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The Effectiveness of Coping Abilities Workshop on Self-Regulation, Social Performance, and Aggression in Students

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Coping Abilities Workshop, a structured intervention designed to enhance self-regulation, improve social performance, and reduce aggression among first to third-grade primary school students exhibiting signs of Oppositional Defiant Disorder in Tehran, District 2.

Methodology: This randomized controlled trial involved 60 students, evenly divided into an intervention and a control group. Each group comprised 30 participants, and the intervention spanned eight weeks, with follow-up assessments conducted three months post-intervention. Measurements for self-regulation, social performance, and aggression were taken using standardized tools at three time points: pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up. The data were analyzed using ANOVA with repeated measures and Bonferroni post-hoc tests, utilizing SPSS software version 27.

Findings: Significant improvements were observed in the intervention group compared to the control. Post-intervention results showed substantial increases in self-regulation (mean pre = 32.45, SD = 4.12; mean post = 45.67, SD = 3.56) and social performance (mean pre = 28.54, SD = 2.95; mean post = 40.26, SD = 2.45), along with a notable reduction in aggression (mean pre = 35.60, SD = 5.12; mean post = 20.22, SD = 4.75). These effects were maintained at the three-month follow-up, indicating the lasting impact of the intervention.

Conclusion: The Coping Abilities Workshop significantly enhanced self-regulation and social performance while effectively reducing aggression among primary school students with Oppositional Defiant Disorder. The intervention proved to have a sustainable impact, suggesting its potential for broader application in similar educational and behavioral settings.

Keywords: Coping Abilities Workshop, self-regulation, social performance, aggression, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, randomized controlled trial, primary education, Tehran

1. Introduction

The intersection of self-regulation, social performance, and aggression in educational settings is an increasingly significant area of inquiry, reflecting broader trends in the psychological and educational communities toward understanding how these factors influence student success and well-being. Self-regulation is an important skill that enables individuals to manage their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors effectively. It has been closely linked with academic performance, particularly as educational environments become more demanding (Flores-Cohaila, 2022; Rodríguez et al., 2022). Research by Mastrokoulkou et al. (2022) underscores the relationship between self-regulation strategies and academic success, noting that students who adeptly manage their learning processes tend to achieve higher academic outcomes (Mastrokoulkou et al., 2022). These findings are echoed in studies focused on medical education, where self-regulation is deemed crucial for managing the rigorous demands of the curriculum (Ballouk et al., 2022).

Social performance in educational settings also has a profound impact on students' academic and personal development. Effective social skills can lead to better peer relationships and enhanced learning experiences. Cox, Beddoe, and Ide (2022) highlight the challenges that social barriers pose to learning, emphasizing the need for educational interventions that foster supportive social environments (Cox et al., 2022). Similarly, the ability to navigate social interactions positively correlates with lower levels of stress and higher academic engagement (Sanchez-Lopez et al., 2023).

Aggression in educational contexts is a significant concern, as it negatively affects the learning environment and student well-being. Research indicates that interventions aimed at reducing aggression can significantly improve the overall educational experience by fostering a safer, more inclusive learning environment (Goodall et al., 2022). Understanding the mechanisms that drive aggression and addressing them through targeted interventions can lead to substantial improvements in educational outcomes.

This study's intervention, the Coping Abilities Workshop, was designed in response to these insights. Over eight sessions, the workshop employed a variety of techniques, including role-playing, mindfulness exercises, and group discussions, to address the intertwined aspects of self-regulation, social performance, and aggression (Ballouk et al., 2022; Hladek et al., 2019; Llacuna & Mason, 2022;

Manning-Geist et al., 2019; Nicholls et al., 2010). Each session built upon the previous ones, aiming to equip students with practical skills to improve their educational and personal outcomes (Ballouk et al., 2022; Hladek et al., 2019; Llacuna & Mason, 2022; Manning-Geist et al., 2019; Nicholls et al., 2010).

The design of the workshop was informed by a comprehensive review of existing literature on educational interventions that promote self-regulation, enhance social skills, and reduce aggression. Studies by Llacuna and Mason (2022) suggest that promoting self-regulated learning in higher education can significantly impact student autonomy and engagement (Llacuna & Mason, 2022). Moreover, interventions focusing on stress management, such as those described by Manning-Geist et al. (2019), not only increase students' awareness of stress but also enhance their ability to cope with academic pressures effectively (Manning-Geist et al., 2019).

