

## Effectiveness of life skills training on coping strategies and psychological capital of Female Students

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of the present study was to determine the effectiveness of life skills training on strategies of coping with stress and psychological capitals of female students. **Methodology:** The present research was a fundamental and qualitative and experimental -quasi-experimental including pretest-posttest design with control group. The statistical population consisted of all female high school students in the 4th district of Tehran in the academic year of 1396-97. The sample size and number were estimated to be 30 individuals. Systematized random sampling method was used, but the participants were included in the control and experimental groups. they were randomly assigned (15) person in the experimental and (15) in the control group. The measuring tools included Lazarus's Coping Strategies Scale (1985) and Lutz's Psychological Capital Scale (2007), which subjects completed before and after the life skills training program. **Findings:** The results showed that life skills training (14.3%) played a significant role in explaining the improvement of problem-focused coping strategy, but it was not effective in improving the emotion-focused coping strategy ( $P = 0.824$ ). Life skills was 19.7% effective in explaining self-efficacy, 23.2% in explaining hope, and 17.1% in explaining resilience of the experimental group. But there was no significant change was occurred in control group. **Conclusion:** Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that life skills training has been effective on coping strategies and psychological capital of adolescents.

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## 1. Introduction

The World Health Organization views life skills as one's ability to behave positively and adapt to others, enabling him to meet daily challenges and needs effectively (Sadegh, 2008). Unicef (2012) also identifies life skills as a large set of psychosocial and interpersonal skills that can help individuals make informed decisions, communicate effectively, coping skills and personal management. To expand and live a healthy and productive life. Life skills can also guide personal actions, actions of others, and actions of the environment in a way that leads to greater health and greater health, ie greater physical - psychological and social well-being (Ghazanfari, & Ghadampour, 2008). The most important life skills include problem solving skills, decision making, creative and critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal skills, empathy, self-awareness, coping with unpleasant emotions and stress. The World Health Organization (1997) divides life skills into three categories: cognitive skills, social skills, and emotion (Dehghannejad, Haj Hosseini & Ajeei, 2017). Adolescent life skills training is particularly important. Because adolescence is the transition from one stage of development (childhood) to another (adulthood). Age changes in this period are relatively rapid and changes in attitudes and behaviors are also rapidly occurring. As the physical changes take place, the attitudes and behaviors change more slowly. (Sadok & Sadok, 2012).

These additional pressures include stress. According to Lazarus and Folkman's 1985 view, coping is a set of behavioral and cognitive activities and processes to prevent, manage, or reduce stress. Although coping strategies involve many activities, most of them involve trying to improve a difficult situation, such as map design and action (problem-solving), or to adjust emotional distress such as seeking others for emotional support or reducing the severity of the situation. Are cognitive (emotion-focused coping) (Bisharat, 2007). Effective ways of dealing with life's problems are called the "life skills" in science. Life skills are those groups of abilities that help one to deal effectively with and deal with life's struggles and situations. These abilities enable one to act positively and consistently in relation to other human beings, their society, culture and environment and to ensure their physical and mental health (Saadatian, 2017). Concerning the study of the impact of life skills on coping styles, the results of the study by Amand & et al. (2008) showed that effective coping styles training can reduce stress and anxiety. Stress coping strategies are specific strategies used by individuals to cope with stressful life situations and involve cognitive and behavioral efforts to interpret and overcome problems (Lazarus & Folkman, 1985). On the other hand, life skills training on adolescent psychological capital may also be useful.

