

The Relationship Between Group Therapy and Communication Skills, Self Esteem, Creativity in Students in Online Classes

Abstract

Adolescence is a period of fundamental physical, psychological, and social alterations that cause them to develop new requirements. Paying heed to these demands results in quicker and more effective adaptation, enhancing communication skills, self-esteem, and creativity. As a result, this study looked at the link between educational group therapy and the rise of three factors in middle school students taking virtual classes. In this quasi-experimental study, 36 teenage girls in middle school were selected through random cluster sampling and divided into two experimental groups (18 people) and control (18 people). Then the educational therapy group program was held in 4 sessions to improve the test group's communication skills, self-esteem, and creativity and was analyzed by SPSS software version 25. According to the results, the educational therapy group increased communication skills, self-esteem, and creative development; the scores for communication skills, self-esteem, and creative growth in the experimental group improved significantly compared to the control group. Independent t-tests revealed a statistically significant difference ($p=0.003$) between the two groups' communication skills, self-esteem, and creativity development scores. Middle school students' communication skills, self-esteem, and creativity have increased, and their academic performance has improved. As a result, educational therapy groups are recommended for use in schools.

Keywords: *Group therapy, Communication skills, Self-esteem, Creativity*

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Introduction

Countries have closed centers and institutions to prevent the spread of coronavirus disease in the wake of its global epidemic. Education is pursued virtually, away from school and teachers, and at home (Kohandani et al., 2015).

All the things humans experience are part of an ever-changing world filled with various experiences. Humans perceive themselves to be at the center of the universe, and one of the defining characteristics of this universe is that it is unique to each individual. No one can discover and comprehend this universe; only man can comprehend how he perceives and interprets his experiences. Therefore, the most critical factor in increasing self-satisfaction is altering people's attitudes toward themselves to boost self-esteem and bring about positive social change. It is only possible if these changes and efforts to achieve them are made from forming personality during childhood and adolescence (Nasiri Nia et al., 2020).

As an influential and future-building group, students account for most of a country's planning and budget and are one of the most gifted segments of society. As a result, paying attention to their psychological elements to increase academic performance is vital (Aghili et al., 2017). As a social group that plays a significant role in shaping the future of society, students are subject to more significant psychological duress than other groups. They neglect their social-psychological development in favor of education, devoting a significant portion of their time, intelligence, and cognitive abilities. All life skills can be learned, expanded, and developed throughout a person's

lifetime (Kia et al., 2016). Therefore, students should be assisted in taking advantage of new opportunities while minimizing potential risks.

Effective communication skills are vital to a student's academic success; individuals can engage in interpersonal interactions and communication through these skills. These skills are the foundation of communication skills and include "understanding verbal and non-verbal messages," "regulating emotions," "listening," "insight into the communication process," and "assertiveness in communication" (Hosseinchari & Fadakar, 2005). These skills are so crucial that their absence is associated with isolation, social anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and a lack of career and academic success (Duong et al., 2020).

Communication is a complex process of giving and receiving verbal and non-verbal messages to exchange information, feelings, needs, and priorities, the goal of which is a mutual understanding of the message's meaning, which has been described as the most important characteristic required for individuals working in primary health care. Effective communication is the foundation of the quality of services and care, whereas ineffective communication is a formidable barrier in health care. In recent years, a greater emphasis has been placed on teaching communication skills, and in some countries, communication skills have been proposed as the primary educational skill [5].

Due to their communication skills, individuals can engage in interpersonal reflection and communication processes, in

which they communicate their information, thoughts, and emotions through verbal and nonverbal exchange. These skills are so essential that their absence is associated with isolation, depression, low self-esteem, and a lack of academic and career success (Mostaghimi et al., 2012).

Self-esteem is a self-evaluation that reflects confidence in one's abilities and the value of accomplishment. Self-esteem is an individual's evaluation of his weight. Self-esteem, defined in psychology as having self-worth and acting by one's values, is closely related to an individual's level of expectation in various facets of life. People with high self-esteem evaluate their abilities, so they are confident that they will likely achieve their goals when they set out to accomplish something. On the other hand, people with low self-esteem have a low opinion of their abilities; as a result, they anticipate less success and limit their activities (Omran et al., 2021).

People's sense of value and self-approval is referred to as their self-esteem. Low self-esteem is the most fundamental issue students confront today regarding communication skills. Self-esteem issues may be transient but can lead to more severe problems like melancholy, suicide, and delinquency. Low self-esteem is one factor that impedes social development, whereas high self-esteem is one of the criteria for mental health. Low self-esteem indicates mental illness and hinders life satisfaction and contentment. This psychological characteristic is vulnerable during adolescence, particularly in females (Nasirinia et al., 2020).