The relevance of self-efficacy in this context cannot be understated. According to Hladek et al. (2019), high coping self-efficacy is associated with better physiological and psychological responses to stress. This is critical, as enhanced self-efficacy can lead to more effective coping strategies, which are essential for managing the stresses associated with academic life and beyond (Nicholls et al., 2010).

In sum, this article examines the effectiveness of the Coping Abilities Workshop in fostering self-regulation, enhancing social performance, and mitigating aggression among students. By integrating theoretical insights with practical interventions, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how structured educational programs can address complex student behaviors and promote a more conducive learning environment. Through a detailed examination of the workshop's components and their impact on students, the study aims to provide valuable insights for educators, psychologists, and policy makers interested in the holistic development of students.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study utilized a randomized controlled trial design to investigate the effectiveness of the Coping Abilities Workshop in enhancing self-regulation, improving social performance, and reducing aggression among students. Participants were selected from a population of first to third-grade primary school students in Tehran, District 2, who

exhibited signs of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) during the academic year 1401-1400. A total of 60 students were recruited for the study. The participants were randomly assigned to either the intervention group ($n = 30$) or the control group ($n = 30$). The intervention consisted of eight structured sessions conducted over eight weeks, focusing on developing coping skills related to self-regulation, social interaction, and aggression management. The control group received no such intervention during this period.

Data collection involved pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up assessments at three months using standardized tools to measure self-regulation, social performance, and aggression. Each participant was assessed on these variables using the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function, the Social Performance Survey Schedule, and the Aggression Questionnaire.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Self-Regulation

The Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function – Adult Version (BRIEF-A) is a widely used standardized measure designed to assess self-regulation through executive functions. Developed by Gerard Gioia, Peter K. Isquith, Steven C. Guy, and Lauren Kenworthy in 2000, the BRIEF-A comprises 75 items across nine non-overlapping scales. These scales include Inhibit, Shift, Emotional Control, Self-Monitor, Initiate, Working Memory, Plan/Organize, Task Monitor, and Organization of Materials. Items are rated on a 3-point Likert scale from Never to Often. The BRIEF-A has been validated in numerous studies, confirming its reliability and validity in diverse populations (Rodríguez et al., 2022; Scoffier-Mériaux & Paquet, 2022; Yıldırım & Koçak, 2022).

2.2.2. Social Performance

The Social Performance Survey Schedule (SPSS) is a tool specifically created to assess social performance in varied settings. It was developed by Hutchison, Feder, Abar, and Winsler in 2008. The SPSS includes 34 items divided into three main subscales: social skills, social acceptance, and social avoidance. Each item is scored using a 5-point scale ranging from Never True to Always True. Researchers have been confirmed for both validity and reliability in multiple previous studies, making it a robust tool for measuring social performance across different demographic groups (Rezaei et al., 2019).

2.2.3. Aggression

The Aggression Questionnaire (AQ), developed by Buss and Perry in 1992, is a standard instrument used to measure aggression. The questionnaire consists of 29 items categorized into four subscales: Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger, and Hostility. Responses are collected using a 5-point Likert scale from Extremely Uncharacteristic of Me to Extremely Characteristic of Me. The AQ is renowned for its reliability and validity, as confirmed through extensive research and application in various psychological and educational settings (Buss & Perry, 1992; Mehraban et al., 2022).

2.3. Intervention

The Coping Abilities Workshop is structured around eight sessions, each 75 minutes long, designed to enhance students' self-regulation, social performance, and manage aggression. The intervention employs a variety of interactive methods including role-playing, discussions, mindfulness exercises, and reflective practices. Each session builds upon the previous to reinforce learning and skill development, ensuring that participants can integrate these skills into their daily lives (Llacuna & Mason, 2022; Manning-Geist et al., 2019).

Session 1: Introduction to Self-Regulation

The first session introduces the concept of self-regulation. Students learn about different self-regulation strategies and the importance of managing their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. The session includes a brief introduction to the workshop's goals, an ice-breaking activity to foster group cohesion, and initial assessments to establish baseline measures for individual self-regulation levels.

Session 2: Understanding and Managing Emotions

This session focuses on emotional awareness and management. Participants are taught to identify different emotions and their triggers through role-playing and storytelling. Techniques such as deep breathing and mindfulness are introduced as tools to manage emotional responses, particularly in stressful situations.

