

## The Effectiveness of Life Skills Training on individual-social adjustment and Psychological capital in high school students

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** The purpose of this study was investigating the effectiveness of life skills training on personal-social adjustment and psychological capital of high school students in Tehran during 2018. **Methodology:** The method used in this study was applied in terms of purpose and in terms of data collection, a quasi-experimental design with pretest-posttest design with control group and random sampling. The statistical population consisted of all female secondary school students in 2018. Using random sampling, 30 students in both experimental and control groups (15 subjects) and control (15 subjects) were considered as the sample size. The experimental group received 8 life skills training sessions, and the control group did not receive any treatment. In order to collect information, two questionnaires, personal-social adjustment (California, 1953) and McGee's Psychological Capital questionnaires (2011) were used. In order to determine the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used and the coefficient for each questionnaire was higher than 0.7. Content validity was also used to assess the validity of the questionnaire, which was approved by the relevant experts. Data analysis was performed using SPSS software in two sections: descriptive and inferential parts (covariance analysis). **Findings:** The result showed that life skills training increased personal and social compatibility of students. Based on the results of the findings, life skills training increased the psychological capital and its components among students ( $P > 0/01$ ). **Conclusion:** Therefore, it seems that life skills training can enhance students' adaptation and provide effective techniques for increasing psychological capital.

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## 1. Introduction

Educational challenges are sources of mental pressures for students and endanger their health; these challenges sometimes affect their learning abilities (Chen, 2018). This period is full of transformations for teenagers regarding social relations and cognitive capacities. Accordingly, compatibility with new conditions for positive confronting with these changes has been considered (Stephanin, Camillo & Cabana, 2017). Human relations are considered for meeting fundamental needs of human being and having positive and healthy relations with others is the key for human being's growth and evolution. The relations form the individual's behavior in a social context and at the same time, they play significant role in unique personality, identity and self-concept. This issue is realized as compatibility of the individual with the environment and society (Gollob, 2018).

In the study of Sebjan and Tominc (2015) it was observed that education with solution based strategy has positive effect on improving negative behavior of teenagers and young people and it has increased the social compatibility meaningfully. Salem and Helmi (2016) consider compatibility as constant process in which the social learning experience of the individual causes mental needs in him/her and provides abilities and skill by which we can meet the needs.

Lou et al (2008), in a study found that training life skills increases self-efficiency, decreases dangerous behaviors, increases compatibility and understanding risks of pregnancy, better understanding sexual contagious diseases and AIDS in research experiment groups. Also Barimani et al (2018) in their study found that success plan at school has considerable effect on social compatibility of students, so theoretically, the evolution of learning ability is important. Kamarzarin and Hosseini (2015), equal the social compatibility with social skill. From their viewpoint, social ability is the capability of reciprocal relation with others in special social situations acceptable and valuable in the society. On the other hand, positive psychology studies human's abilities and considers mental health improving factors and enables people to envisage the potential threatening events less intimidating or control their reactions to these kinds of events (Goldsmith, Darity, Veum, 2018).

"Psychological capital" emanates from "positive psychology" proposed in postmodernism (Van Wyk, 2013). Psychological capital includes strongpoints and positive aspects of human behavior (Cavus and Gokcen, 2015). Lotanz considers positivism as regarding and boosting individuals' capabilities instead of managing their weak points (You, 2016). Psychological capital focuses on tasks that lead to people's welfare, raising positive individuals, boosting societies and social equality. Positive psychologists have optimistic and hopeful perspective toward human nature; as they believe in developing capabilities, human evolution and boosting human capacities (Bitmis and Ergeneli, 2015). Therefore, psychological capital is a synthetic and conjunct element including four cognitive parts i.e. optimism, tolerability, hope and self-efficiency (Lee and Chu, 2016). Optimism is an interpretive style that relates positive events to constant, personal and comprehensive reasons and assigns negative events to external, cotemporary reasons and special conditions (Newman, Nielson, Smith and Hirst, 2018).

Tolerability is determined as a class of events with pattern of positive compatibility in significant risks and problems (Yazdanbakhsh, Moradi and Bastami, 2018). Hopefulness is a positive motivational situation based on emotional response as dynamic success or strategy success (Savadkoochi and Motamedi, 2017) and finally self-efficiency, individual's belief in his/her abilities for mobilizing motivation and cognitive resources and required strategies for implementing determined successes. In fact, these elements give meaning to an individual's life in an interactive and evaluative process, continue the individual's attempt for changing stressful situations prepare him/her for entering practical arena and guarantee his/her perseverance in realizing objectives (Wu and Chen, 2018).