The root of the notion of psychological capital is to be found in the works of Martin Seligman, who identified him as the father of positive psychology (Golparvar, 2014). Psychological capital consists of four constructs of hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy, each of which is considered a positive psychological capacity, has a valid measurement scale, is based on theory and research and is dependent. It is state-of-the-art and capable of growth and significantly correlates with functional outcomes (Lutz & Olivier, 2007). The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effect of life skills training on coping strategies and psychological capital of female students

## 2. Methodology

The present research was a fundamental and qualitative and experimental -quasi-experimental including pretest-posttest design with control group. The statistical population consisted of all female high school students in the 4th district of Tehran in the academic year of 1396-97. The sample size and number were estimated to be 30 individuals. Systematized random sampling method was used, but the participants were included in the control and experimental groups. they were randomly assigned (15) person in the experimental and (15) in the control group. The measuring tools included Lazarus's Coping Strategies Scale (1985) and Lutz's Psychological Capital Scale (2007), which subjects completed before and after the life skills training program. According to Cohen's table, sample size and volume were estimated 30 (with effect size of 0.5,  $\alpha = 0.05$  and test power of 0.76) that were randomly divided into two equal groups of experimental

(n = 15) and control (n = 15). Were divided. Research tools included life skills training using the life skills training guide for teachers (2008), non-life skills training course (2012), psycho-social empowerment book for students in school (student workbook). Summed up in 10 90-minute sessions, including: 1- Defining life skills, 2- Defining self-awareness, 3- Defining empathy, 4- Defining communication skills, 5- Defining interpersonal skills, 6- Defining emotion management, 7- Familiarity with stress management, 8- Problem-solving training, 9- Definition of decision-making skills, and 10- Summary and conclusions. 2- Lutz psychological capital questionnaire (2007) This questionnaire uses standardized values that have been widely used for constructs that measure hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy. The validity and reliability of these subscales have also been confirmed. 3. Lazarus's Coping Strategies Questionnaire (1985). Lazarus's Coping Strategies Questionnaire (WOCQ) is a 66-item test developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1985) based on the Coping Strategies List (Lazarus and Folkman, 1985 and also evaluates the wide range of thoughts and actions individuals use when dealing with stressful situations inside or outside. The design of the study was that among the female students of the first high school in the 4th district of Tehran, 30 students were selected by random sampling and randomly divided into two experimental and control groups, each consisting of 15 students. And then the pre-test: Psychological Capital Questionnaire (2007) and the Lazarus Coping Strategies Questionnaire (1985) were administered to both groups in similar conditions. The experimental group received 10 sessions of life skills training and no training was provided for the control group. At the end of the educational intervention, the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (2007) and the Lazarus Coping Strategies Questionnaire (1985) were again administered to both groups. Data were analyzed using ANOVA software. Spss21 was performed at the significant level of 0.05. The principle of respect for human dignity and liberty, the principle of duty and responsibility, the principle of usefulness and harm, the principle of paying attention to the welfare of others and providing sufficient information on how to research all participants, obtaining written consent to participate in the research. Were.

### 3. Findings

In descriptive part of the current study, Descriptive indices, such as mean, standard deviation, were used to describe and classify the variables.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Indicators of Psychological Capital Scores in Control and Experimental group in Pre-test and Post-Test

Groups		Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	low	High
Pre-test	Experiment	Efficacy	20/80	5/40	12	28
		Hope	20/66	4/41	15	28
		Optimism	20/73	5/25	11	30
		Resilience	19/53	4/21	13	27
		Psychological capital	81/73	12/14	62	104
	Control	Efficacy	20/20	5/33	14	26
		Hope	20/00	4/57	15	25
		Optimism	20/40	6/25	12	28
		Resilience	19/46	3/67	14	27
		Psychological capital	80/06	10/54	63	95
Post-Test	Experiment	Efficacy	23/33	5/11	18	28
		Hope	24/13	4/32	15	28
		Optimism	20/06	5/67	19	30
		Resilience	23/33	3/21	17	27
		Psychological capital	90/86	8/14	77	108
	Control	Efficacy	20/60	3/58	14	29
		Hope	20/93	4/43	15	27
		Optimism	20/06	5/41	15	30
		Resilience	19/33	4/11	9	27