Creativity is one of the essential topics in many scientific disciplines, particularly educational sciences and psychology. Creativity has been one of the primary objectives of schools and educational institutions throughout various eras of human history. In today's world, significant changes in the cultural, social, and economic spheres have resulted in new challenges, which in turn have prompted the development of new expectations for schools and education systems on a global scale. The rapid growth of information and communication technology, the concentration of knowledge, and the expansion and emergence of various information processing tools have prevented economic structures from relying on primary resources and have replaced them with the training of specialized human resources, access to information, and the widespread application of scientific findings (Amini, 2016).

According to Savile (2006), creativity is a mental state where multiple intelligences operate in concert. He believes creativity gives people a superpower in such a scenario, allowing them to attain a beneficial focus for innovation. Education prepares a person for future life and is a facet of life that should evolve. Therefore, if one of the long-term objectives of education is to prepare students to tolerate rapid social change, they should be taught to have an open mind, be flexible, combine new information, and become creative

individuals. To respond to the rapid and significant changes in the world, he also believes that education must promote a distinct mode of thought. Creative thinking is a method of thinking that leads to the emergence of new perspectives, emergent approaches, new perspectives, and new ways to comprehend objects and situations. The modern world requires that new educators be proficient in pedagogical techniques, open-mindedness, and analysis. They must adapt to their environment's ongoing changes and demands, assimilate the increasing flux of information, and reflect on it personally and professionally (Ranjdoust & Eyvazi, 2016).

Theorists believe that creativity can be fostered through instruction. According to Kinsey Goman, creativity introduces a novel concept to others (Asgari & Shaghazad, 2011). Therefore, it is more important for education to cultivate intellect and creative thinking skills than to teach people to work and be normal. Teachers must be knowledgeable about creativity and have a positive attitude toward it to foster a creative environment in the classroom and cultivate their students' abilities. In addition, teachers should be aware of creative teaching skills and strategies for nurturing creativity and complete the required training courses in this area (Hosseini, 2009).

Dong Ho et al. (2020) investigated the development of 10th-grade students' mathematical communication skills through the study of oval subjects; the results indicated that the majority of students whose mathematical communication skills on oval subjects improved substantially. The students also demonstrated a favorable disposition toward the preceding procedure. In addition, the research findings include essential concepts and recommendations, and these skills have positively impacted the improvement of student learning. Mazaheri and Yasser (2018) examined the effectiveness of play therapy based on a cognitive-behavioral approach to the communication skills and self-esteem of children with speech disorders in their thesis. The findings indicate that play therapy based on a cognitive-behavioral approach to communication skills and its components (feedback skills, listening skills, and verbal skills) has been influential on self-esteem and its components (general self-esteem, social self-esteem, family self-esteem, and academic self-esteem) in children with speech disorders.

In the experimental group, cognitive-behavioral play therapy will continue to improve the self-esteem and communication skills of children with speech disorders. Kazemi et al. (2013) examined the impact of life skills training on students with math disorders' self-esteem and communication skills. This study investigates the impact of life skills training on self-esteem and self-esteem. According to the findings, life skills training can improve self-esteem and communication abilities. Cooper Smith (1990) identifies self-esteem as a threshold

variable whose lowness inhibits persistence, self-confidence, and academic performance and compels an individual to take action to alter his situation or settle for it. The research results indicate a significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement, and those with low self-esteem receive lower grades in school (Baron, 1991).

According to Iranian studies, most secondary school students in Rasht have low self-esteem (Babaei et al., 2016). As a result, the researchers suggested that educators give more attention to this aspect of personality. Teaching communication skills is an effective method for boosting self-esteem (Mostaghimi et al., 2015). According to the findings of the Omid Rad study, factors such as self-esteem, communication skills, good communication, goal setting, decision-making, problem-solving, and determining individual values are effective in preventing or reducing behavioral problems and mental disorders in adolescents and improving their mental health (Omid Rad, 2021). Consequently, good behaviors exist for expressing emotions and needs and achieving interpersonal objectives. In other words, communication skills are a set of potential and actual abilities of a person that can be used to accomplish acceptable and informative behavior until reaching an aspect of an emotional relationship. It is undeniable that communication skills positively impact lowering social anxiety, enhancing problem-solving abilities, boosting self-assurance, and enhancing social interactions. Effective social communication is one of the most fundamental aspects of a good personality. All theories and schools of psychology have addressed the importance of social communication, with some perspectives, such as Sullivan's theory of interpersonal relations, basing their theories on interpersonal relationships (Wallace et al., 2015).

