

The Impact of Social-Emotional Learning Skills Programs on Social Development Among Primary School Students

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to investigate the impact of teaching social-emotional learning skills program on social development among primary-school students in Urmiya, Iran. Therefore, 64 primary-school students (32 male and 32 female) were randomly selected through cluster sampling who ranged were in age 11 to 12 years old (fifth grade) of Urmiya city, and were placed in experimental and control groups (each group 32 participant). Before administering skills training to the experimental group, the Vineland Social Maturity Scale (117 items) was administered to both groups as pre-test. Then prepared program of social-emotional learning program, was administered to the experimental group in 12 sessions, each sessions about 45 minute. After finishing the instructions, the Vineland Social Maturity Scale was administered to both groups again as a post-test. Data analysis was achieved through the t-test and Gain Scores. The results showed that the prepared program training had been effective in increasing the social development of primary-school students in the experimental group. ($p \leq 0/0001, t=9/10$). Based on this result, enhancing social development with a view of promoting social-emotional skills across different educational levels can be a practical objective.

Keywords: Social-emotional skills learning, Social development, Primary-school students

1. Introduction

Educators need to be as prepared and well-equipped as possible to be able to successfully deal with these complicated and interrelated problems. Thus, a radically different form of education is necessary in order to develop the awareness, understandings, social skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to create equality and maintain peace (Fountain, 1999; Galtung, 1996; Shin, 2006).

Psychological findings in the area of development from the moment of conception until death, have stressed importance of physical, cognitive, emotional, social and moral development. Each of these aspects particularly social development is represented best after birth. When the baby finds out that the mother is necessary to satisfy his/her needs and has the first eye contact with her, the process of social consciousness begins. At age 3 to 4 months the baby responds to environmental factors and tries to communicates with pleasant emotions of joy, laughter and voices. The second year is very important for social development. At this age, children should feel safe and relaxed and express their feelings and show desires easily to be able to develop independence and self-reliance (Jalali, 2005).

Teaching social-emotional skills is an underlying factor that enhances social competencies and emotional abilities of individuals. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL, 2003) is the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development (Cherniss, 2000). This capacity enables people to identify and manage emotions, develop healthy relationships, set positive goals, satisfy social needs and make decisions responsibly and ethically (Karimi, 2009).

Social development has been defined in different ways. Namka (2009) defines it as any change in individuals' behavior for attaining order and discipline, which helps them achieve a level of social skills that enable them to easily connect with people and live better. Social development depends on factors such as family structure, peer relations, social skills, emotional intelligence, good social adjustment with others, etc.

Children's social development and enhancing it as important factors in achieving scientific and human accomplishment are among the most significant aspects in helping children. Lack of social development on the part of individuals, who are components of society, leads to lack of personal development as well as decline of communities (Mayer and Salvey, 1997).

Social development is influenced by various personal, educational and family factors. Studies in the field of psychology have shown that training in components of emotional intelligence increases social development (Zines, et al. 2004).

For example, studies carried out by Zines et. al. (2004) in Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), made it clear that teaching social-emotional skills help learners to solve their social problems creatively, be assertive and responsible, identify their feelings, and demonstrate better interpersonal

relationships. In addition, Vardeyn et al (2006) suggested that after the teaching of the social-emotional skills, students demonstrated significant improvement in activities, social skills and their confidence increased.

Sadri et al. (2008) have examined the basic effectiveness of teaching social-emotional skills learning in high school students. Their findings indicate that critical factors regarding the effectiveness of social-emotional skills learning programs for students include consideration of the different levels of social development of students, as well as age appropriate teachings and positive reinforcements of social-emotional learning skills processes. Similarly, Elias (2001), show that the teaching of social-emotional skills enhance and significant effect on social development as an important aspect of emotional intelligent.

Ghaltash (2004) show that social-emotional learning skills programs in three areas of social behavior, self-control, empathy and cooperation is effective. Given the above results on the one hand and the importance and effectiveness of each type of training including training in components of emotional intelligence in early childhood on the other as well as considering the lack of adequate scientific research in the field of emotional intelligence and social development in Iran.