One of the applications of psychology in contemporary age is using psychological principles in finding modern methods of life and preventing social, occupational, family and personal problems. Training

programs of life skills are among applications of psychology in different personal and social arenas hold by the goal of improving physical and mental health level, preventing mental, physical and social harms. These skills increase the individuals' ability in effective treatment of life conditions along with stress and anxiety and acts as a primarily preventive factor (Wellford, 2005). Life skills are a set of abilities that increase compatibility, positive and efficient behavior of individual and as a result the individual can accept his social role responsibilities without harming himself/herself and effectively faces daily challenges and problems (Khalsari et al, 2019).

Fata et al (2006) considered life skills as an approach based on changing or formulating behavior by which the balance among knowledge, perspective and skill is considered. Life skills area set of mental abilities that provide positive compatible situation and enable the individual to accept his social responsibilities without harming himself/herself and s/he can confront expectations, daily problems and official and work busy time (Matin and Ahmadi, 1398). In fact, the goal of life skill trainings is increasing social mental abilities and finally preventing harmful behaviors in health and upgrading mental health of individuals (Moradi, Baseri and Moaen Julia, 2018).

Accordingly, we can refer to these researches: Liu, Yan, Lee and Mays (2016), in a study titled, "examination of effectiveness of communicative skills on behavior and learning problems of students" found that training social and communicative skills are effective in learning and behavioral problems and those trained by social, communicative and self-expression skills gained better success from the educational progress aspect. Albertyn et al (2011) in a study entitled, "examination of effectiveness of training life skills on self-confidence" found that training life skills to people help them have more flexibility against changes, gai higher self-confidence and therefore show higher ability in controlling problems. Asrafi and Monjezi (2013) in a study entitled "examination of effectiveness of training communicative skills on aggression level of high school female students" found that training communicative skills affects decreasing aggressive behaviors of students.

Khalatbari and Azzadeh (2011) in a study titled, "comparison of the effect of life skills curriculum and treatment strategies against mental pressure on mental health of girls" found that training life skills and treatment strategies against mental pressure meaningfully increases mental health of students. Adolescent period is a critical growth step that can have different social harms. So using training interventions dealing with enabling people's fundamental skills has significant importance. On the hand, life skills are essential needs of all people in society for proper treatment with different life conditions. The importance of this examination emanates from the significance of training life skills at schools that can be deduced based on findings and researchers' ideas. Schools play an important role in prevention and mental health of children, because of that, in recent years; schools are led by preventive plans. These kinds of activities are interventions that enable teenagers in dealing with life skills like effective treatment of mental pressures, social compatibilities, problem solving, controlling anger and decision-making (Ryan and Shin, 2014). Okech (2015) believes that life skill approach provides organized framework for consulting centers and mental health and is a main educational element for elementary and high schools. So, according to the importance of life school training in social-individual compatibility and psychological capital of students, the researcher examines this issue that "if the training of life skills affects social-individual compatibility and psychological capital of students in Tehran?"

## 2. Methodology

This study was semi-experimental and uses pre-test and post-test plan with control group. The research Population all high school female students (district 11 of Tehran) in educational year 2018. The sample size was chosen using step clustering sampling with 86 students that answered social-individual compatibility questionnaire and psychological capital. For choosing the subjects, at first among the schools of district 11,

four schools were randomly selected and from each school two classes and from each class 15 subjects were chosen. Then, on the basis of questionnaire scores, 30 subjects got scores lower than cut point and were chosen as sample. Subjects were divided into two groups of experimental and control randomly. The experimental group received 8 ninety-minute sessions of training life skills of Fata and Motabi (2006), but the control group received no education. The summary of sessions for training life skills has been proposed in table 1. The research tools included social individual compatibility of California (1953) and psychological capital of Mac Gee (2011). The social individual compatibility of California (1953): this scale was prepared in 1953 by Clark et al for measuring different life compatibilities having two extremes of personal compatibility and social compatibility. This questionnaire has 180 questions and 12 sub-scales that half of them are designed for personal compatibility and other has been designed for measuring social compatibility. Personal compatibility elements include 6 specified scores related to the factors of self-confidence, understanding your own value, personal freedom, dependency feeling, rejected tendencies, nerve symptoms and by summing up the total of this part, one score is obtained as personal compatibility. In social compatibility, 6 specified scores related to factors of social frames, social skills, anti-society interests, family relations, school relations, social relations and by summing up the total of this part, one score is obtained as social compatibility.

