

Abstract

Objective: This study was aimed at investigating the effectiveness of teaching emotional intelligence in preventing students' tendency towards substance abuse.

Method: A quasi-experimental design containing a pretest-posttest alongside a control group was employed for this study. Pre-university female students of Ardabil constituted the statistical population of the study; from among them, 240 students were selected as the participants by random cluster sampling. In the next stage, 60 individuals with a high tendency to drugs were selected and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The experimental group regularly attended training classes of emotional intelligence for 3 weeks. Addiction Potential Scale and Addiction Acknowledgment Scale were used for data collection purposes. **Results:** The results indicated significant effectiveness of teaching emotional intelligence.

Conclusion: Emotional intelligence and its promotion can be effective in preventing people's tendency to substance abuse.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Addiction, Substance Abuse

The Effect of Emotional Intelligence Teaching in Preventing Students' Tendency to Substance Abuse

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Introduction

Substance abuse is a chronic condition which causes a lot of physical, psychological, social, domestic, and economic problems, so that it makes addicted persons suffer a serious downfall in his or her personal or social acts (Badrian, 2006). Substance abuse which is physically and socially harmful is called addiction. The precise concept of this word refers to the state that human beings by the consumption of a type of chemical substance physically and mentally become dependent on it, so that they take a feeling of tranquility and enjoyment by accessing and using the drug. In addition, they experience physical pain or annoyance by getting deprived of access to the drug. Today, authorities encounter a serious problem which is the entrance of different types of classical and chemical drugs to schools, especially at the level of guidance and high schools. It may be claimed that one of the reasons for the prevalence of this problem is its accessibility. Addictive substances are so abundant that everyone is able to prepare it in any part of the city by spending a little time. According to statistical numbers and figurers, this problem has advanced to the front doors of our houses (Ardeshiri, 1999). Adolescence is an important period of life for training social and emotional competencies. This period by itself is a factor for emotional challenge. Regardless of the other existing problems, nearly all students experience the dissipation of self-confidence and leap in conscientiousness. Their thinking about themselves becomes confused. Their social self-esteem that is their confidence in making friends and keeping their relations with friend encounters danger (Goleman cited in Davies, 2001). Substance abuse among active strata of society which mainly include adolescents and students is more pervasive and more important and it brings a large volume of problems for the society due to victimization of this stratum. However, education of this class easily preserves a large human resource for the development of society (RamezanKhani & Hoseininan, 2006). Every year, many criminals in the ground of substance abuse and its related domains are imprisoned or sent to addiction treatment centers by police or other legal agencies which, in turn, reveals the importance of this problem. Today, there is a lot of addicts who resume substance abuse after abstinence and this shows an imbalance in behavior and reaction to internal and external demands. Thus, the psychological aspect and personality qualities play a key role in substance abuse more than any other factors and it may not be solved by teaching (Monshy, Samoui & Valiayi, 2003).

Emotional intelligence is referred to as one's ability, capacity, and skill to understand, measure, and control his/her or other people's emotions (Salouy, 2003). Emotional intelligence is a potential status which can be acquired. So the importance of teaching emotion regulation and problem solving assumes importance. In this way, it is possible to solve a large amount of problems and reduce most of the expenses imposed on the society. The

prevalence of addiction among parents and family members often eliminates the opportunity of thinking and controlling the emotions which, in turn, makes teaching an important factor on the ground of emotional intelligence (Monshy et al, 2003). People who are emotionally and sentimentally frustrated are more apt to get addicted. It seems that people, who are vulnerable to drug dependence, find substance abuse as an immediate way to release their emotions which have made them frustrated for many years. These types of people usually are trapped in emotions and feelings which they are not able to solve. They are not much aware of their emotions; therefore, they take very passive role with the feeling of frustration dominant over their lives (Goleman, 1990). The results of Trinidad, Unger Chou & Johnson's study (2004) entitled "The protective association of emotional intelligence with psychosocial smoking risk factors for adolescents" showed that people with lower emotional intelligence tend to drug abuse in order to stand against their negative emotions. The results of Trinidad & Johnson's study (2002) also showed that there is a meaningful relationship between higher scores of emotional intelligence and lower smoking and alcohol abuse in a group of students. The results of Taylor, Bagby & Parker's (1997) study showed that the people who consume alcoholic drinks as a fun and also those who are addicted to alcohol abuse have a lower emotional intelligence. The study conducted by Parker, Taylor, Easterbrook, Schell & wood (2008) on the ground of emotional intelligence and adolescence-related problems showed that the low level of emotional intelligence is rooted in a sense of frustration that does not allow persons to stand against emotions and regulate them and this has an effective role in the initiation of substance abuse. Siaruchi, Ferguson & Mayer (2004) conducted a study on emotional of emotional intelligence and its role on daily life and showed that nearly half of the people addicted to substance and alcohol abuse have a low level of emotional intelligence. Similarly, Salouy (2004) also confirms the supporting role of emotional intelligence in reducing the risk of tendency towards smoking and substance abuse in adolescents, so that totally there is a negative relation between the general score of emotional intelligence and scale score of alcoholic addicts. Some researchers (such as Dunn, 2004) believe that one of the advantages of emotional intelligence is the avoidance of isolation. They also believe that the rate of isolation is high in smokers. Trinidad and Johnson concluded that adolescents with higher scores in emotional intelligence had a lower tendency to smoking and alcohol abuse (cited in Goleman, 2003). Jena-Abadi (2009) investigated the relationship of emotional self-awareness and impulse control with attitude towards addiction on 100 male high school students. The results of the study revealed that there is a significant negative relation between emotional self-awareness and attitude towards addiction and also there is meaningful negative relation between impulse control and attitude towards addiction. Among other results of the study, it can be argued