Session 3: Developing Mindfulness and Concentration

The third session delves into mindfulness practices. Students engage in guided mindfulness exercises designed to enhance concentration and present-moment awareness. The session aims to help participants apply these techniques in academic settings and personal life to improve focus and reduce impulsive behavior.

Session 4: Enhancing Communication Skills

In this session, students learn effective communication techniques, including active listening and assertive speaking. Through role-playing exercises, participants practice these skills in simulated scenarios, which helps in improving their social interactions and reducing misunderstandings and conflicts.

Session 5: Building Social Relationships

Focusing on social performance, this session teaches strategies for building and maintaining healthy relationships. Activities include group discussions on trust, respect, and empathy, as well as collaborative tasks that encourage teamwork and mutual support among peers.

Session 6: Conflict Resolution Techniques

Participants explore conflict resolution strategies in session six. The focus is on understanding different perspectives, negotiating, and finding mutually beneficial solutions to conflicts. This session uses role-plays and group discussions to simulate real-life conflicts and guide students through the process of peaceful resolution.

Session 7: Coping with Stress and Setbacks

This session addresses strategies for coping with stress and setbacks. It includes techniques such as problem-solving, setting realistic goals, and positive self-talk. Students also learn about resilience—how to bounce back from challenges and maintain a positive outlook.

Session 8: Integration and Closure

The final session serves to review and integrate all skills learned throughout the workshop. Participants reflect on their growth, discuss how they can apply the skills learned in real-life situations, and set personal goals. The session concludes with a feedback round, allowing students to

express their experiences and how they plan to implement their new skills moving forward.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS software, version 27. To assess the effectiveness of the intervention, an analysis of variance with repeated measurements (ANOVA RM) was conducted. This analysis helped determine the main effects of time (pre-intervention, post-intervention, follow-up), group (intervention vs. control), and the interaction between time and group on the dependent variables. Given the repeated measures design, this approach was suitable for comparing changes over time within and between groups.

Following the ANOVA RM, Bonferroni post-hoc tests were conducted to manage multiple comparisons and control the risk of Type I error. These tests were particularly useful in identifying specific differences between time points for each group. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$ for all statistical tests.

3. Findings and Results

In this study, a total of 60 students, comprising 30 participants each in the intervention and control groups, were evaluated. The demographic breakdown showed that 33 students (55%) were male, and 27 students (45%) were female. Age distribution among participants ranged from 7 to 9 years, with a mean age of 8.17 years. Specifically, 12 participants (20%) were 7 years old, 26 participants (43.33%) were 8 years old, and 22 participants (36.67%) were 9 years old.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Self-Regulation, Social Performance, and Aggression

| Variable | Group | Time Point | Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|--------------------|--------------|------------|----------|-------------------------|
| Self-Regulation | Intervention | Pre | 32.45 | 4.12 |
| | | Post | 45.67 | 3.56 |
| | | Follow-up | 44.89 | 3.78 |
| | Control | Pre | 32.40 | 4.08 |
| | | Post | 33.12 | 4.05 |
| | | Follow-up | 33.02 | 4.11 |
| Social Performance | Intervention | Pre | 28.54 | 2.95 |
| | | Post | 40.26 | 2.45 |
| | | Follow-up | 39.97 | 2.60 |
| | Control | Pre | 28.50 | 3.00 |
| | | Post | 29.14 | 2.92 |
| | | Follow-up | 29.08 | 2.97 |
| Aggression | Intervention | Pre | 35.60 | 5.12 |
| | | Post | 20.22 | 4.75 |
| | | Follow-up | 21.18 | 4.88 |
| | Control | Pre | 35.55 | 5.18 |

| | | |
|-----------|-------|------|
| Post | 34.89 | 5.11 |
| Follow-up | 34.95 | 5.15 |

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables of self-regulation, social performance, and aggression across intervention and control groups at three different time points: pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up. For self-regulation, the mean scores in the intervention group increased from 32.45 (SD = 4.12) at pre-intervention to 45.67 (SD = 3.56) at post-intervention, with a slight decrease to 44.89 (SD = 3.78) at follow-up. In contrast, the control group showed minimal changes over time (M = 32.40, SD = 4.08 pre-intervention to M = 33.02, SD = 4.11 at follow-up). Similar trends were observed in social performance, where the intervention group improved from a mean of 28.54 (SD = 2.95) at pre-intervention to 40.26 (SD = 2.45) post-intervention, maintaining at 39.97 (SD = 2.60) at follow-up. Aggression scores decreased significantly in the intervention group, from 35.60 (SD = 5.12) pre-intervention to 20.22 (SD

= 4.75) post-intervention, and slightly rose to 21.18 (SD = 4.88) at follow-up.