For consistency of California personality test, in preliminary study using Cronbach alpha for personal compatibility the efficient of 0/87 and for social compatibility the efficient of 0/85 was obtained. Qartapeh et al (2015) reported validity of California personality test in personal compatibility, social compatibility and total score was correlated by individual's relations with others in the meaningful situations. Mac Gee psychological capital questionnaire (2011) (PCQ) will be used for measuring psychological capital based on 26 item questionnaire by Mac Gee (2011, reported by Golparvar, Jafari, Javadian, 2013) with four sub-scales of self-efficiency, hopefulness, tolerability and optimism. The response scale used in this research is for this six scale questionnaire (totally disagree-1 to totally disagree=6).

Mac Gee (2011, reported by Golparvar et al 2013) examined the validity and reliability of this questionnaire by twenty-five and twelve question forms of psychological capital and presented evidence for their validity and reliability. For instance, Mac Gee (2011) reported evidence of real time validity of questionnaire with other versions of psychological capital questionnaire, between psychological capitals with positive meaningful correlation self-efficiency between 0.48 to 0.54, positive meaningful correlation between .40 to .61, positive meaningful correlation of tolerability between .48 to .55 and positive meaningful correlation of optimism between .47 to .50. The nominal validity of this questionnaire was examined and confirmed (Golparvar et al 2013). In study by Golparvar et al 1392 the discovering factor analysis with varimax circle on 26 questions of the questionnaire led to four mentioned factors in the main questionnaire and Cronbach Alpha for self-efficiency, hopefulness, tolerability and optimism were respectively .91, .89, .83 and .70.

**Table 1.** The summary of training life skills

Sessions	Subject	Educational content
First	Ways to communicate effectively	Introduction, first communication, familiarity with principles, regulations and objectives of sessions, the concept of communication, the importance of communication, speech and non-speech acts of communication, active listening, asking and its objectives, closed and open question, giving feedback, the barriers of effective communication, healthy and unhealthy styles of communication.
Second	Interpersonal relations skill	The concepts of effective interpersonal relations, knowing self, knowing others, elements of amicable relations, trust, sympathy and acceptance, summary, my

		message ad your message, friction solving styles, friction solving rules, training brave behavior techniques.
Third	Self-awareness and sympathy	The concept of self-awareness, self-awareness benefits, the concept of self-esteem and tolerability, self-assessment skills, detecting one's own weak points and strong points, understanding others' life conditions, improving social relations, improving social relations and increasing supportive behaviors, respecting others and environment.
Fourth	Fighting with negative mood	The concept of depression, depression symptoms, the relationship among thoughts, feeling and behavior, detecting negative thoughts, examining cognitive errors, dealing with negative thoughts, doubts, reassessment, testing hypotheses
Fifth	Stress management	Stress concept, definition and process of management, treatment strategies for stress, calming, time management, sport, problem solving, brave behavior, dealing with irrational thoughts, financial management, and upgrading stress treatment, preparing oneself for stress management.
Sixth	Problem solving skill	Problem solving concept, various ways for dealing with problems and excitements, compatible and incompatible treatments, definition and formulating the problem, producing different solutions, examining advantages and disadvantages of every solution, using solution, assessment and reviewing it.
Seventh	Emotion control	Detecting and naming one's own emotions, emotion control, detecting and naming others' emotions, maintaining communication and interpersonal relations and motivation for obtaining goals.
Eighth	Decision making	Contributing effective dealing with life problems, requiring information and considering social effects on decision making.

The analysis of obtained information from questionnaires by 19SPSS software were used in two parts including average, standard deviation and deduction regarding parametric statistic presuppositions (variance assimilation and normal distribution of data) and multi-variance covariance analysis was used for testing research objective.

### 3. Findings

The descriptive information for the scale of social and individual compatibility and psychological capital have been proposed in table 2 as pre-test and post-test in experimental and control groups.