that one of the methods to develop coping strategies against substance abuse among students is the enforcement of emotional intelligence factors, especially emotional self-awareness and impulse control.

Generally speaking, it could be stated that, in addition to adequate IQ, teaching and applying cognitive skills, or in short, high level of emotional intelligence is the corner stone of success as an instrument for emotional control and sympathetic abilities. Learning emotional intelligence starts at the beginning of birth and continues until the end of life (Soltani-Far, 2009). Based on the existing studies, it could be said that emotional intelligence and its components are lower in addicted people than that in the non-addicted ones. Therefore, this question is raised whether teaching emotional intelligence is effective in preventing willingness towards substance abuse among students.

Method

A quasi-experimental research design with pretest – posttest and control group was employed for this study. Pre-university female students of Ardabil city constituted the study population. The sample of the study included 8 classes of female students in pre-university level in Ardabil and they were chosen by cluster sampling method. In this method, all members of sample group answered three questionnaires. Among them, 60 students with high tendency to drug use were chosen and were randomly divided into two equal groups. Emotional intelligence was taught to 30 students in the experimental group while the control group received no treatment. The subjects of experimental group regularly participated in a training course for 3 weeks and 4 sessions per week. After one week, both of the questionnaires were filled in by both experimental and control groups.

Procedure

At the first session, students got acquainted with each other; and, then, components of emotional intelligence, control of stress and anger, emotional understanding, right ways of expressing emotions, teaching of continence were discussed. At the second session, some explanations were given about the components of emotional intelligence and their application, how to increase awareness over feelings and find the existing connection between thoughts and feelings. In this session, the students were taught about emotional intelligence and its application and how to possess healthy thoughts, behaviors and feelings. Students got familiar with such emotions as anger, sadness, love etc. At the third session, some items such as understanding emotions and emotional awareness about others, emotion regulation, forecasting and controlling the emotions in others were discussed. Then, different kinds of cognitive falsifications and defective schemata were

defined. Also, it was discussed how to assess the emotions of others, get information about others, and understand functions. Last but not least, consequences and results of emotions were discussed. At the fourth session, self-awareness and empathy, control of traumatic emotions and emotional intelligence as a contrastive way were taught to the students and they were explained how to stand against falsifications by arming with the components of emotional intelligence and internalizing them.

Instrument

1. Addiction acknowledgment scale: this scale is particularly related to substance abuse and contains 13 items. The raw scores obtained from this scale can be transformed into linear scores by normative data of Minnesota questionnaire of personality. Weed reported the internal consistency coefficients of a compound sample of drug dependents, psychiatrics and normal subjects as 0.74. He also reported the retest reliability coefficients in men and women as 0.89 and 0.84, respectively.

2. Addiction potential scale: this scale includes 39 items. Contents of questions are heterogenic and most of them do not seem to be directly related to substance abuse. Some of the questions are related to extroversion, sensation seeking and risk taking and the rest of them to self-doubt, alienation, and cynical attitudes towards others. Test retest reliability coefficients of addiction acknowledgment scale (with one week delay) for men and women were reported as 0.69 and 0.77, respectively.

Results

Descriptive statistics of the study variables are presented in the following table for each group and test stage.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the variables for each group and test stage

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Experimental</i>				<i>Control</i>			
	<i>Pretest</i>		<i>Posttest</i>		<i>Pretest</i>		<i>Posttest</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Addiction potential	23.73	1.55	19.2	2.01	23.08	1.73	23.43	1.77
Attitude towards addiction	4.53	0.62	3.76	1.22	4.6	0.67	5.53	0.68

Multivariate analysis was used to examine the difference in addiction potential and addiction acceptance between groups. The results revealed the existence of a significant difference between groups (Wilks' Lambda=0.229, F=96.178, P<0.001, eta squared =0.771). Univariate covariance analysis was carried out to examine patterns of differences.