On the other hand, a lack of self-esteem impedes the development of creativity, which is closely linked to people's personality traits. Personality traits are also an organized set and a unit comprised of relatively stable and robust characteristics that distinguish one individual from another. Group therapy treats social, emotional, behavioral, family, social isolation, loneliness, low self-esteem, aggression, and anxiety issues. This method is notably helpful for adolescents wishing to participate in a group. Teenagers feel safe and secure in the group and can express their sentiments. The ideal and value of adolescents motivated the researcher to evaluate the effect of educational therapy groups on adolescents by enhancing their interpersonal communication skills, problem-solving processes, social skills, and coping abilities. Considering the significance of the variables communication skills, self-esteem, and creativity development, the relationship between educational group therapy and the improvement of communication skills, self-esteem, and creativity development in middle school students enrolled in virtual classes in

Khorramabad was investigated, and the following hypotheses were tested:

1- Is there a significant relationship between group therapy and increasing communication skills in middle school students by attending virtual classes?

2- Is there a significant relationship between group therapy and self-esteem in middle school students and attendance in virtual classes?

3- Is there a significant relationship between group therapy and the creativity development in middle school students with attendance in virtual classes?

Materials and Methods

In this quasi-experimental study, the statistical population consisted of female middle school students in Khorramabad during the academic year 2021-2022. The school was selected non-randomly. Finally, one class was chosen randomly as the experimental group, while another was the control group. There were 18 students in the experimental group and 18 in the control group. The willingness to participate and cooperate in the study required female students to be admitted to Khorramabad during the academic year of 2021-2022. The exclusion criterion was student transfer out of the institution at the time of the study. Three questionnaires were utilized for information gathering: 1- Jarbak's social anxiety questionnaire (2004). This questionnaire consists of 34 questions with 5-point Likert scale responses (1=Never and 5=Always). 2- The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, which includes 58 items. The 60-item Abedi creativity development questionnaire has three possible options or answers for each query.

Before beginning the intervention, the control and experimental groups' communication skills, self-esteem, and creative development were measured. The content of the training program, which included face-to-face training, a PowerPoint presentation, an educational video (teachers' relationship with the adolescent child and comprehension of the adolescent child), and a pamphlet, was tailored to meet the requirements of the teachers. The introduction of books about improved educational content and material comprehension. According to the requirements of adolescents, sixteen one- to one-and-a-half-hour training sessions were administered. After receiving informed consent, the instructors were divided into groups of 18, and each group received four training sessions on communication skills. The importance of communication with adolescents, adolescents and changes during adolescence in girls, including physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes, ways of dealing with adolescents (supportive, bossy, counselor), essential factors of behavior management in adolescents, ways to strengthen relationships among adolescents, and the needs of adolescents (physical, mental) were among the topics discussed at the meetings. Teachers'

experiences were utilized during the meetings. A counselor was recommended to some adolescents. Lastly, the checklist (when communicating with my child, I keep in mind that I am interacting with an adult) stipulated a specific communication and data collection period.

The factor analysis method confirmed the instrument's validity, and Cronbach's alpha was used to determine its reliability. In

the study by Etebarian and Pourvali (2008), reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha method. In the present study, the reliability value was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha test, and according to Table 1, the questionnaires were reliable because the derived alpha value was more significant than 0.7.

Table 1 - Reliability of variables

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Significance level
Communication skills	0.936	0.000
Self-esteem	0.981	0.000
Creativity development	0.982	0.000

After collecting questionnaires on communication skills, self-esteem, and creativity development, the data were analyzed using independent t-tests and χ^2 analysis methods in SPSS software version 26 during the pre-test and post-test phases.

Findings

The components of pre-test and post-test descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2. The mean and standard deviation of

the total communication skills score increased from 93.50±50 to 116.23 and from 110.22 to 111.66 in the experimental and control groups, respectively, as shown in Table 2. In addition, the experimental group's mean growth in self-esteem and creativity increased from 83.88 and 109.72 to 98.00 and 147.33, respectively. The mean and standard deviation in the control group rose from 79.05 and 90.56 to 88 and 91.72.