**Table 2.** The descriptive information for psychological capital on the basis of measuring step in groups

Variable	Statistical factors		Pre-test	Post-test
Personal compatibility	Experiment group	Average	05/50	55
		Standard deviation	3/8	8/7
	Control group	Average	1/52	2/53
		Standard deviation	2/6	4/7
Social compatibility	Experiment group	Average	15/44	85/48
		Standard deviation	9/5	2/7
	Control group	Average	3/46	7/45
		Standard deviation	3/9	2/8
Psychological Capital	Experiment group	Average	83.10	98.20
		Standard deviation	7.15	8.68
	Control group	Average	80.10	80.10
		Standard deviation	6.85	9.68
Self-efficiency	Experiment group	Average	19.10	23.20
		Standard deviation	2.94	2.78
	Control group	Average	18.60	18.80
		Standard deviation	3.02	3.61
Hopefulness	Experiment group	Average	18.70	23.40
		Standard deviation	2.36	3.73
	Control group	Average	18.50	19.00
		Standard deviation	3.10	3.43
Tolerability	Experiment group	Average	23.60	27.50
		Standard deviation	2.11	4.81
	Control group	Average	23.70	23.60
		Standard deviation	3.63	4.73
Optimism	Experiment group	Average	21.70	24.10
		Standard deviation	3.39	3.21
	Control group	Average	19.30	18.70
		Standard deviation	3.85	2.92

We can see that the average of experiment group in the post-test stage has been increased relative to the pre-test. According to the results in table 2, we can deduce that training life skills increases personal and social compatibilities and psychological capital among students. In this section, according to the score variance equality and normal distribution of scores and equal size of experimental group and control group, for the meaningful difference observed between experimental group and control group in post-test and pre-test and controlling the pre-test score effects.

**Table 3.** F. Levine test for examination of variance homogeneity in control and experiment group

Statistical index/scale	Df1	Df2	F	Sig
Social-personal compatibility	1	38	0.88	.35
Psychological capital	1	38	0.02	0.98

As it can be observed, the assumption of equality for all variables is right ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 4.** One-way covariance analysis between subjects for examination of effect of life skills in compatibility (personal and social)

Change source	Variable	Square sum	Freedom rate	Square average	F	Meaningful level	Effect size
Group	Personal compatibility	8/143	1	8/143	9/7	01/0	180/0
	Social compatibility	9/181	1	9/181	9/13	01/0	279/0
Error	Personal compatibility	8/656	24	2/18			
	Social compatibility	7/470	24	07/13			
Total	Personal compatibility	119397	30				
	Social compatibility	93120	30				

The results of table 4 indicates that even by accounting Bonferroni alpha (0/025) in each of two elements, “personal compatibility” and “social compatibility”, there was meaningful difference between groups; so it can be concluded that: “training life skills affects compatibility of students (personal and social)”. The highest effect is also related to social compatibility (0/279), i.e. about 27/9 percent of variance “social compatibility” of subjects depended on training life skills. This number was 18 percent in “personal compatibility”.

**Table 5.** One-way covariance analysis between subjects for examination of effect of life skills in psychological capital

Change source	Variable	Square sum	Freedom rate	Square average	F	Meaningful level	Effect size
Group	Hope	5/33	1	5/33	5/8	01/0	264/0
	Optimism	4/30	1	4/30	04/8	01/0	251/0
	Tolerability	1/57	1	1/57	5/15	01/0	392/0
	Self-efficiency	3/27	1	3/27	5/7	012/0	237/0
Error	Hope	8/87	24	66/3			
	Optimism	7/90	24	7/90			
	Tolerability	8/88	24	8/88			
	Self-efficiency	9/87	24	9/87			
Total	Hope	1917	30				
	Optimism	1758	30				
	Tolerability	1407	30				
	Self-efficiency	648	30				

On the basis of information in table 5, by accounting Bonferroni alpha (0/0125) in elements of “hope”, “optimism”, “tolerability” and “self-efficiency” there was meaningful difference between groups. According to this table, the average of these four elements in control group students received life skill training, has increased meaningfully. So it can be said that training life skills affects elements of “hope”, “optimism”, “tolerability” and “self-efficiency” among students. The effect size indicated that about 19.7 percent of

variance “hope”, 25.1 percent of variance “optimism”, 39.2 percent of variance “tolerability” and 23.7 percent of “self-efficiency” of subjects assigned to groups were detectable.

