

Psychological explanation of the importance of life skills training programs, applications and challenges facing to it

Dr.Javad Khalatbari, Mohammad Mojtaba Keikhayfarzaneh, Dr. Shohreh Ghorbanshiroudi, Dr.Shahnam Abolghasemi, Saeedeh Motamed

Abstract— Today, despite the deep cultural changes and the changes in the way of life, many people have not the basic and required skills in dealing with life' problems, and that's why, they have been vulnerable in the face of their problems and requirements of life. Meanwhile, some programs has been designed for preventing and avoiding these problems, which one of the most effective kind of them is the life skills education program that has been designed by World Health Organization (WHO). In this study, it is tried to determine the importance of implementation and training of these skills through psychological orientation, and paid a brief overview on the applications and the challenges facing it.

Index Terms— Life skills training programs, psychology, science, social psychological capabilities.

1 INTRODUCTION

HAVING a reasonable, healthy, purposeful and flexible living to deal with problems and ups and downs of it is every wisdom human's desire, but why achieving to this goal, at least for many of us, are not possible, is a question that can be answered by designing a deep matter named "life skills". Nearly four decades in the psychological literature, in the world, teaching basic life skills and perhaps even before the school is highly regarded, and this training period is performed in two groups of general skills including self-awareness, empathy, effective communication, effective interpersonal relationships, anger, coping with negative emotion, teaching problem solving, decision making, creative thinking, critical thinking and time management skills in one hand, and specific skills including a group of people such as education before and after marriage, crisis management, prevention from trauma and teaching performed in workshops. This article is aimed at introducing you with this notion, as well as considering the reasons and needs of this training [1].

2 THE IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY OF IMPLEMENTING LIFE SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM

One of the ways to prevent mental and behavioral problems is increasing people's psychological capacity, which is performed through life skills training. Life skills are simply a set of capabilities that provide field of adjustment and positive and helpful behavior. Numerous and extensive research have shown the positive effect of life skills in reducing drug abuse, preventing violent behaviors, strengthening self-reliance, increasing skills to deal with pressures and stresses, establishing positive and effective social relationships [1].

Today's life needs, the rapid socio-cultural changes, changing in family structures, extensive and complex network of human relations and diversity, extension and invasion of information resources, encountered people with challenges, stresses and numerous pressures, which to deal effectively with, it is required to have socio-mental abilities. Lack of emotional, mental and social abilities has made people vulnerable in facing with problems and exposed them to numerous psychiatric, social and behavioral disorders [1].

Numerous studies have shown that many of health problems and mental-emotional problems have been rooted in social-psychological factors; for instance, the research performed on drug abuse has shown that three emotional factors are related with drug abuse, including poor self-esteem, inability to express feelings and lack of communication skills [2]. Many studies have indicated that there is significant relationship among poor self-esteem and alcohol and drug abuse [3], sexual unchastely [4], suicide thoughts [5], and delinquency [6]. Therefore, according to scientific evidence, and to prevent social pathologies like suicide, drug addiction, violence, delinquent behaviors and psychiatric disorders, it is necessary to have a more attention on mental health issue and its importance.

Moreover, the nature of psychological problems are in a

- Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon Branch, Tonekabon, Iran. E.mail : saba_javadpsy2@yahoo.com
- Department of Psychology, Young Researcher Club, Zahedan Branch ,Islamic Azad University, Zahedan, Iran.PH.+989389384191. E.mail : m_m_farzaneh@yahoo.com
- Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon Branch, Tonekabon, Iran.
- Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon Branch, , Tonekabon, Iran.
- Department of Psychology, Young Researcher Club, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran.

way that dealing with it in the next level of intervention (secondary and third prevention) not only imposes significant cost on society in term of manpower and financial issues, but its effectiveness and efficiency is very limited and often negligible. For example, studies show that when a person becomes depended on drug (addiction), there will be 20-30 percent chance to be improved in the most optimistic case, and it is likely that this problem to be recurred under these conditions [7].

These facts caused the authorities and professionals in mental health field to focus all their attention and efforts surrounding the first-level of prevention program. Therefore, prevention programs, both in general, with the aim of reducing and controlling various psycho - social, and in particular, in relation to reducing and controlling specific problems (such as drug dependency; depression, etc) has been designed and implemented in different parts of the world.

3 LIFE SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM

Life skills education program is an incentive and a preventive program. This program has been prepared to promote mental health level and prevent social-mental trauma. Perhaps, it is better to have a definition of mental health, preventive and enhancing program before getting familiar with life skills program training.

Mental health simply means the ability to have a happy, productive, healthy and without trouble and problem living. According to World Health Organization (WHO), not only does mental health mean not having mental illness, but rather, it is associated with some kind of mental health[8]. Mentally healthy individuals are those who deal with living and its changes and problems that come along, they also control their living and be responsible for it, and they are able to use their mental abilities and establish a good relationship with others and engaged in constructive and beneficial activities[8].

