

The Effectiveness of Self-Kindness Training on Emotional Dysregulation and Academic Burnout of Girl Students with Self-Harming Behavior

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of self-kindness training on emotional dysregulation and academic burnouts of girl students with self-harming behavior. This was a quasi-experimental study with pre/post-test design and a control group. The population included all girl students had self-harming behavior in the second grade of the second-high school of Rasht in the academic year of 2018-19. The sample consisted of 35 girl student had self-harming behavior that was randomly assigned to two groups (18people self-kindness training group and 17people control group). For data collection, we used Self-Harm Inventory, Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale and Academic Burnout Questionnaire. The experimental group received their kindness training in eight sessions and the control group received facade training. The results of multivariate analysis of variance showed that the self-kindness training was effective in reducing emotional dysregulation and academic burnout in students with self-harming behavior.

Keywords: Academic burnout, emotional dysregulation, self-harm, self-kindness

Introduction

Self-harm behavior is included of behaviors that are done consciously, unswervingly and without the purpose of dying by the person, with the aim of damaging body tissues (Chamberlain, et al., 2017) and its prevalence among Iranian students has been reported to be 10%. (Hadizadeh Nohdani, 2019). The role of emotional regulation defects in the onset and persistence of self-harming behaviors have been also confirmed (Brereton and McGlinchey, 2019). Furthermore, academic burnout is one of the variables that may cause the persistence of self-harming behavior in students (Phosalay, *et al.*, 2019). Academic burnout can be defined as tiredness because of the anxiety and requirements of education, having a pessimistic feeling and not being interested in homework and not feeling experienced (Lee and Lee, 2018). Among the various psychological interventions for self-harm, the interventions which has not been considered by researchers is the teaching of kindness to person oneself. Kindness to oneself is a propensity to be kind to oneself, which is used in the face of inadequacy through positive and comforting self-talk. In fact, a peace offer contains intimacy, kindness, and compassion from within the individuals that enables real healing (Mason-John and Groves, 2015). Regarding the effectiveness of self-compassion training, studies have also shown that self-compassion-focused therapy is effective in increasing cognitive regulation of emotion (Ghodrati Torabi, *et al.*, 2020) and reducing academic burnout (Arch *et al.*, 2016). A few studies examined the high prevalence of self-harm in Iranian adolescents and the non-use of student samples. The present study examined the following hypotheses:

- Self-discipline training has an effect on self-harming emotional female students.
- Self-compassion training has an effect on the academic burnout of self-harming female students.

Method

This research used Quasi-experimental method with a pretest-posttest design with a control group. Using random sampling method, 347 people of 11th grade students in four high schools were evaluated using multi-stage sampling completed a self-assessment questionnaire and 118 students who received a cut score of 5 or more were also chosen. These students were then clinically interviewed and eventually reduced to 111, of whom 40 were randomly selected and 20 were randomly assigned to the self-kindness training group and 20 to the teaching group. In the meantime, in the self-kindness training group, 2 people were excluded by themselves and in the training group, 3 people were excluded from the sample, and the experimental group was reduced to 18 people and the control group was also reduced to 17 people. In this study, a structured clinical interview based on DSM-V, self-harm behavior questionnaire (Sansone, et al., 2009), difficulties in emotion regulation questionnaire (Victor and Klonsky, 2016) and burnout questionnaire (Salmela-Aro, et al., 2009) with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.81, 0.91 and 0.88 and validity of 0.57, 0.26 and 0.60, respectively, were used. Also, 75 minutes of instruction was in accordance with the guidelines of the National Institutes of Health and Intensive Care (2004) in four 30-minute group sessions.

Results

Mean and (standard deviation) of the age groups of kindness, self-kindness training and instruction groups are 16.89, 0.47 and 16.94, 0.66, respectively. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of research variables by groups.

