

Effectiveness of Assertiveness Training on Assertion and Social Problem Solving of Male Students Who Are Victims of Bullying

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of assertiveness training on assertion and social problem solving of male victims of bullying in junior high school. The research method was quasi-experimental with pre-test, post-test design with control group. The statistical population of the study consisted of all male junior high school students in Marivan city. Using cluster random sampling method, 60 students were selected and randomly assigned to experimental (30) and control (30) groups. The participants of the experimental group were trained in 12 sessions. Research tools included questionnaires of bullying, assertiveness and social problem solving. Data were analyzed using analysis of covariance. The results showed that assertiveness training had a significant effect on the level of assertion but no effect on social problem solving.

Keywords: Assertion, assertiveness, bullying, social problem solving

Introduction

Bullying is usually defined as a distinct type of aggression characterized by a repeated and systematic abuse of power (Olweus, 1999) over a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons. It covers a wide range of behaviors, which have been categorized into three distinctive forms: physical (e.g., hitting, kicking, pushing), verbal (e.g., name calling, threats), and social/relational bullying (e.g., social exclusion, spreading rumors (Košir, et al., 2019).

Therefore, the need to inform the victims the appropriate response to bullying and the use of methods to improve their relationships with peers is important (Beyrami, et al., 2017).

Social problem solving reflects the process through which people generate, select, and implement solutions to problems that arise in everyday life (Romano, et al, 2019). Problem solving learning provides the basis for amending interactions and relationships with peers, and its training can also improve communication with peers (Asmari Bardehward, et al., 2017). Denise and Irsoy (2016) reported deficiencies and lack of social problem-solving skills of victims. It is possible that if the victims of bullying increase their assertion, their social adjustment will increase and they will be able to deal with the bullying behaviors of other people (Boket, et al., 2016). Assertiveness training leads to the ability to defend one's personal rights without hesitation, as well as without showing aggression. Research Hypotheses:

Assertiveness training is effective on bullying students.

Assertiveness training is effective in solving the social problem of bullying students.

Method

The present study was conducted as a quasi-experimental design with two experimental and control groups in pre-test and post-test stages. The statistical population of the study consisted of male junior high school students in the city of Marivan in the academic year of 2018-2019. The final sample of the study was a total of 60 people who were selected based on the scores obtained in the self-assessment questionnaire and the opinion of the students' counselor and school executives. These students were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups.

Participants were completely free to participate in the study. They were also reassured about protecting their identities, providing sufficient information about the research, and keeping the information confidential.

Victim Behavior: Questionnaire developed by Olweus (1996) for ages 11 to 17, and consists of 19 items, the first ten items (1 to 10) out of the 19 - items were used to measure bullying victimization. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this questionnaire for the bullying victim subscale in Olweus research (1997), has been reported 0.86 (Rezapour, et al., 2014). The reliability of the questionnaire in the present study was 0.78 by Cronbach's alpha method.

Social Problem Solving: The revised short form of social problem solving (Nezo, et al, 2002) has 25 items. The reliability of retest for this questionnaire was reported between 0.68 to 0.91 and its alpha coefficient was between 0.69 to 0.95 (Saif, 2014). The reliability of the questionnaire in the present study was 0.78 by Cronbach's alpha method.

Assertiveness: Gambrill and Richey Questionnaire (1975) has forty items. The reliability coefficient of this test is reported to be 0.85 (Piri, et al., 2012). The reliability of this questionnaire in the present study was 0.73 by Cronbach's alpha method.

Results

Descriptive statistics and then analysis of covariance were used for statistical analysis of data. The data in Table 1 is presented by descriptive indicators of scores in the variables of assertion and social problem solving by groups. Default study of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z statistic of assertion variables and social problem solving indicated the establishment of the condition of normal distribution of scores in the experimental and control groups ($p < 0.05$). Leven test was used to check the default homogeneity of variances. The results showed that Leven statistic was not significant for the variables of assertiveness and social problem solving ($p < 0.05$). Also, through the interactive effect of covariate with the independent variable, the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes of assertion variables and social problem solving among the groups were examined. The results of assertion scores test ($F = 0.485$, $df = 1$, $p > 0.05$) and social problem solving ($F = 0.175$, $df = 1$, $p > 0.05$) showed non-meaningful interaction and showed the homogeneity of regression slopes.

Table 1: Mean and Std. deviation of scores of assertion and social problem solving variables

Variables		Experimental group		Control group	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Assertion	Pre test	103.67	9.27	105.7	8.85
	Post test	134.5	2.62	106.33	10.42
Social Problem Solving	Pre test	17.52	1.8	15.73	1.47
	Post test	17.2	2.04	16.67	1.64

The findings of Table (2) show that there is a significant difference between the scores of the experimental and control groups in assertion variable after adjusting the effect of pretest ($F = 73.16$, $p < 0.05$). There was no significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the social problem-solving variable after adjusting the pre-test scores ($F = 0.002$, $p > 0.05$), so the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the two groups is accepted. In other words, the implementation of assertiveness training had no significant effect on increasing the social problem of the target community.

Table 2: Results of analysis of covariance of assertion scores and social problem solving

Variable	Source of effect	Total squares	DF	Average squares	f value	p value	effect size	statistical power
Assertion	Pre-test	119.63	1	119.63	0.76	0.386	0.013	0.14
	Group	11480.32	1	11480.32	73.16	0.001	0.001	1
	Error	8944.54	57	156.92				
Social problem solving	Pre-test	14.88	1	14.88	4.6	0.036	0.075	0.56
	Group	0.007	1	0.007	0.002	0.962	0.001	0.050
	Error	184.35	57	132.2				

Conclusions

Explaining the findings of the first hypothesis, it can be said that assertiveness training taught bullying victim students to express their desires and opinions freely, and to express their feelings

positively and effectively. This training has also increased their ability to express desires and expectations freely, without any stress and fear of peers, along with their assertion.

In explaining the non-confirmation of the second hypothesis, Bayrami et al. (2017) pointed to the implicit theories of individuals as the basis of goal orientations. Assertiveness is one of the necessary factors to develop social problem solving skills, not a sufficient condition. Sufficient conditions probably accompanied by more effective environmental measures, such as teachers, family, and cultural supports in the neighborhoods in which students live, can provide the necessary ground for developing this skill. Finally, it is possible that the intervention or teaching method variable unlike the previous variable has not achieved the desired result

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