Gottman (1997) argues that those involved in child rearing from family environment to school and universities can play a significant role in the social development of children by emotional intelligence skills training. it should be noted that many authors such as Klerk & Roux (2009) believe that social development are teachable and they have emphasized SEL training programs.

Therefore, such studies is very important for many reasons: First, the theoretical importance of the variables of study in the field of psychology in general and in the educational psychology in particular and that still need further study. Secondary; social development is important issue that is seen as determinants of academic and social success. Finally, can take advantage of the study results in ensuring the development of the components of the social-emotional skills among students and particular components of the direct effect on the positive social development. As a result, given the role of social-emotional skills in a person's success in life, using various effective training programs to enhance and use it will improve the other human functions. This study investigates the impact of social-emotional learning skills training on elementary school students in Urmiya, Iran.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Pretest – posttest control group quasi-experimental design has been used in the research. Therefore, 64 primary-school students (32 male and 32 female) were randomly selected through cluster sampling who ranged were in age 11 to 12 years old in Urmiya city, Iran, in the academic year 2012-2013. There were placed in experimental and control groups; 32 (16 male and 16 female) students were selected as experiment group and likewise 32 students were selected as control group.

2.2. Instruments

In this study, in order to gather the required data, social development was measured by Vineland Social Maturity Scale.

-Vineland Social Maturity Scale:

This scale is a development scale that measures the person's ability to meet his operational needs and accept responsibility. The scale can be used from birth to over the age of 25. It includes separate questions for each year until the age of 12. But after 12 years, it has common questions for 12 to 15, 15 to 18, 18 to 20 and 25 upwards. However, it has been shown that its peak efficiency is at lower ages. This scale includes 117 statement divided into 1-year groups. Information required is gathered not via test conditions, but through interviews with people aware about the subjects. The scale is based on the person's ability in life. It can be divided into eight categories: General Self-help, Self-help eating, Self-help dressing, Self direction, Occupation skills, locomotion and communication skills. Vineland scale was normed on 620 patients, including 10 males and 10 females in each age group from birth to age 30 (Mehr Jahanian, 2007).

Ghamat Boland et. al (2007) state that the excessive use of this scale in previous studies and its acceptable results is its content and face validity. Its test-retest Reliability is 0.56 that is acceptable. Salvia and Silvik (1978) report the validity of (0.75) and reliability of (0.78) for this test.

2.3. Procedures

In purpose of the research is to evaluate the effectiveness of developed social-emotional learning program on the fifth grade students' social development. For this reason, social-emotional learning skills program (SEL) has been prepared and implemented and tested.

Social-emotional learning skills program which is composed of twelve sessions were applied on experiment group one lesson hours (45 minutes) in a week. Approximately, the process lasted in a total of three-month. On the other hand, control group has not been provided any treatment. Before and after experimental treatment, Vineland Social Maturity Scale developed by Edgard Vineland (1965) have been applied on experiment and control groups. The study in which pretest– posttest control group quasi-experimental design was used, to

examine the effectiveness of experimental treatment, the statistical parameters such as mean and standard deviation were calculated for data analysis. Then in inferential statistics part, independent t-test was used. In the analysis of quantitative data, the program of SPSS was used.

3. Results

To facilitate understanding the results of this study, question of this study are divided two hypothesis.

The first hypothesis: Training the social-emotional skills learning program enhances social development in primary school students.

To test this hypothesis, independent t-test and comparison of group means on the post-test were used. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Independent t-test to determine the effects of training the social- emotional learning skills on social development in primary school students.

	Group	N	mean	St. deviation	t	df	Sig.
Pre-test	Experiment	32	64.42	3.30	1.23	58	NS
	Control	32	65.65	3.79			
Post-test	Experiment	32	71.68	2.37	4.99	58	0.0001
	Control	32	67.42	4.03			
Difference	Experiment	32	7.17	2.76	9.10	58	0.0001
	Control	32	1.77	1.71			

Table 1. shows that there is no significant difference in the students social development levels in the pre-test between experimental and control groups. But the mean difference between pretest and posttest for experimental and control groups is significantly different ($t=9.10$; $p \leq 0.0001$).The mean difference is higher for the experimental group. ($\bar{X} = 7.17$ vs. $\bar{X} = 1.77$) which means that training of the social-emotional learning skills enhances social development in primary school students in experimental group.