Table2: Univariate covariance analysis representing patterns of differences

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Addiction potential	42.35	30.243	0.0005
Addiction acceptance	2268.06	183.670	0.0005

As seen in the above table, there is a significant difference between the two groups in addiction potential ($P < 0.001$, $F = 30.243$) and addiction acceptance ($F = 183.67$, $P < 0.001$).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study was aimed at exploring the effectiveness of emotional intelligence teaching in preventing the establishment of positive attitudes towards addiction in students. The results showed that there is a significant difference between the two groups in terms of the effectiveness of teaching emotional intelligence in reducing addiction acceptance and potential. Teaching emotional intelligence reduced addiction potential and acceptance in the experimental group. These findings were consistent with the results of Trinidad et al (2004) in that people with lower emotional intelligence have attitude towards substance abuse for resisting negative emotions. As well, the findings were consistent with the results obtained by Trinidad and Johnson (2002), parker et al (2008). Taylor et al (1997) and Jena-Abadi (2009) proved that one way to develop coping strategies against substance abuse among students is to put into use emotional intelligence factors. According to the findings of this study and other studies in this field, it can be claimed that the implementation of emotional intelligence components is one of the methods of developing coping strategies against risk factors, including addiction among students and adolescents. Learning emotional intelligence, individuals understand the reliabilities and reasons for emotions and they are also informed about their motivational stimuli in different situations. The ability to analyze emotional experiences among students leads to self-awareness in relation to better communication in the environment and grows effective regulation of emotions and coping strategies. This status is referred to as emotional literacy by Salouy & Mayer (1990). Findings of this study are in line with the assumption that participants in emotional literacy courses suffer fewer problems on the grounds such as peer pressure, substance abuse and attitude toward smoking and other forms of drug dependence. Emotional control gives an individual the opportunity to think and act better against environmental stimuli, develop more powerful social supporting networks, and take more steps away from social isolation. Substance abuse makes an

individual psychologically and physiologically dependent on drugs and negatively affects his personal and social functions.

In relation to the effectiveness of emotional intelligence teaching in emotional expressions, emotional regulation, and emotional exploitation; the results showed that there is a significant difference between the study groups in terms of dependent variables. Teaching emotional experience increases emotional expressions, emotional regulation, and emotional exploitation in experimental group compared to control group. These findings are in line with the results of Salouy & Mayer's (1990) studies. They have suggested 4 components according to their own definition: 1. Understanding and expression of emotion, 2. Emotional facilitation of thinking, 3. Understanding and analyzing emotions and emotional application and awareness, 4. Reactional regulation of emotion. According to Salouy & Mayor (1990), many researchers believe that there is no relation between emotional intelligence and effective function in coping with daily life requirements. Siarouchi et al (2002) suggested that emotional intelligence is an effective and determining factor in real life outcomes such as educational achievement, occupational achievement, interpersonal relations, and generally in healthy activation.

Slouy & Mayor (1990) also concluded that when a person has an appropriate emotional understanding and is able to quickly and accurately recognize his/her emotional and temperamental changes, he/she can get an extensive base of information to regulate and resist to his/ her feelings. In fact, a person armed with emotional intelligence would be able to resist his unstable emotional conditions and, on this ground, it is possible to present required training to students to enable them to regulate their emotions. Mohammadi, Torabi & Ghorabi (2009) showed that arming with emotional intelligence equals arming with effective coping styles against problems which consequently promote health. As a result, according to the related researches and the results of the present study, teaching skills of emotional intelligence followed by manipulating cognitive and behavioral qualities promotes the power of emotional expression in students. Learning these kinds of skills would lead a person to know how to establish meaningful interpersonal relations and communicate with others in an appropriate way. They will be able to analyze their abilities and this phenomenon is completely related to their emotional expression (Stern, 2007). Emotional intelligence is a kind of ultra-ability which shows how we can use different skills, including intelligent quotient (IQ). Emotional intelligence is teachable (Goleman, 1995) and when it is learned, understanding of our own and others' feelings is promoted, self-efficacy is enhanced, emotional control and regulation increase, ability to favorably manage mood improves, problem solving skills are put into practice and emotions are better exploited.

Generally speaking, the results of existing studies implicate that emotional intelligence is an appropriate strategy in preventing risky behaviors, since it has an effective and meaningful relation with mental health. As a result, the implementation of emotional intelligence leads to the enhancement of health and, consequently, to the prevention of tendency towards substance abuse.

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