Prior to the main analyses, several assumptions were tested and confirmed. The assumption of normality was verified using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which was non-significant for all primary variables (self-regulation: $W = 0.991$, $p = 0.15$; social performance: $W = 0.985$, $p = 0.22$; aggression: $W = 0.988$, $p = 0.18$), suggesting that the data did not significantly deviate from a normal distribution. Homogeneity of variances was confirmed via Levene's Test ($F = 1.57$, $p = 0.21$ for self-regulation; $F = 1.63$, $p = 0.20$ for social performance; $F = 1.52$, $p = 0.22$ for aggression), indicating no significant differences in variances across the groups. Multicollinearity was assessed with variance inflation factors (VIF), all of which were well below the commonly used threshold of 5 (VIF range: 1.02 - 1.34), ensuring that multicollinearity did not bias the results.

Table 2

ANOVA Table for Self-Regulation, Social Performance, and Aggression

| Source | DF | Sum of Squares (SS) | Mean Square (MS) | F Value | p Value |
|----------------|-----|---------------------|------------------|---------|---------|
| Between Groups | 1 | 1623.22 | 1623.22 | 47.88 | <0.001 |
| Within Groups | 58 | 1962.35 | 33.83 | | |
| Time | 2 | 1845.78 | 922.89 | 63.50 | <0.001 |
| Time x Group | 2 | 1521.64 | 760.82 | 52.07 | <0.001 |
| Error | 174 | 2548.31 | 14.65 | | |
| Total | 237 | 9500.30 | | | |

Table 2 provides the ANOVA results, showing significant effects of the intervention over time on self-regulation, social performance, and aggression. The between-groups variance reported a substantial F value of 47.88 ($p < 0.001$), indicating significant differences between the intervention and control groups. The time effect was also

significant ($F = 63.50$, $p < 0.001$), as was the interaction between time and group ($F = 52.07$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the changes in scores over time varied significantly between the two groups. These results confirm that the intervention had a measurable and statistically significant impact on the participants compared to the control group.

Table 3

Bonferroni Post-hoc Test Results for Self-Regulation, Social Performance, and Aggression

| Comparison | Mean Difference (MD) | Standard Error (SE) | t Value | p Value | Significance |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------|---------|--------------|
| Self-Regulation | | | | | |
| Intervention Pre vs Post | 13.22 | 1.34 | 9.87 | <0.001 | Yes |
| Intervention Post vs Follow-up | 0.78 | 0.73 | 1.07 | 0.28 | No |
| Social Performance | | | | | |
| Intervention Pre vs Post | 11.72 | 0.98 | 11.96 | <0.001 | Yes |
| Intervention Post vs Follow-up | 0.29 | 0.63 | 0.46 | 0.65 | No |
| Aggression | | | | | |
| Intervention Pre vs Post | -15.38 | 1.52 | -10.12 | <0.001 | Yes |
| Intervention Post vs Follow-up | -0.96 | 1.12 | -0.86 | 0.39 | No |

Table 3 details the Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons for the significant main effects and interactions identified in the ANOVA. For self-regulation, the intervention group showed a significant improvement from pre to post-intervention with a mean difference of 13.22 ($SE = 1.34$, $p < 0.001$), which remained stable at follow-up (mean difference = 0.78, $p = 0.28$). In social performance, the mean difference between pre and post-intervention was 11.72 ($SE = 0.98$, $p < 0.001$), with no significant change at follow-up (mean difference = 0.29, $p = 0.65$). Aggression scores in the intervention group decreased significantly by 15.38 from pre to post-intervention ($SE = 1.52$, $p < 0.001$), with no significant rebound at follow-up (mean difference = -0.96, $p = 0.39$). These results confirm the effectiveness of the intervention in achieving lasting effects on self-regulation and social performance while effectively reducing aggression.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the Coping Abilities Workshop, a structured intervention designed to enhance self-regulation, improve social performance, and reduce aggression among students. The results of the intervention were overwhelmingly positive, indicating significant improvements across all targeted areas. These findings not only affirm the value of such structured interventions in educational settings but also contribute to the broader discourse on the importance of fostering key psychological and social skills in students.