Table 1. Descriptive indices of pre-test and post-test variables by group

Variable	Group	Pretest M±SD	Posttest M±SD	Variable	Group	Pretest M±SD	Posttest M±SD
Emotional Exhaustion	Self-kindness	16.72±6.64	10.22±5.62	Difficulty in performing targeted behaviors	Self-kindness	10.39±3.16	6.94±3.56
	Pretend to teach	13.12±4.78	16.06±5.95		Pretend to teach	10.06±3.94	10.76±3.78
Pessimism	Self-kindness	8.89±5.81	6.28±4.74	Impulse-control disorder	Self-kindness	9.22±4.26	7.06±3.54
	Pretend to teach	8.35±4.33	9.71±4.72		Pretend to teach	10.82±3.45	10.18±3.39
decreased efficiency	Self-kindness	11.17±7.28	8.11±5.86	Rejection of emotional responses	Self-kindness	8.06±3.69	5.28±2.08
	Pretend to teach	14.53±7.43	13.53±7.36		Pretend to teach	7.29±3.58	7.53±3.41
Academic burnout (total score)	Self-kindness	36.78±15.95	24.89±11.43	Limited access to emotional regulation strategies	Self-kindness	9.17±3.96	6.61±3.4
	Pretend to teach	37±13.92	39.29±14.53		Pretend to teach	9.71±4.15	8.82±3.89
Lack of emotional awareness	Self-kindness	7.56±2.81	5.39±2.03	Bad emotional regulation (Total score)	Self-kindness	50.44±10.21	37.39±9.27
	Pretend to teach	6.94±2.61	7±3.54		Pretend to teach	51.88±11.83	51.18±12.71
Lack of emotional clarity	Self-kindness	6.06±2.6	6.11±2.87				
	Pretend to teach	6.94±2.73	7.06±2.75				

Shapiro-Wilk test which indicates the lack of significance of the index indicates the normality of the score distribution for the research variables ($P < 0.05$), was used to observe its assumptions, before using the analysis of covariance test. Then, the hypothesis of homogeneity of pre-test and post-test regression homogeneity was examined, but due to the lack of hypothesis homogeneity of pre-test and post-test regression in the two groups ($P < 0.05$), some variables were obtained, and post-test of research variables were used.

Table 2. Results of multivariate analysis of variance to evaluate the effectiveness of self-kindness training on bad emotional regulation and academic burnout

Dependent variable	SS	df	MS	F	P	Eta	OP
Lack of emotional awareness	43.3	1	43.3	6.89	0.013	0.173	0.722
Lack of emotional clarity	0.03	1	0.03	0.01	0.955	0.001	0.05
Difficulty in performing targeted behaviors	105.6	1	105.6	17.88	0.001	0.351	0.984
Impulse-control disorder	20.19	1	20.19	4.32	0.046	0.116	0.523
Rejection of emotional responses	79.37	1	79.37	7.7	0.009	0.189	0.768
Limited access to emotional regulation strategies	24.48	1	24.48	3.7	0.063	0.101	0.463
Bad emotional regulation (Total score)	1397.68	1	1397.68	23.71	0.001	0.418	0.997
Emotional Exhaustion	369.01	1	369.01	14.41	0.001	0.304	0.958
Pessimism	137.38	1	137.38	6.23	0.018	0.159	0.678
Decreased efficiency	143.8	1	143.8	6.01	0.02	0.154	0.663
Academic burnout (Total score)	1899.17	1	1899.17	21.02	0.001	0.389	0.994

The results of multivariate analysis of variance presented in Table (2) showed that the effectiveness of self-compassion training on the components of lack of emotional awareness, difficulty in performing targeted behaviors, Impulse-control disorder, rejection of emotional responses, total scores of bad emotional regulation and emotional exhaustion, pessimism, decreased efficiency and total score of academic burnout were 17.3, 35.1, 11.6, 18.9 and 41.8, 30.4, 15.9, 15.4 and 38.9%, respectively, according to ETA squares. Also, there is no significant difference between the two groups of kindness, self-education and instruction in the components of lack of emotional clarity and limited access to emotional regulation strategies.

Discussion

Self-kindness training allows students to let themselves to express their feelings more properly, maintain emotional cohesion, and modulate and regulate emotions as they develop the ability to engage appropriately with negative emotions. Self-kindness also reduces mental rumination, anxiety and stress caused by academic issues by creating a friendly relationship with oneself and less self-criticism, and consequently can reduce academic burnout. Strengthen the aura effect due to the researcher's therapist and self-reporting tools. This research can support the science of clinical psychology and in addition to strengthening psychological research, it can play an important role in considering the emotional and

educational variables of students for counselors and therapists in this field. Due to the effectiveness of self-kindness training, it is recommended to be taught in life skills by counselors in schools.

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Conflicts of interest

There were no conflicts of interest in this study.

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