health Organization health is not defined only the absence of disease. But also health, includes a euphoric feeling in all physical, psychological, social and even spiritual dimensions. Undoubtedly, to achieve a desirable, happy situation of life, it is not enough to rely solely on holistic therapies and people must stabilize their health status using acquired tools and skills and prevent from imbalance in the body and mind, or disease. But the problem is that the modern man, in search of happiness, does not know where to take refuge in (Farmahini, 2013).

One way to create happiness, is social skills training. Social skills training, includes cognitive and behavioral set of techniques to increase happiness which was presented by Levinson and Goth Leap. The program includes training in assertiveness skills, fostering a sense of collaboration, spending leisure time, responsibility and communication skills which have been effective in increasing happiness according to many of

these researches. The results showed that the value of *t*, obtained for irrational beliefs and happiness variables was meaningful. So that the mean score of irrational beliefs is less for gifted students and their rate of happiness is higher. The results showed that there is a difference in irrational beliefs and happiness for regular and gifted students. The Taremian et al., (2006) presented that factors such as confidence, effective communication, purposefulness, decision-making and problem solving in is involved in mental health of adolescents and weaknesses in these skills will be reduced happiness and health. Researches of Hafezi et al., (2010) showed that life skills training is effective in reducing distorted behavior of delinquent teenagers. Tabesh (2008) also concluded that female high school students' life skills training has a positive effect on their compatibility. Researches of Myers (2000) showed that happiness can improve physical and mental health. Several studies also showed that happiness acts as a buffer against stress (Barati et al., 2011). Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade (2005) believe that each individual has a model for happiness or unhappiness, that makes him interpret events in such a manner that preserves his happiness. In general, they believe that happy people respond in a more adaptive and positive manner to happenings and conditions and have lower stress levels, stronger immune system and more creative than unhappy people. In life skills training programs, the skill refers to: The ability to create appropriate and effective interpersonal relationships, doing social responsibilities, make correct decisions, conflicts and struggles resolution without resorting to actions that harm self and others. Communication skills help to express ideas, beliefs, desires, needs and emotions and to ask help and guide from others when its necessary.

Listening skill or effective listening, includes the active participation in a dialogue, the activity which helps the speaker to transmit his own purpose. Clear and effective expression of desires, feelings, thoughts, is half of the communication process that is necessary for influencing and interpersonal communication. The other half is to listen and perceive others. effective communication is obtained when the recipient of a message, understands the purpose of the sender in the same way that the sender means to (Ghorbani, 2006). Empathy skill is the ability to understand others even if one not has the same situation of life. Empathy helps to individual to accept other people despite their differences and respect them. Empathy improves social relations and leads to create a supportive and accepting behavior toward other human beings. Assertiveness skill is the ability to express feelings and thoughts and ideas to be worthy so that nobody is disrespected and no one's right is spoiled (Fathy, 2015). Also the word Happiness has a psychological concept that has different definitions and dimensions. In dictionaries, happiness is synonymous with words like rejoice, joy and vitality (Moen, 2003). According to the above, the necessity of considering issue of the happiness has several reasons, one is that, happiness is contagious; which means that, happiness of a person can make others happy. Moreover, happiness makes life more pleasant (Abedi, 2006). Given the advantages of a happy life for the people, especially youth and students as future builders of society, some psychologists and researchers have tried to provide ways to increase the happiness of the people. Some of these methods could be social skills training program [Levinson and Gottlieb], cognitive therapy Beck, teaching interpersonal communication (Bus, 2000) and mood induction methods (Argyle, 2002). Due to the fact that happiness is partly learnable, to create happiness in people behavioral skills that can cause or increase the happiness can be trained to people. According to some research, it seems

that the issue of happiness has little role in the process of education and training. If this is true, it could be considered to be a serious injury in the process of education. Happiness and joy bring positive energy for the person, whether a student or teacher, both can take advantage of this energy. Therefore, in this research we intend to study the effectiveness of communication skills training on increasing the happiness of high school female students.

2 Method

This current research method is experimental. Research design is semi experimental "post-test - pre-test and control group" which includes four groups that all groups are measured twice. For experimental groups, before and after the intervention and simultaneously for the control group but with no training. There are three experimental groups, including those who trained listening skill, empathy skill and a group that receives assertiveness skills training and also one group, as a control group. Random sampling method was used to form groups. In this case, three groups of 15 subjects in the test group and a control group of 15 persons were defined. Each test group was exposed to its own variable test and control group continued to its previous program without any intervention. Measurement of the dependent variable for groups (control and test) was performed at the same time and under the same conditions. Research population consists of all secondary school students (first, second, third, fourth grade) of public schools in city of Sari in the academic year 90-89 which includes 5030 students. The sample size in this research is 60 students that were randomly divided into four control and experimental groups of 15 persons. Research participants were selected through multi-stage cluster sampling.