#### 4. Discussion

The objective of this research is study of effectiveness of life skills training on personal-social compatibility and psychological capital among female students. These findings are compatible with findings of Moradi et al (2018), Ashrafi and Monzeji (2013), Albertin et al (2011). The research findings indicated that training life skills affects personal-social compatibility. In other words, students trained with life skills such as effective techniques of controlling stress and life pressures, have higher ability in decision making and problem solving, interpersonal relations, self-awareness and higher compatibility (Okech, 2015).

In detecting the effectiveness of training life skills on students in this study, it can be said that training life skills on one hand, causes that individual know themselves better, detect their weak and strong points and rectify their weak points and improve their strong points. Becoming aware of strong points and weak points helps the person to use more efficient and suitable methods in dealing with problems and increase his/her compatibility. On the other hand, group training can have positive effect on reducing mental stress, as members feel that other also have the same problems and use each other's experience in reducing stress and increasing self-esteem. Also training muscle relaxation is a part of life skill training as stress is inherent in muscular tension and is considered effective factor in increasing personal and social compatibility of students. It can also be said that life skill training along with correct decision making and problem solving method decreases inability in decision making and confronting with daily life problems and nurtures creative and critical thinking as requirement to obtaining suitable solutions for stressful issues. Some strategies are: stress management (knowing stress level and reasons for that), structuring (data gathering about stressful factors, asking about supportive resources, and designing how to use it) and social skills (including self-expression and sincerity) (Matin and Ahmadi, 2019).

During life skills training, these skills are taught and individual tries to reduce or remove the displeasing consequences of stress and control stressful factors and use problem based strategies in stressful situations and increase is/her personal and social compatibility. Also this program includes teaching positive social behaviors, creating internal control position, increasing bravery, positive self-thoughts, suitable social speech or non-speech skills, ways of controlling nervous stress, treatment ways dealing with stressful situations and muscular relaxation that cause the person gain the required skill for dealing with stressful factors. Also results indicated that training life skills increases the psychological capital of students. In sum, the findings of current research is compatible with similar papers and this indicates that training life skills contributes upgrading compatibility among children and teenagers and is considered as the most fundamental preventive programs at primarily level. The current research is compatible with findings of Rio et al (2016), Ryan and Shin (2014), Khaksari et al (2019). These trainings contribute that people know their feelings well, assess them carefully, find the rational and irrational thoughts related to them, and finally it becomes clear for them that efficient and inefficient thoughts guide their positive and negative emotions. When the subjects know that their imaginations penetrate positive and negative emotions and feelings, they control them with trained skills and gain the psychological capital. Psychological capital and its elements (tolerability, self-efficiency, hopefulness, optimism) reflect useful interaction of a person with others especially friends and peers. Training life skills cause that people understand their mental characteristics and those of others and appreciate them. In the process of training skills, students become aware that there are differences between them and others that should be accepted and continue their friendship with these probable differences. They get the concept of group homogeneity and gain peaceful life by contribution of learning life skills along with difference in ideas and probable disparities. It seems that students in experiment group during training time assess beliefs and mind interpretations and by the help of these trainings become aware that they can be



successfully compatible with environment and internal and external world. After they gained these results, can control their harmful and intense stress under any situations, know themselves better and completely, understand problems and issues and adopt useful solutions. Finally, they get healthy and compatible personalities and follow real and rational aims of life. Finally, it should be noted that in the current research, because of time limit, measurements have been taken just by questionnaire and the students themselves to obtain the more exact results. Training life skills as a course should be considered in school curriculum. Holding workshops and training classes of these skills at schools contribute significantly to students for upgrading their mental health. According to the importance of research variables, it is suggested that these variables be examined with other variables like social skills, self-esteem, self-thought and emotional intelligence. From the research perspective, it is recommended to interested researchers that implement this research with follow up among male and female students in other to detect the effect of proposed trainings in addition to the role of gender in effectiveness of these trainings. so it is recommended that training life skills in educational plans should be considered by advisors and teachers and knowledge based plans of students' parents so that they can play a role in making the students compatible and increase their educational performance.

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