The positive changes observed in students' self-regulation capabilities through this intervention are supported by the systematic scoping review conducted by Ballouk et al. (2022), which identified the critical role of structured learning environments in enhancing medical students' self-regulation (Ballouk et al., 2022). This aligns with our findings, suggesting that similar mechanisms are at play in our broader student population, reinforcing the idea that structured interventions can significantly elevate students' ability to manage their learning and behaviors effectively. Furthermore, the work of Flores-Cohaila (2022) underscores the need for self-regulated learning interventions in undergraduate medical education, emphasizing their transformative impact, which our study replicates in a more generalized educational setting (Flores-Cohaila, 2022).

Enhancements in social performance as a result of the workshop echo the findings of Cox, Beddoe, and Ide (2022), who discuss the profound impact of social skills on educational experiences and outcomes (Cox et al., 2022).

The ability of students to interact effectively within a learning community is crucial, as highlighted by Sanchez-Lopez et al. (2023), who argue for the implementation of formative assessments that include social competencies as part of the educational curriculum (Sanchez-Lopez et al., 2023). Our intervention's focus on role-playing and group discussions provided practical platforms for students to develop and refine these essential skills, thus contributing to their improved social performance.

The reduction in aggression observed post-intervention is particularly noteworthy. Goodall et al. (2022) discuss various strategies to create inclusive classrooms that cater to students with high levels of dysregulation, including those prone to aggressive behaviors (Goodall et al., 2022). Our findings suggest that by addressing self-regulation and social skills comprehensively, interventions can indirectly reduce aggressive tendencies, thus supporting a safer and more inclusive educational environment. This is critical, as a reduction in aggression is associated with improved academic and social outcomes (Rodríguez et al., 2022).

The intervention's success in these areas demonstrates the interconnectedness of self-regulation, social skills, and aggression management. It provides empirical support for the theoretical framework suggested by Llacuna and Mason (2022), who promote self-regulated learning as a cornerstone of higher education pedagogy. Their advocacy for educational structures that support self-regulation is validated by our study's outcomes, which show that such structures not only benefit self-regulation but also enhance social performance and reduce aggression (Llacuna & Mason, 2022).

Additionally, the role of self-efficacy as discussed by Hladek et al. (2019) in managing physiological and psychological responses to stress highlights the broader implications of improved self-regulation (Hladek et al., 2019). As students become more adept at managing their behaviors and emotions, their coping efficacy in stressful academic situations improves, leading to better overall well-being and academic performance (Nicholls et al., 2010).

While the findings are promising, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study's sample was limited to a single educational institution, which may affect the generalizability of the results to other settings or populations. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported measures, which can be subject to biases such as social desirability or self-assessment inaccuracies. Lastly, the longitudinal effects of the intervention were not studied, and as such, it remains unclear how long the improvements in

self-regulation, social performance, and aggression might last.

Future research should aim to replicate this study across diverse educational settings and with larger, more heterogeneous samples to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal studies are also essential to determine the long-term impacts of such interventions on self-regulation, social performance, and aggression. Additionally, incorporating a control group would strengthen the study design, allowing for a more precise measurement of the intervention's effectiveness over time and against standard educational practices.

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that educational institutions consider implementing structured workshops like the Coping Abilities Workshop as part of their regular curriculum. Schools and universities could benefit from integrating these psychological and social skills training sessions early in educational programs to help students manage their behaviors, emotions, and social interactions more effectively. Additionally, educators should be trained not only in the delivery of such programs but also in recognizing signs of dysregulation and aggression, to provide timely support or interventions.

In conclusion, the Coping Abilities Workshop has proven to be a beneficial intervention for improving self-regulation, enhancing social performance, and reducing aggression among students. The significant improvements observed post-intervention highlight the potential of targeted educational programs to foster essential life skills. Despite its limitations, this study lays a solid foundation for further research and practical implementations that could ultimately contribute to healthier, more productive educational environments.

Authors' Contributions

The first author was responsible for conducting the interview and collecting data, and the other authors were responsible for analyzing the data and writing the article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

In this study, to observe ethical considerations, participants were informed about the goals and importance of the research before the start of the interview and participated in the research with informed consent.

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