Table 2 - Mean, standard deviation, and significance level of scores of communication skills, self-esteem, and creative growth in the experimental and control groups

Variables	Phases	Number	Experimental group		Control group	
			Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Communication skills	Pre-test	18	101.22	18.95	116.33	26.32
	Post-test	18	111.66	19.65	93.50	28.34
Self-esteem	Pre-test	18	83.88	18.48	88.00	19.80
	Post-test	18	108.05	22.31	86.05	17.21
Creativity development	Pre-test	18	109.72	26.82	90.56	18.52
	Post-test	18	147.33	26.82	91.72	18.52

The components of pre-test and post-test descriptive statistics are displayed in Table 2. According to Table 2, the mean and standard deviation of the total communication skills score in the experimental group, 101.22±18.95, was not significantly different from the control group, 116.33±26.32, prior to the educational group therapy sessions ($p < 0.13$). After the completion of the educational therapy group sessions, the experimental group's mean score for communication skills (19.65±111.66) was significantly higher than that of the control group (28.34±93.50) ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, the mean and standard deviation of the total score for self-esteem and creativity development were 18.48±83.88 and 26.82±109.72, respectively, compared to the control, 19.80±88.00 and 18.52±90.56, before the educational group therapy sessions, with no significant difference ($p < 0.36$).

While after the end of the educational therapy group sessions, the mean and standard deviation of the total score in self-esteem and creativity development in the experimental group from 17.86±05 and 18.52±91.72 compared to the control group from 22.31±108.05 to 26.82±147.33 has increased ($p = 0.003$).

Conclusion

In this study, two experimental and control groups were homogenized in terms of these three variables to examine the effect of educational therapy groups on the development of adolescent girls' communication skills, self-esteem, and creativity. According to the findings, the educational therapy group has a positive and statistically significant impact on teenage females' communication skills, self-esteem, and

creative development. In a study, Torkashvand et al. (2011) demonstrated that group positively impacts adolescent females' self-esteem. These factors include the social environment, school, family income, physical and mental health issues of family members, and parental education, all of which directly impact an individual's self-esteem. In one of Mashhad's counseling centers, Damanjani et al. found that cognitive-humanistic group therapy training significantly increased the experimental group's communication and social skills (Damanjani et al., 2019). In addition, Nasirinia et al. investigated the impact of parental communication skills training programs on the self-esteem of adolescent female students. The self-esteem of adolescent female pupils has increased due to the parents' communication skills training program, according to the findings of this study. Therefore, to enhance the health of teenage girls, it is recommended that parents be educated based on the demands and characteristics of adolescents (Nasiri Nia et al., 2021).

In their study, Duong Huu T et al. investigated how learning elliptical topics developed 10th-grade students' mathematical communication skills. This research seeks to improve students' mathematical communication skills while studying elliptical topics. Results indicated that most students' mathematical communication skills regarding elliptical topics had improved substantially (Duong Huu T et al., 2021).

In research on the effect of group discussion on the self-esteem of adolescent girls in Florida, Warren et al. found that the mean self-esteem score of girls who participated in group discussion sessions was higher than that of those who received individual therapy. The average scores for communication skills, self-esteem, and creativity development significantly differed before and after the intervention. In light of adolescents' propensity to engage in group discussions, congregate with their peers, and desire to exhibit themselves in front of a crowd, this finding is also fully supported by the present research. According to the results of Haghighi et al., imparting life skills improves female students' mental health and self-esteem. This study demonstrates that using educational therapy groups has improved high school female adolescents' communication skills, self-esteem, and creativity. In the final days of the meetings, it was evident that the adolescents had a strong desire to continue meeting in the future, and the group members viewed this method as an efficient means of expressing their problems and finding suitable solutions.

In these meetings, the group dynamics were evident; members could express their opinions, partake in the interactions, and discover other criticism without difficulty. They felt more at ease than at the initial meetings, had developed a greater sense of unity and dependence with other members, and respected one another's interactions. In addition, they observed the speaking order and actively contributed to

problem-solving and group decision-making. The effect of the educational therapy group on communication skills, self-esteem, and practical individual functioning suggests that this method can be effective with adolescents who must exhibit themselves in the group and have a conducive learning environment. If the effects of this program are conveyed to the parents, their participation in the program's implementation will simplify meetings.

By understanding this topic, parents, teachers, and adolescents can devise a correct plan to solve the existing problems, thereby taking a practical step toward deciding and resolving adolescents' challenges and preventing academic decline, shyness, lack of self-confidence, and behavioral and personality disorders. Group therapy has increased middle school students' communication skills, self-esteem, and creativity development in this manner, as these skills play a crucial role in their decision-making. In addition, it increases self-esteem and fosters the growth of creativity. The findings of this study can be used to enhance the creative development of middle school pupils who take virtual classes.

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