3 Research Tools

A. Research tools is Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. This questionnaire was prepared in 1989 by Argyle and Lu. This questionnaire has 29 parts (Alipour and Nourbala, 2000). Hills and Argyle (1998) have gained seven factors on their analysis including Life satisfaction, self-efficacy, sociability, positive recognition and self-esteem. These factors include 3/56% of the total variance. Farnham and Brewing (1990), in another research have emphasized the effect of three factors, personal development, fun and entertainment on life and health quality. The validity of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire in Nourbala research on 25 students, Cronbach's alpha was obtained 93/0. The value of alpha was respectively obtained by Farnham and Brewing (1990), 0.90, 0.87 and 0.89 and 0.90. The reliability of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire in Nourbala research with a very small sample size (25 students) was achieved 0.79 after three weeks. Argyle and Lu (1990) have reported the reliability 78/0 after 5 months. Noorbala (2000) research investigated the correlation between test questions and the total score of each part of the test showed a high correlation (40 to 73/0) with the total score.

B. Implementation of the independent variable of communication skills. After the implementation of happiness questionnaire at the first stage and selection of experimental and control groups, skills training was presented in the test groups during four sessions of 90 minutes (every week, one session). Then happiness questionnaire was given to both groups again.

4 Results

Table 2: Frequency distribution and percentage of subjects

Index/ Groups	control	Test1	Test2	Test3	Total
Frequency	15	15	15	15	60
Frequency percentage	%25	%25	%25	%25	%100

As table 2 indicates in the descriptive statistics, three student groups were considered as test groups and one for the control group. Their numbers are equal and group 1 possessed active

listening skill between two tests, group 2 possessed empathy skills and test group3 possessed assertiveness skills. The control group did not receive any training between the two tests.

Table 3: Distribution of happiness pretest and post test scores studied for four groups

Average happiness	Test1	Groups Test2	Test3	control
Pre-test	41.60	37.40	42.40	40.53
Post-test	47.60	43.60	49.40	42.66
Tests difference	6	6.20	7	2.13

Table 3 results show the average pre-test group that possessed active listening training was 60/41, and after the training was 60/47. For the group that possessed empathy skills, pre-test and after the intervention, average happiness score, were 60/43 and 60/43 respectively. And for the third group that possessed

assertiveness skills, pretest scores were respectively 40/42 and 40/49 before and after the training. The control group had gained an average score of 53/40 in pre-test and in the second phase, the average score was 66/42.

Table 4: independent t test (The effect of Listening skill training on happiness of female students)

Skill	Average		standard deviation		t	sig
	Test	control	test	control		
Listening	6	2.13	2.72	2.77	3.85	0
Empathy	6.20	2.13	2.56	2.77	4.16	0
Assertiveness	7	2.13	1.92	2.77	6.44	0
communication	7	2.13	2.15	2.77	-7Apr	0

The control and test group both include 15 students, t Critical 2.04 ,P<0.05 ; df=58

The results in table 4 show that the training of listening, empathy, assertiveness and communication skills has an impact on happiness students. And with comparison of averages it can

be concluded that the happiness of students that were trained listening, empathy, assertiveness and communication skill is more than the control group.

Table 5: Data analysis using stepwise regression models (step by step)

Resources	SS	df	MS	F	sig	α
regression	6110.62	3	2036.87	25.64	0.000	May-00
residual	3255.95	41	79.41			
total	9366.57	44	-			

Given that meaningful level is equal to sig =000/0, the alpha value was smaller than the considered one which is equal to α =05/0. So considering the degree of freedom, the regression

confirmed the effect of all three variables on Happiness. And then the share of each effective variable is presented in Table 5.

Table 6: The contribution using the stepwise regression model (step by step)

Skill	r	R	(r2)	(r2)
	step by step	each skill	coefficient	each skill
Empathy	0.45	0.45	%21	%21
Empathy + listening	0.78	0.33	%32	%10
Empathy +listening + assertiveness	0.99	0.21	%37	%5

Results table 6 shows that all three skills of listening, empathy and assertiveness is effective in students' happiness but they share is different. Regression showed that 21, 10 and 5 percent of changes of happiness are respectively related to empathy, listening and assertiveness skill training. The residual 64 percent is related to the contribution of other factors that were not studied in this. research.