	Psychological capital	80/93	11/57	64	103
Experiment	Emotion based	36/66	3/23	29	42
	Problem based	37/66	4/40	26	50
Control	Emotion based	36/61	5/11	19	43
	Problem based	36/33	6/21	27	49
Experiment	Emotion based	37/60	5/31	29	49
	Problem based	36/65	4/89	35	63
Control	Emotion based	39/11	5/09	25	48
	Problem based	34/22	4/56	30	47

Table (1) shows the descriptive indicators of central tendency and dispersion of psychological capital and its scales in participants in the pre-test and post-test groups. According to the information in Table (1), the mean scores of the variables in the pre-test of the experimental groups were not significantly different from those in the control group, but in the post-test, the experimental groups had a significant increase. In most of the variables compared to the control group. Negative tilt in pre-test and post-test scores indicated greater accumulation of scores on the right side of the graph. Positive tensile strengths in the scores indicated that the scores were distributed around the mean, which increased the height of the normal distribution graph. The skewness and elongation values were between +2 and -2 indicating that there were no univariate outliers in all variables; normality tests were used to examine more accurately the distribution of scores and their normality. The results also showed that the interaction between groups, dependent variables and pretest was not significant because their significance level was greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be safely argued that there was no significant interaction between pre-tests and life skills training. The results of the Ubox test showed that according to the obtained F value (0.565) and significant probability (0.759) it can be concluded that the data did not violate the assumption of variance-covariance matrix homogeneity. Bartlett's Spearman's test showed that according to the obtained chi-square value (16.057) and its significant probability (0.007) it could be concluded that there was a significant correlation between the dependent variables.

**Table 2.** Multivariate test results

Effect	Value	F	Df	Error Df	sig	eta
Pillay effect	0/397	5/052	3	23	0/008	0/397
Villkes lambda	0/603	5/052	3	23	0/008	0/397
Hoteling effect	0/659	5/052	3	23	0/008	0/397
Rooyes highest root	0/659	5/052	3	23	0/008	0/397

The results of multivariate tests according to Table (2) showed that since the significance level of the tests was less than 0.05, it can be concluded that between the control and experimental groups in terms of the variables of emotion-oriented strategies and problem-oriented and psychological capital with variables control. There was a significant difference between the correlation (F = 0.052, P = 0.008, eta = 0.397). In other words, life skills training influenced the scores of emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies and the psychological capital of the experimental group.

**Table 3.** Inter-Subject Impact Tests (Dependent Variables: Emotion-oriented Strategies and Problem-Oriented and Psychological Capital)

Source	Dependent variable	Sum of squares	Df	Mean of squares	F	sig	Eta
Groups	Emotion focused pretest	0/363	1	0/363	0/014	0/905	0/001
	problem focused pretest	144/356	1	144/356	4/649	0/041	0/157
	Psychological capital pretest	582/189	1	582/189	9/100	0/006	0/267

According to Table (3), the results of the F-test for examining the effects between subjects showed that between the experimental and control groups the variables were problem-oriented strategy (P = 0.041, F = 4.649, eta = 0.157) and psychological capital. (P = 0.006, F = 9/100, Ea = 0.267) There was a significant difference in inhibiting the effect of pretest means, but life skills training was not effective in the emotion-

focused strategy of the experimental group. ( $P = 0.905$ ) It can also be concluded from the EATA coefficients that life skills training had a powerful effect on explaining the dependent variables. More precisely, life skills training (independent variable), 15.7% played a role in explaining problem-oriented strategy and 26.7% played a role in explaining psychological capital.

**Table 4.** Modified averages of emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies and psychological capital in the post-test of the experimental and control groups.

Dependent variable	groups	mean	Standard error	border	
				Low border	High border
Emotion focused post-test	Experiment	37/22	1/297	34/55	39/89
	Control	37/44	1/297	34/77	40/11
problem focused post-test	Experiment	42/20	1/442	39/29	45/17
	Control	77/79	1/442	34/89	40/76
Emotion focused post-test	Experiment	90/32	2/069	88/06	94/58
	Control	81/47	2/069	77/12	86/73

Table (4) shows the mean scores of tests of emotion-focused strategies and problem-focused and psychological capital in the post-test of the experimental and control groups. As can be seen in the problem-oriented strategy and psychological capital scores, the experimental group had a higher mean score than the control group, but no significant difference was found in the emotion-focused strategy.