The second hypothesis: The effects of training the social-emotional learning skills on the social development of male and female students are different. To test this hypothesis, t-test based on the difference between pre-and post-test scores was used. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: t-test to determine the effect of training the social-emotional learning skills on the social development of male and female students.

	group	N	Mean	St. deviation	t	df	Sig.
Pre-test	Male	16	64.57	3.87	0.24	58	NS
	Female	16	64.27	2.73			
Post-test	Male	16	71.33	2.57	0.34	58	NS
	Female	16	71.65	2.23			
Difference	Male	16	6.87	3.61	0.59	58	NS
	Female	16	7.47	1.59			

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference between social development of male and female students on the pre-test. The mean differences for pre-test and post-test of male and female were not significantly different. But the mean difference between pretest and posttest for experimental and control groups is not very significantly different ($t=0.50$; $p \leq 0.0001$).The mean difference is not higher between male and female students. ($\bar{X} = 6.87$ vs. $\bar{X} = 7.47$) which means that training of the social-emotional learning skills enhances social development in primary school children.

That is, after teaching the social-emotional learning skills, the social development of male and female students were not significantly different. So the hypothesis is rejected. Furthermore, no statistically significant difference between genders was found in students' social development after the training.

4. Discussion

The main concern of this study was to find out whether there would be a statistically significant difference in the social development level after the teaching SEL program in experimental group. Secondly, this study analyzed whether there would be a statistically significant difference between genders in the usage of this program with respect to training.

According to the results of this study in first hypothesis, training of the social-emotional learning skills program enhances social development in primary school students. Therefore, training of the social-emotional learning skills program had a significant impact on social development in primary school students. The findings are consistent with the findings of other research in this area, such as Arnold and Hussey (2003); Cherniss (2000, 2004); Elias (2001); Goleman (2008); Gottman (1997); Klerk and Roux (2009); Namka (2009); Sarni (1999);

Sadri et al. (2008); Zines et al (2004), Verdeyn et al (2006). Therefore, these findings are consistent with the of most studies and programs conducted in the field of elementary school student's social development and show the need to use these programs to appropriate development of children.

But there is no significant difference between social development of male and female students after the training of the SEL program. Therefore, there is no significant difference between growth of social development dimensions in male and female students in this research. In this section the results of this research, are not consistent with those of Bar-on (2000); Elias (2001); Lin et al (2006) and Nota and Sorsi (2006). Most of these studies stress the impact of gender on SEL programs particularly assertiveness and its effects on social functioning and adaptive behavior. They state that the overall impact of these programs on enhancing SEL particularly assertiveness is higher for male than female students. This inconsistency can be explained by sub-culture differences, different expectations of the two genders, training time, trainer skills, differences in assertiveness intensity, and other states of people. It should be noted that in today's society, children, both boys and girls, are protected by families and the gender issue is not so much concerned by parents. Moreover, given that today a significant number of families are single-child, support for all children has increased and more attention is paid to children, both boys and girls, by their parents, gender differences have declined.

The findings of this study revealed that SEL training was effective in changing the students' social development from positive aspect. It is a proof that if students are instructed how to interaction with the environment, they have the capacity to put it into practice. Furthermore, no statistically significant difference between genders was found in students' social development after the training. Thus, the results of this study may be beneficial for all educators who believe that their job is not just teaching academic courses. All teachers should be aware of the fact that without educating our children, we do not have the right to expect them to be the defenders of our future. According to the results of this study, following line of research is suggested for the future studies: First, The schools needs to have a better role to increase the effectiveness of students' social development through academic and training programmers. In addition to, other studies are required to verify these findings for other educational levels and other variables in different areas. It should be noted that the primary school period is critical and plays a critical role in shaping children's social character. Therefore, more research is recommended on primary school children and their education. Social development enhancement and social-emotional learning skills training classes at this age should be included in the regular education courses. The integration of such programs into academic courses should get a start in our educational programs as well.

Resources

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