Mental health has a wide range, and there are no guarantees that if anyone has a relative mental health today, this health will be permanent. All of us are dealing with small and big pressures and stresses such as growth stages, maturity, diseases, economic stress, job loss, noise and bustle, etc. For this reason, we experience some problems and troubles throughout our life. These problems and troubles have an effect on our satisfaction and joy feelings, and gradually affect our social-mental health. To achieve a desirable level of mental health and maintain it, different programs have been offered, which these programs generally revolve around two main axes named incentive and prevention. But, what does it mean by incentive programs, and what kind of programs are preventive ones?

Any action that that increases the people's mental health and welfare within the community is called incentive program. For example, programs such as proper use of leisure, sports, recreation, etc. are included among incentive a program that makes a person feel happy, satis-

fied and more capability. Preventive programs refer to any interference that performed before starting the basic social problem or starting any disease in order to prevent growing of problem or social harm or growing any kind of disease [1].

The reality is that having skills is a matter in all fields. Because having skills mean the necessary abilities to properly perform a job. So carpentry, driving, cooking painting, etc. all are a kind of skill. But because the goal of life skills training program is to promote people's mental health level and preventing social harm, those kinds of skills will be offered in this training program that is appropriate with the program's goal[1].

What kinds of skills are trained in life skills training program?

To promote mental health level and prevent social harms, basically ten basic and primary skills are used which include:

Ten aspects of life skills include:

1. Problem solving ability:

We're constantly solving problems in our life. Some of these problems are simple ones, but some others require a complex thought. Problem solving abilities help us solve our life's problems in a desirable way. If important problems our life remains unresolved, we'll face with mental stress and our physical and mental health will be put at risk.

2. The ability to make decisions:

Although we are all make decisions, not always make intelligent ones. Some wrong decisions lead to unpleasant consequences. Decision-making skills help us decide correctly on our actions, and ponder upon various aspects of positive and negative consequences of each of them. Appropriate and realistic decisions lead to higher levels of mental health.

3. The ability to have an intelligent thinking:

This kind of thinking helps us understand issues from different angles and evaluate different solutions to the problem and its consequences, and finally find new solutions to the problems. By using this skill, we make better decisions and problems are resolved more practically.

4. The ability to think critically:

By this skill, we analyze and evaluate our thinking and others and achieve more clear understanding. This ability helps us analyze the information and experiences we're faced with and resist against the values and pressures we're imposed on and know that the behaviors of others are not always right.

5. The ability to interact with others:

Most of our time during a day is assigned to interact with others to express our needs even more, and to understand the need of others. Interaction capabilities help us have a verbal and non-verbal communication more effectively, and express our ideas to others by overcoming the embarrassment. If we acquire this kind of skill, we can

disagree with unsuitable demands of others, if necessary.

6. The ability to have an interpersonal relationships:

Interpersonal relationship ability help us have better cooperation and participation with others, and also trust them and identify the boundaries of our relationships, and maintain good friendships and behave more effectively at the beginnings and end of communications.

7. Self-consciousness ability:

It means self-cognitive ability and awareness the strengths and weaknesses of our desires, fears, willingness and desires. This ability helps us have a realistic view of ourselves and know our rights and responsibilities better.

8. The ability to empathy:

The ability to empathy means to be able to understand other's lives, even not present at those circumstances. Empathy help us accept those who are different from us and respect them. Those who have more empathy to others, have more interests towards them and tolerate different people, and have less aggression and are lovelier. This skill improves people's social relations.

9. The ability to deal with emotions:

This skill includes the ability to identify our emotions and of the others, and also identifying the effects of emotions on behaviors. This skill helps us show an appropriate reaction in times of failure, anger, depression, and anxiety.

10. The ability to deal with psychological pressure (stress):

This ability includes identifying various life stresses and its impact on our behavior. This skill also enables us to identify mental stress resources and to follow the correct ways to reduce stress.

4 LIFE SKILLS APPLICATION

4.1 Increasing physical and mental health:

- Strengthening self-confidence and self respect.
- The tools and methods to equip people to deal with environmental and psychological pressure
- To help strengthen and develop friendly, good and healthy relations
- To promote healthy behavior and social benefit

4.2 Prevention of psychological behavioral and social problems, including the prevention of:

- Smoking and drug abuse
- Emerging psychiatric disorders and social-psychological problems
- Suicide in adolescents and young adults
- Violent behaviors

- HIV prevalence
- Sexual abnormalities
- Loss and decreased academic performance

5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Life skills include a set of abilities that increase compatibility power and a positive and effective behavior. Therefore, the person enables to accept the responsibilities related to social roles without damaging other people, and deal with the challenges and problems of daily living. Researches confirmed the positive effect of life skills in reducing drug abuse, using the cognitive and IQ capacities and capabilities, preventing violent behaviors, increasing self-reliance and self-esteem. Especially, the key role of life skills is emphasized in reducing drug abuse [1]. The training of these skills has also been emphasized as a general preventive way from personal and social damages. In Smith's study (2004), it is shown that life skills training leads significantly to decreasing drug and alcohol abuse in youths [9]. The process of life skills role in promoting mental health can be demonstrated in a way that successful learning of life skills is influenced the learner's feelings about him/herself and of the others, and changes other's attitudes towards that person as well as acquiring these skills. For this reason, acquiring life skills change both the person and the environment, and these two mutual principle increase mental health in a faster way.

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