#### 4. Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of life skills training on coping strategies and adolescent psychological capital. The results showed that 15.7% of life skills training was involved in explaining problem-focused strategy and 26.7% in explaining psychological capital of experimental group, but it was not effective in emotion-focused strategy ( $P = 0.905$ ). Along with the effectiveness of life skills training on stress coping strategies in the main research hypothesis, we can refer to the researches of Haddadi, Salek and Badri (2013) and Rezaei & et al. (2009), Sadegh Movahed (2008) and Amand, Harrell, Stereh, Mercer and Derosier. (2008). The results of Haddadi and Badri (2013) and Rezaei et al. (2009), Sadegh Movahed (2008), and Besharat (2007). Chhava & Kacker (2013). indicated that life skills training significantly increased the mean scores of problem-oriented coping.

It is possible to explain the impact of life skills training on problem-focused coping strategies. Lazaros and Folkman (1985) point out three important features of coping: 1. Coping requires effort and planning 2- The end result of coping reactions is not always positive 3- Coping is a process that occurs over time. There are generally two main strategies for coping with stress: 1- problem-oriented coping strategy 2- emotion-focused coping strategy. Lazarus and Folkman (1985) were among the first researchers to address this issue in a coherent framework. The problem-oriented coping strategy refers to direct action to reduce stress by enhancing stress management skills (Clinic, translated by Mohammadkhani, 2011) and involves constructive measures of the individual in relation to stressful situations and attempts to remove or modify the source of stress. Give. In this type of confrontation, one's goal is to calm down and to achieve peace that is disturbed by stress (Ghazanfari & Ghadampour, 2008). In this way, the person is fully active and seeks a solution to the problem or to minimizing the psychological stresses that result from it, and tries to do work or activity to alleviate or minimize stress. But emotion-focused coping strategy refers to cognitive strategies that delay or eliminate the stressor by giving it a new name and meaning (Kazemi, 2014).

And include efforts to regulate the true emotional consequences of stressful situations and maintain emotional and emotional balance by controlling the emotions resulting from the stressful situation (Ghazanfari & Ghadampour, 2008). In this way, the individual does not make any particular effort or effort to reduce or eliminate stress; he only relaxes himself and avoids distress.

Along with the effectiveness of life skills training on psychological capital in the main research hypothesis, we can refer to the researches of Dehghannejad et al. (2018), Esmaeilzadeh (2011). The results of Dehghannejad et al. (2018) study showed that positive thinking skills training was effective in increasing students' adaptability and resulted in improvement of psychological capital in all its components including self-efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience. The results of the study of Harati & Hendry, (2010). indicated that social skills training promoted all components of psychological capital (resilience, hope, optimism and self-efficacy). Also, in the studies of Herati et al. (2010) and Ahmadi and Safavi (2014), the effect of life skills on self-efficacy was confirmed. Kazemi (2014) demonstrated the effectiveness of life skills training on hope and leadership (2015) on resilience and Yousefi (2016) on optimism. In addition, Golparvar (2014) studies confirmed the impact of life skills training on (individual-social) adjustment.

In explaining the potential impact of life skills training on psychological capital, it can be argued that the main purpose of life skills training is to develop the capacity and increase the psychological and social abilities of individuals (Smith, Genry & Ketring, 2005). Learning life skills through the application of management skills (decision making, problem solving, awareness of social impacts and coping, anger, frustration and anxiety, goal setting, self-leadership and social self-empowerment) and skills Social (social communication, verbal and nonverbal daring skills, respect and enhancing competence) enhances mental and social ability and ultimately prevents the formation of harmful behaviors to health and mental health promotion and ultimately mental health promotion Cognition in female students

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