5 Conclusion

This research aims to study the communication skills training influence on students' happiness. The results indicate the effectiveness of communication skills training on increasing of students' happiness levels. T test and regression analysis results indicate that the skills training has been positively influenced happiness components. Training listening, empathy,

assertiveness and communication skills affect students' happiness. And the comparison of the results showed that the happiness of the students who were trained Listening skill, empathy, assertiveness and communication skills was more than the control group. The results of current research consistent with Taremi et al., (2006), Hafezi et al., (2010), Tabesh (2008). So far, the direct study of the relationship between communication skills and happiness has not been made yet. Some studies, have generally evaluated life skills training effect, positive on happiness. Such as, Amiri Baramkoochi (2010) that studied the effectiveness of life skills training, on reducing depression symptoms of students. The results of data analysis, showed that the training was effective in reducing symptoms, actually, life skills training, has a positive effect on happiness (as opposed to depression). Since, communication skills is an important component of life skills, somehow this research is consistent to

the researches of this type. Poyrazli et al., (2002) Those with assertiveness are not only faced with the problem they encounter stressors, but also to conduct successful in dealing with these factors had a more positive cognitive evaluation And consequently they also experience more positive emotions and feelings (Prazly et al., 2002). anxiety, depression and personality disorders. Aryndl studies and et al (1991) and Rabstvn Temple (1991) and Nissi and Shahni yeylagh (2002) showed that the behavior of assertiveness, has a direct positive relationship with self-esteem, social self-sufficiency and independent behavior and mental health. Amalie (1992) and Ramezani (1996) also assessed the effect of assertiveness training positive in the treatment of shyness and decisiveness. As in this study was obtained and as well as the results of tables 5 and 6 presenting that 21% of the positive changes in happiness in the experimental group, were related to empathy skills training. Also 10% of the variance was related to listening skills and 5% of the positive changes related to happiness is related to assertiveness skills training. Also effects of all these three variables was confirmed on happiness. The share of empathy, listening and assertiveness skills were respectively determined in first, second and in the third grade. It seems, according to the dependent variable of happiness, what makes people in a relationship be happy, is the empathy above all factors, and after that it is active and effective listening. Although assertiveness has more effective share in a successful relationship, perhaps for cultural reasons, here it failed to brought more happiness for people than empathy. Unfortunately, there is no study found that directly or indirectly is related to these findings. However, since the share of empathy skills was more than other skills in happiness increasing. It can be assumed that in Iranian culture, at least in adolescents and among girls, empathy produce more happiness, joy and pleasure of people in interpersonal relationship, than active listening or assertiveness. In most studies, emphasis is on assertiveness and often overlooked role of empathy skills; Therefore, it seems necessary that the contribution of this factor in happiness in various related fields to be investigated. In general, it can be said that communication is one of the oldest and highest human achievements, that in addition to survival functions, it can pave the way for social activities. All of us on a daily basis, experience various communication, but most normal people, are not able to make a good and effective communication. Happiness is in fact is the magnitude of positive value that a person considers for himself (Vynhuven, 1997). This concept has two aspects, one is emotional factors that indicate emotional experience of happiness and other positive emotions. and the other one is cognitive appraisal satisfaction of various areas of life, which indicates happiness and mental health (Andrews & McConnell, 1980). In fact, happy people are mostly associated with positive emotional events, by raising their skills, instead of negative events (Carr, 2004). Generally, humans evolve in such a way that some situations make them happy and others, to bring the experience of failure. Individual differences, Happiness, have been associated with personality differences difference that can be caused by genetic factors (Bass, 2000). For this reason, Eysenck considers the biological basis for Among the limitations of this study (Alipour & noubala, 2009), environmental problems and deficiencies related of education system can be mentioned that provided no specific time and place for educational-consulting activities. It is also recommended that similar studies be conducted on larger groups, and a comparison between boys and different ages also be performed to generalize results to the whole community. Considering the great share of empathy in happiness according to results of this study, it is necessary to investigate this issue in different sex, age, and other personal and social differences. In addition, it has a greater effect in trainings. And even its role in other components of positive psychology such as mental health, self-esteem, etc. should be considered Given the importance of happiness on health of individuals and society and its effects on different individual and social functions, in research projects, rejuvenating process of academic texts should be investigated for different educational levels.

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