

Efficacy of life skills training on general health in students

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ABSTRACT

Background: With regard to the importance of life skills, the present study deals with the effect of life skills training on general health of the students.

Materials and Methods: This was a one-group, pre-test, post-test, quasi-experimental research. Forty students were selected through purposive sampling method. The data collection tool was Goldberg General Health Questionnaire.

Results: Paired *t*-test showed a 22 score significant decrease in general health after education compared to before education ($P < 0.01$).

Conclusion: This study showed that life skills education increases general health level of the students.

Key words: Health, Iran, life, nursing students

INTRODUCTION

Fast changes in living conditions, social and familial problems, as well as numerous advances in information technology and communications reveal the necessity of taking individuals' health in close consideration more than before.^[1] In recent decades, psychologists, in investigation of behavioral disorders and social corruption, concluded that most of the damages are as a result of individuals' disability in analyzing personal problems, lack of control, and incapability to face difficult situations, and ultimately lack of being prepared to solve the problems in an appropriate way; Therefore, preparation of the youngsters to cope with such difficult situations seems essential.

The necessity for education of life skills is well revealed when we know these abilities can help individuals to manage conflicts and difficult life situations.^[2] Generally, many of socio-psychological problems such as depression, alcoholism, delinquencies, interpersonal problems, loneliness, schizophrenia, etc., are associated with the weaknesses in life skills and making social communications.^[3]

Although an increase in number of the students referring to counseling centers reflects their socio-cultural growth as

asking help from others is believed to be a sign of mental maturation, it can also show the sophisticated problems they face, leading them to educational decline.^[4] The importance of the above issues led the researchers to investigate the efficacy of life skills training on general health in students to reduce their physical and psychological problems and to promote their general health through education of life skills in a new environment (university).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a quasi-experimental, one-group, pre-test, post-test study with no control group. Forty subjects were recruited from nursing and midwifery students through purposive sampling. Inclusion criteria were studying in semester one in 2011-2012, having a bachelor's degree, taking no tranquilizers, and not having attended any life skills education prior to research. The data were collected through a two-section questionnaire including personal characteristics and Questionnaire of General Health (GHQ) which contained 28 questions on general health with four sub-scales of physical symptoms, anxiety, disorder in social function, and depression.^[5]

General score of individuals' health was calculated by summing up the scores of these sub-scales. Chavoshi obtained validity of 88% for this test,^[6] and Sadeghi Movahed reported its reliability as 89% through Cronbach's alpha.^[7] The questionnaire was initially filled by the students, and then educational program was held within 2 months in the form of eight 90-min sessions in Islamic Azad University, Maragheh branch, Iran, in Sept-Oct 2011. Educational

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material was a booklet prepared by the researchers. The education was held through lectures and questions and answers sessions by a video projector. The life skills, taught in educational sessions, included 1) emotion management, 2) problem solving skill, 3) decisiveness, 4) self-awareness skill, 5) resiliency, 6) anger management, 7) skill of critical thinking, 8) skill of decision making, 9) skill of effective communication, and 10) skill of stress management.

Finally, 3 weeks after education, the subjects were assessed by the initial questionnaire. Descriptive statistical tests were adopted to analyze the data through SPSS.

RESULTS

The findings showed that mean and SD of general health scores were 40.32 (10.59) and 18.15 (6.50) before and after education, respectively. Paired *t*-test showed that score of general health decreased by 22 scores after education compared to before education, with a significant difference ($P < 0.001$, $t = 11.2$).

Mean scores and SD of physical symptoms were 9.97 (4.24) and 5.3 (2.04) before and after education of life skills, respectively.

Paired *t*-test showed that the score of physical symptoms decreased by 4.9 scores after education compared to before education ($P < 0.01$, $t = 6.7$).

Mean scores and SD of anxiety were 10.4 (3.28) and 4.2 (2.62) before and after education of life skills, respectively. Paired *t*-test showed that score of anxiety decreased by 6.17 scores compared to before education and had a significant association ($P < 0.01$, $t = 8.94$).

Mean scores and SD of social function were 9.52 (3.69) and 5.5 (1.81) before and after education of life skills, respectively. Paired *t*-test showed that score of social function decreased by four scores after education compared to before education and had a positive significant association ($P < 0.01$, $t = 6.35$). Mean scores and SD of depression were 10.4 (5.24) and 3 (3.63) before and after education of life skills, respectively. Paired *t*-test showed that score of depression decreased by 7.3 scores after education compared to before education ($P < 0.01$, $t = 6.6$).

DISCUSSION

The results through paired *t*-test showed a significant difference in general health before and after education, which is consistent with the report of Haghghi *et al.*^[2] With regard to sub-scale of physical symptoms, the findings of the present study agree with those of Mousavi.^[8] With

regard to sub-scale of anxiety, the results are consistent with those of Haj Amini *et al.*^[9] In relation with sub-scale of social function, the obtained findings agree with those of Forneris^[10] and Turner^[11] who showed that education of life skills promotes individuals' ability to solve the problem and to make the best of social supports. With regard to sub-scale of depression, paired *t*-test showed that there is a significant difference in depression before and after education, which is in agreement with the study findings of Amiri Barmkouhi,^[3] Butvin Kantor,^[12] and Popenhagen and Qualley.^[13]

CONCLUSION

Nurses and midwives daily witness people's mourns and pains in clinical environment.

Nurses' special hospital situations such as patients' sigh and their critical condition and death, nurses' insomnia, lack of assurance, and disturbances in their interpersonal communications in all levels enhance nurses' and midwives' stress, and worsen the vicious cycle of anxiety, which leads to their physical problems ultimately influencing the output of health system and the manner and quality of their care.^[14] With regard to the results of this study, level of communication skills, self-awareness, and stress management among nurses and midwives can be promoted through education of life skills to prevent the problems and/or lower the level of problems. Based on the findings of the present study, it is suggested to consider life skill education along with other educational programs in the curriculum in order to promote the level of individuals' general health, lower the incidence of depression, anxiety, physical problems, and to amend low social function to prevent physical and mental disorders. With regard to growing sophistication and changes in the society as well as development of social communication, preparation of individuals, especially the youngsters, to manage difficult situations is an essential issue.

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